



Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

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MS-4787: Abba Hillel Silver Papers, 1902-1989.

Series V: Writings, 1909-1963, undated.

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The growing power of the state, 1933.

THE GROWING POWER OF THE STATE
Abba Hillel Silver

Neither Judaism nor Christianity have anything to fear from the spread of the doctrine of the socialized community and the collective life which is likely to dominate the New Era. The danger lies in the excessive zeal and over-reaching on the part of the State which may lead to the complete subjugation of the individual and which in time may prove fatal to his spiritual life. ^{TP} Our experience of the last decade and a half indifferent parts of the world with experiments in the corporate society, in Communism, in State Socialism, or in State Capitalism has given men ground for fear that the individual is being sacrificed in the process of economic and political concentration. Whether the suppression of the individual is only a necessary incident in the transition from one social order to another or whether together with dictatorship it will become a permanent feature of the new social order is for the present a matter of conjecture. But for the time being at least, it is alarming to behold in the lands where the corporate ideal of the state has made the greatest headway the total conscription of the individual in the service of the autocratic state. All thought is regimented. Education becomes propaganda. Every writer becomes a functionary of the state. Attempts are even made, as in Germany, to make the church an adjunct and a propaganda agency for the political state. The right of the individual to quest for himself in the fields of the mind and the spirit are denied. A new orthodoxy has been enthroned. It is now proclaimed that absolute truth as regards social ethics, government and economics, even private morality, has already been revealed. It is in the safekeeping of a minority political group -- a new priestly hierarchy. The individual must accept the dogma of a new regime, unquestioningly and submissively or he is anathema. ^{TP} This new state absolutism, backed by its vast ~~punitive~~ ^{punitive} power, is far more dangerous than the old and now discredited absolutism of the church. The latter was frequently held in restraint by the secular arm of

of government. At least the secular and the ecclesiastical attenuated each other's powers. But with the decline in the political power of the church, ^{and} the ascendancy of the absolute authoritarian State, the individual is at the complete mercy of the latter, without recourse and without refuge.

