

THE DANGERS OF DEMI-FASCISM

IN a previous article¹ I tried to make clear the distinction between Fascism and 'Statolatry,' logically inevitable if we properly understand the twin Fascist principles of the Corporate State and of the priority of civic duties to civic rights. But amongst those calling themselves Fascists there have unquestionably been 'statolaters,' avowed or implicit. These may be classed as Demi-Fascists, representing as they do the maximising of one half of the Fascist creed with a corresponding minimising of the other.

From an undue stressing of the corporate idea we may arrive at a worship of the State on a kind of pantheistic basis. If the highest authority is an extension of myself, then both it and myself are participants in the Godhead. But the essential difference between God and a creature is that from the very conception of Divinity it follows that *Divine* rights have no co-relative duties. Might and right are identified. Thus the true Fascist denial of natural civic rights is neutralized and the result is a mentality extremely dangerous both to the citizen and the world. To the citizen because the condition of his citizenship becomes one of increasing the might, whether it be in wealth or dominion, of the State. To the world because the policy of such a State must be world conquest. It is God's right to exercise universal dominion, and since only your own State is God—or, at any rate, *your* God, to whom *you* owe service—it follows that no other State has a right even to exist, save in so far as its existence redounds to your own power.

The 'team' idea disappears in the absurdity of a team with a right to win. Foreign relations are thought of as resembling a chess problem to which the only correct solution is for 'white' to mate after a certain number of moves. While in internal affairs anything that does not contribute to this external end is treason—indeed, blasphemy! Amongst such treasons is, of course, any individual lack

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of efficiency. Against this these Imperialistic demi-Fascists invoke the doctrine of denial of natural rights, which has logically fallen to the ground through their previous acceptance of the Corporate and Immanent, as distinct from the Despot's Individual and Transcendent, God. The outcome is, in practice, a military aristocracy on the old Prussian model. God defend Nazi Germany from it!

Religion may be tolerated, and even encouraged, in such a State, provided it does not become treasonable, *i.e.*, so long as it preaches the gospel of material efficiency and at least allows of its adherents regarding themselves—not as its adherents but as citizens of the State—as a chosen people.

There is, on the other hand, a demi-Fascism arising from an undue insistence on the denial of natural rights. This can become a false religion as what we may call 'Technolatry.' The logical process is somewhat as follows:

'If man has no natural rights, then all that man enjoys is the fruit of his own efforts. Man is superior to the amoeba, the amoeba itself to the slime, only by virtue of some potential force within them becoming dynamic. About what that force is, it is unnecessary to dogmatize. If you like to call it God, or the gift of God, you may do so. But, in practice, what constitutes man's superiority is that manifestation of it which we call intellect, and the instrument of man's progress is the unfettered exercise of intelligence which we call science. Hence the condition of your enjoyment of any rights is that you perform the primary duty of forwarding science. For so only are you of value to the community.

If such people really understood the term 'science' there would be no danger. The pursuit of knowledge for the benefit of mankind, which is true science, includes the search for ultimate truth in philosophy and theology. Unfortunately, however, this is not what they mean. For reasons with which we, as Catholics, are familiar, and which need not detain us here, the moral sciences are in ruins. The whole vast edifice of physical science is, in fact, also a house built on sand for that **very reason.**

BLACKFRIARS

But by abandoning concern with fundamentals physical science has succeeded in giving man immense physical powers. These powers are to-day being neutralized by human wickedness and foolishness. How far the modern exaltation of avarice from a deadly sin into a cardinal virtue, and of usury from theft into earning, have proceeded from theological errors we need not now enquire. But that the thing has happened there can hardly be a doubt.

One of the great achievements of Fascism is that it has found a way of appealing to the popular conscience to have these things recognized for what they are. But the materialistic bias of modern science and the complete historical ignorance of the average scientific and technical expert are apt to regard them as only part of an obscurantism—generally described as medieval—which is all that stands between us and the Brave New World which could be brought about by a technocratic regime. ‘All these things will I give thee if bowing down thou wilt adore me.’ In a world dazzled by scientific wonders, and at the same time mystified by social maladjustment and starvation in the midst of apparent plenty, the appeal is almost irresistible.

Under a demi-Fascist regime of this kind, loyalty to the corporate State becomes loyalty to the guardian of ‘Progress,’ the High Priest of the God ‘Technique.’ The place of the corporate idea in this debased demi-Fascism is to provide a safeguard against exploitation and reaction by commercialists, so that the men of science, generally poor business men, may have a free hand and reward adequate to their services. The measure of the individual’s value, and therefore of his rights, is his contribution to the increase of wealth and comfort—including, perhaps, aesthetic and emotional satisfaction miscalled spiritual—of the community.

In such a State religion will be tolerated only so long as it does not conflict with such increase of wealth and comfort. Though it may even do official lipservice to God, it is on the condition that He shall not get in the way of

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Progress. There is no chosen race, but the 'progressive' races have earned by their own efforts the right to dominate the world. Peace as between such higher races is a desideratum because in peace all can contribute to Progress in the highest measure. Internationalism is only rejected because it is obviously impracticable and because the force of national loyalty and tradition can serve to cement the classes of the State and prevent waste of energy in disputes, strikes, political controversies, etc.

This has been the chief danger of Italian Fascism, originated, we must remember, by an ex-socialist and internationalist. But the genius of Mussolini seems to have grasped the need, as the tradition of the Italian people felt the want, of a truly spiritual religion. None the less, traces of this almost communist spirit could still be discerned in the utterances of Mussolini until very recently. No full report of his latest epoch-making speech is yet in the writer's hands. But he is reported as saying, 'We have rejected the theory of the economic man. The economic man does not exist; the integral man exists, who is political, religious, who is a saint, a warrior.' That is enough to reassure us as to the future of Italian Fascism.

HERBERT SHOVE.

VERY SILLY SYMPHONY

I ALWAYS read with the greatest interest the pronouncements of the two schools of theatrical critics of the Film, the 'whole-hoggers' and the 'half-and-halfers': fairly represented respectively by Mr. St. John Ervine and Mr. Sydney Carrol. Mr. Ervine and the whole-hoggers—with whom I am not going to bother either myself or my readers here—regard a Cinema as exclusively a place for nit-wits to which nobody of the intelligence of Mr. Ervine would ever resort, unless the Film happens to be an exact repro-