

FASCISM AND RELIGION

ONE of the greatest obstacles that confronts the Fascist Movement in Britain to-day is the opposition of the British public to its arch-enemy. Because Communism is a 'totalitarian' doctrine and it is also the very essence of Fascism that 'a Kingdom divided against itself cannot stand' the two are lumped together as both standing for a tyrannous 'dictatorship' over the citizen by an all-powerful State, extraneous to himself and assumed to be coercive of his will. Nothing could be more unjust to Fascism.

The Fascist conception of the State is not of a thing extraneous to the citizen. To the Fascist the State *is himself* 'with a plus.' As a man—if he is fit to have one—regards his family, or a soldier—if he be worthy of the name—his regiment, or a footballer—if he is fit to be in it—his team, so, in the Fascist conception, must the citizen—if he is worthy to be accounted as such—regard his country. Thus a man works for his family, *which includes himself*, a footballer plays for his team, *which includes himself*, a soldier fights for his regiment, *which includes himself*, and a citizen must work, play or fight for his country, *which includes his family, his team, his regiment and himself*. This is the corporate spirit which is Fascism, in contradistinction to the individualistic spirit of 'liberalism,' which regards the association as to be valued and worked for by the individual only in so far as it serves his individual ends—the doctrine of 'enlightened self-interest'—and its natural outcome in the 'class war' of Communism.

Now the family man or the soldier should be ready to die for his family or regiment and, in the smaller sphere, the footballer to 'stand down' in the interests of his team. Even in this they are sacrificing themselves for their own good also—their own honour as well as that of their association. The corporate spirit extends beyond the material into the spiritual sphere. The idea of Fascism could not even be conceived by a thoroughgoing materialist; if, indeed, any human being can really be such. But it is not the

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duty of the family man or the soldier to *be damned*, or of the footballer to *cheat* for his family, his regiment or his side. This is to *dishonour* both himself and them and no material gain can outweigh dishonour. The true Catholic and Fascist attitude towards such things as the German sterilization law is that—whether or no they could be **justified** on material grounds—they are spiritually harmful both to individuals and to the State and therefore *are not Fascist*. The same may be said of anything that tends to exalt the State above God.

It is no part of the Fascist creed that every Fascist leader, or every Fascist Government, is either infallible or impeccable. In general they will reflect the mentality of their citizens. **As** an inefficient regiment or an unhappy family generally connote a bad colonel or father, while the colonel of a well-disciplined regiment or the father of a happy family reflect its *esprit de corps* or mutual love. This is how the British Parliament is supposed to reflect the nation. **If** it does so it is obvious to Fascists that a change is needed in the spirit of the nation if anything is ever to be done to save it.

But even with a changed Parliament we should not, under the present regime, have 'Parliamentary Government.' A committee of six hundred cannot really govern. In fact, though the term has a conventional meaning, it does not really describe the British Government either in theory or in practice. In *legal* theory the King governs through his ministers as delegates of his authority. In *constitutional* theory his choice is limited because only those ministers can accept office who command the confidence of a majority in the House of Commons; which is legally only an advisory body with a power of veto on new legislation, but no control over the executive in action. **In actual practice** there is a vast plebiscite, in which votes have by no means equal value, to decide which of the nominees of two or three party organizations rich enough to run candidates shall be forced on the King as Prime Minister, who will then have his work hampered at every turn by futile debate

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which never affects the final decision (arranged by negotiation of the party whips) and which at least once in recent times has provoked an exasperated sufferer to exclaim 'enough of this foolery ' and another to become the butt of hypocritical attack by telling his tormentors they must ' wait and see.' The result is weak government, discontinuity of policy and a public distrust of the sincerity and truthfulness of politicians, who have to try to reconcile the irreconcilable in order to get the votes of people with conflicting views. That is the case for Fascism in Britain.

On the topical point of ' sterilization ' it seems to be forgotten by some Catholics that there is already a British Commission sitting and that, if their report is favourable, there is nothing to prevent a Government bill legalising it being forced through by the use of the party whip. If it be objected that we have now at least a chance of being heard against it, the reply is that we shall have a better one under Fascism. For the Fascist system has still a Parliament, *specially designed to ensure that all interests shall be heard.* Elected on an occupational and not a local franchise and containing also general, but not local, representatives, there is nothing—in the scheme of British Fascism—to prevent a religious body *being openly represented as such,* provided it has sufficient adherents to form a quota and sufficient cohesion to vote together.

The corporate idea in itself forbids the notion of an autocrat, in the sense of a man empowered to govern arbitrarily by his individual will. Fascist ' dictatorship ' is the dictatorship of Fascism, and Fascism simply means that everybody, as a condition of enjoying the benefits of citizenship, is expected to do more than lip-service to the good old English virtue of public spirit. If there are religious bodies or parties—like the Italian *Partito Popolari*—using religion as a cloak for sectional dominance or practices subversive of the public good, Fascism will suppress them. The Church could not possibly come under any such head. Unauthorized associations of Catholics might. But the Hierarchy in England has always very properly refused

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to meddle in politics as such. On the other hand, if a Government calling itself Fascist introduces measures whereby Catholics are to be compelled to act against their consciences as properly guided, not by their individual opinions but by the Church's explicit dictum, then we as Catholics shall know that it can only be because, in that matter at any rate, it has been false to Fascism. For the real interests of the State cannot conflict with the moral law. Fascism, let it be repeated, is not a 'policy' or a 'programme'—though of course Fascists in any given time and country will have such, suited to the current local problems—but a philosophy of citizenship, and pre-eminently a Christian philosophy, negating the Pagan selfishness which, in the name of 'individual liberty' or of 'class consciousness' is ruining the world to-day.

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