

The Church: Fascism's Ally

An Interpretation of Christianity

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I should like to discuss this subject from the standpoint of a Christian Anarchist, which, if I am to have a label at all - and I hate all labels - is the nearest label to fit me. From that standpoint I define my conception of Christianity as perfect Freedom, which coincides with my conception of Anarchy. In my opinion there are two conceptions of spirituality: the one that only in the fullest attainment and expression of his freedom can man attain to the spiritual life, individual and social. And the other that he must seek the high goal of his spirit not by self-expression and freedom, but by self-repression and obedience to external authority.

I believe the first conception to be that of Christ, and the Gospels read with any intelligence, and the second to be so foreign to the whole spirit of Christ that it is not only un-Christian, but positively anti-Christian. It follows that any Church which bases itself on the second, that of obedience to the external authority and denial of the individual's right to experiment and judge for himself, above all in those realms of faith and morals where his own soul must find its own unique path, is not, in my opinion, a Christian Church, even though it arrogantly claims the monopoly of Christian inspiration.

Subordinating Individual Freedom

From this standpoint I could have foretold the association of the Roman Catholic Church with Fascism, not only in Spain, but everywhere else, on philosophical grounds, because that Church and Fascism have the same fundamental philosophy of subordinating individual freedom to the totality of Church and State.

For the present, however, I must stick to the subject and cannot do better than by examining a controversy between a Cardinal Archbishop of the Spanish Church, Cardinal Goma, and Senor Aguirre, leader of the Basque Catholic Nationalists, who support the people's cause in Spain. This controversy brings out clearly the conflict between the Pope and almost the entire Hierarchy and controlled Press of the Catholic Church and the small but honourable number of Catholic priests and laymen, who have dared to follow their conscience against the overwhelming weight of their Church's authority. It is a conflict not only of ideas, but also of facts, and I hope to show that the Cardinal cannot defend his perversion of ideas without a direct and complete falsification of the facts.

Senor Aguirre writes to the Cardinal:

"The war has arisen between an egoistic Capitalism, which has abused its powers, and a deep feeling for social justice. It is not a war of religion."

Now you will see at once that in an argument whether, the Spanish struggle is or is not a war of religion, some definition of what is meant by religion is necessary, and my preamble about two different and irreconcilable conceptions of religion, namely, of, freedom and authority, were not out of place.

"I do not believe that there are a dozen men who have taken up arms; to defend their property or to defend themselves from the persecution of those who hold or administer property.

I admit social injustice is one of the remote causes of the struggle, but I categorically deny that this is a class war. A pretext is not a real cause, and the championship of the working classes has been only a pretext for this war."

The full insolence of the Cardinal's inversion of the facts lies in the last sentence, for it implies that on the sham pretext of labour demands for social justice, the Spanish people took up arms and started a war. Now let us have the truth, which the Cardinal inverts, in the words of Father Lopo, one of the few priests who have been faithful to their people.

"When the people were roused to demand their rights, when they asked for the universally claimed transformation of the land-owning System; when they asked for access to the great heartless machine of industry to humanise labour there - when we stopped our ears; we gave them a few crumbs in the name of charity and refused to envisage the solutions which reason and justice forced on every Christian conscience;

And there appeared immediately in the midst of the conflict a word lacking all meaning and reason for those who were to use it as a terrible weapon of attack. There appeared the word 'Order'; they talked of the established order and fortifying themselves against the workers, they called them with infinite scorn, 'enemies of order.'

'Let everything go on as it was', was the supreme aspiration of those who were comfortably placed in life, who: were little if at all perturbed by the Existence of the disinherited; yes, disinherited, a term and a conception which fill the mind with horror, so clearly do they speak of fratricidal and anti-Christian cruelty."

I am reminded of Francis Adam's lines:

Sometimes the heart and brain
Would be still and forget Man, woman and childen
Dragged down the pit But when I hear them declaiming
Of Liberty, Order and Law,
The husk-hearted gentleman And the mud-souled bourgeois
A sombre, hateful desire
Creeps up slow in the breasts
To wreck the great guilty temple, And give us rest.

"The great guilty temple," there is the position in a nutshell. Guilty priests of that guilty temple who refused to envisage, who from atrophy of soul and mind were, I believe, incapable of envisaging, the solution which reason and justice forced on every Christian conscience.

Wolves In Sheeps' Clothing

But when the disinherited, claimed their human inheritance, they were not allowed to claim it legally and peacefully, as they sought to do. They were attacked by their disinheritors. They had to fight to defend more than their property they had not secured: they had to defend their liberty and their lives from the Fascist wolves, led on by the viler wolves in sheeps' clothing: the guilty priests.

Not a dozen men, says the Cardinal, took up arms to defend themselves from the persecution of those who hold and administer property. We answer him, "Foul bloated blasphemer! The whole Spanish people took up arms to defend themselves against the treacherous, rebellious attack of those who held and administered property and cared little, if at all, for those they had disinherited.

"They took up arms," do I say? They took up sticks, they took up stones, they fought with their bare hands for they had no arms to take. And in the sacred passion of the right for which they

fought, and the burning determination not to be robbed once more by the treacherous violence of the inheritance, of which they had been robbed for centuries, now almost within their grasp, they wrested the arms from the hands of their persecutors and created a great people's army.

And then what?

The bullies and thieves could not depend on their own, conscript army to shoot down their; brothers. They imported more and more infidel Moors to massacre their own countrymen in the name of the most high God.

But the Moors were not enough. They had to pawn their country to foreign butchers, till whole army corps of Germans and Italians came to help the holy 'massacre.

I pray to the God of Justice, whom I believe can never be mocked in the end, that the peoples of the whole world will rise at last to take just vengeance on the spiritual criminals, who in frightful blasphemy pervert religion and encourage, the slaughter of the poor and humble, whom it is their duty to defend.

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