JAMES STRACHEY BARNES AND THE FASCIST REVOLUTION:

CATHOLICISM, ANTI-SEMITISM AND THE INTERNATIONAL NEW ORDER

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"Fascism may be defined generally as a political and social movement having as its objective the re-establishment of a political and social order, based upon the main current of traditions that have formed our European civilisation, traditions created by Rome, first by the Empire and subsequently by the Catholic Church."[1] So declared James Strachey Barnes, one of the convinced "universal fascists" of the interwar period.[2] As this chapter seeks to demonstrate, examination of the "fascist intellectual"—a publicist figure theorising the relevance of the ideology—takes us into a realm of microanalysis where some of the assumptions developed by generic theories of what "fascism" can be problematised. For example, despite his presentation of Italian Fascism in the definition above as a restoration of old values, we should note that Barnes's vision simultaneously embraced wholesale political and social revolution too. Moreover, closer scrutiny reveals that Barnes's theme of promoting internationalism is somewhat at odds with a narrow and radical vision of the "palingenesis," or rebirth, of the national community that generic fascism theorists often highlight as forming the core of all true fascisms. Yet as we will see, despite this tension Barnes's anti-Semitism in particular revealed his reliance on resurgent nation states as a bulwark against the decadence and decay he found promoted by a corrupt international order driven by liberalism and to a lesser extent communism.

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[1] James Strachey Barnes, *The Universal Aspect of Fascism* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1928), 35.
[2] See: Michel Ledeen, *Universal Fascism; the Theory and Practice of the Fascist International, 1928–1936*, (New York: H. Fertig, 1972); and Roger Griffin, *International Fascism: Theories, Causes and the New Consensus* (London: Arnold, 1998).

Curiously, Barnes's own story reveals a transient life, though gravitating around Italophile sentiments he acquired in his youth. Born in India, he grew up in Italy before entering formal education in Britain. He adhered to the Roman Catholic Church, wrote books supporting Italian Fascism, and by the late 1930s contributed to American periodicals too, especially *Social Justice*, before becoming a publicist for the Fascist regime after its entry into the war. Following the Second World War, Barnes eventually settled in Italy, where he lived until his death in 1955. His idiosyncratic embrace of a pro-Fascist politics during this period synthesised an international vision outlining the rejuvenation of "strong" and "young" nations with an evocative theme of a pan-European Catholic revival. Furthermore, Barnes's endorsement of Italian Fascism as a politically revolutionary force conforms to what some analysts of fascism now refer to as "political modernism" too. In sum, Barnes set out a worldview steeped in a "sense of an ending," as well as envisioning a radical sense of a "new beginning." This allowed him to set his assertions for a new configuration for Europe in an apocalyptic tenor, while also believing himself to be living through a time of elemental renewal and regeneration. As we will see, he stressed that Fascism in Italy and elsewhere represented the politics of the future, while liberalism and communism, driven by hidden Jewish forces, were the corrupt ideologies of a dwindling era. Yet before grounding such themes in samples of Barnes's publicism, in particular as Europe entered into war around 1939, it is first useful to set out in more detail parameters for the qualitative analysis of such fascist writings.

Firstly, regarding the issue of the nature of "fascism" as a generic phenomenon, the approach embraced in this chapter will broadly conform to the now-dominant view of the ideology as one combining a sense of nationalised spiritual

revolution with a populist, anti-liberal and anti-capitalist politics, and calling for the constitutional reordering of the modern nation-state.[3] Moreover, it will engage and expand on this approach to raise a series of larger research questions. Indeed, although setting out a core set of qualities can help to give focus to enquiry, such general definitions offer a mere skeletal approach for understanding fascism as a complex intellectual trend that can be identified as a product of modernity. So to build on such a core working definition, we can employ a more expansive framework, drawing on further observations set out by a range of cultural theorists who have examined fascism. This will establish a heuristic "cluster" of analytical themes for contextualising a sample of the materials developed by Barnes in the wider milieu of interwar fascisms.[4]

As successive analysts of fascist ideology and culture have shown, when examining the phenomenon we need to be especially careful about being dismissive of the complexity of fascist thinking, and recognise that it was a powerful, generic political force that gave, in its own terms, "positive" visions to its many adherents. In an implicitly anti-fascist contemporary context – at least within Anglophone academia – it is all too easy to write off those attracted to fascisms in their interwar historical context as wrong-headed, or simply mad. Yet such a dismissive approach is limiting when trying to understand fascist intellectual milieus. For example, rather than scorning those who self-identified as fascists for jumping between a variety of ultimately incompatible ideas, we can take note of one of the early analysts of fascist

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[3] The major texts setting out this approach include: Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Routledge, 1993); Stanley Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-45* (London: Routledge, 2001); Zeev Sternhell, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); and Roger Eatwell, *Fascism: A History* (London: Pimlico, 1993).
[4] For a more detailed exposition on the value of this approach for developing qualitative analysis of fascist ideology, see Roger Griffin, "Cloister or Cluster? The Implications of Emilio Gentile's Ecumenical Theory of Political Religion for the Study of Extremism," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 6.1 (June 2005), 33-52.

culture, George Mosse, especially his observation that fascism is a "scavenger ideology."[5] This recognition of the heterogeneous nature of fascist cultures has been augmented by Roger Eatwell's stress on the "syncretic" nature of these milieus.[6] This again helps us recognise that individual renderings of fascism are the product of protagonists fusing together many diffuse strands of radical thought, drawing on the left as well as the right. This synthesising of radical stances is developed in order to evoke the trope of the nation entering a new era. A strong language of national redemption thus runs through fascisms, a point we can examine further via reference to Emilio Gentile's influential work exploring evocations of the sacred in fascist movements and regimes.[7] Thus, we can add to the theme of syncretism the notion of fascism as a form of "political religion"—that is, an experimental worldview that tries to shore up the existential gap generated by secularising modernity by blurring numinous and ideological qualities to both evoke a religious aura and develop a radical political agenda. Fascist political religions of the interwar period offered experimental political forms that attempted to address ontological disenchantment, while gravitating around overcoming national humiliation by spinning out a wide variety of redemptive meta-narratives for the nation and its future.

Such concern with fascism as a force trying to re-sacralise modernity has also been explored by Roger Griffin, whose more recent commentaries on fascist cultures identify a need for people experiencing profound existential crises under the conditions of modernity to generate for themselves what he calls a new "sacred canopy" to stave off the meaninglessness of existence, a pattern including, but not

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[5] For further elaboration here, see George Mosse's collection of essays *The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism* (New York: Howard Fertig, 2000)

[6] See also, Roger Eatwell, "Towards a New Model of Generic Fascism," *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 4.2 (1992), 161-94.

[7] For his most detailed elaboration of this approach, see Emilio Gentile, *Politics as Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

limited to, fascisms.[8] Echoing Frank Kermode's classic analysis of the intellectual

climate of the early twentieth century, *A Sense of an Ending*,[9] Griffin has used the

phrase "the sense of a new beginning" to highlight this attempt to generate new

"sacred canopies" to restore a sense of ontological security to the conditions of

modernity. Kermode himself explored what he considered an apocalyptic sensibility

found in modernisms, and stressed that, among ideologues attracted to radical politics

of the era of modernism too, there was a tendency to riff on a mood of living through

a period of elemental transition, decay and renewal. So following from this

memorable analysis, Griffin's approach claims that early twentieth-century fascists

were profoundly engaged in such a radical milieu, and intellectuals attracted to its

politics were excited by tensions between the decline and fall of an old order, and

promise of revolutionary renewal. As Griffin and others also point out, fascists were

thus steeped in a mind-set that identified decadence in the type of modernity

generated by liberal democracies, as well as by communism. Yet rather than merely

retreating to an earlier time they wanted to develop "a sense of a new beginning" by

proposing a radically new "alternate modernity," one offering a new "sacred canopy"

centred around reviving past glories in a way that would transcend the crisis-ridden

present and offer a new future.

Indeed, the philosopher Peter Osborne has proposed that fascism was a form

of "political modernism," a term subsequently used by Griffin too. For such theorists,

fascism's appeal lay in the fact that it offered a radical evocation of the new, what

Osborne calls a *futural* vision, driven by a need to escape the conditions of an

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[8] Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a New Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), especially Part 1.
[9] For more discussion on this theme, see Paul Jackson, *Great War Modernisms and* The New Age *Magazine* (London: Continuum, 2012) especially Chapter 1. See also Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

"actually existing modernity" seen as, somehow, going wrong.[10] Thus for fascist "political modernists" the ideology appeals as it offers a radical break with the present, does not merely want to return to the pre-industrial past, and rather proposes a new and different modernity, fusing a mythicised, imagined past with a vision of elemental regeneration and a new and enlarged role for the state. With these wider concerns in mind that we can now begin to ask not only who James Strachey Barnes was, but, more importantly, examine what he saw in fascism that led him to view it as the only solution to the crisis of the modern age.

To summarise Barnes's own backstory, he was born in India before being brought up in Italy by his grandparents, and later went to public school in England. This included attending Eton, before studying at King's College, Cambridge. He served in the Royal Flying Corps during the First World War, and was well connected among the London cultural elite at this time. After the end of the First World War he worked for the Foreign Office as part of the South European delegation to the Paris peace conference—claiming a particular expertise on Albania.[11] Drawn back to Italy in the interwar years, he became attracted to the ideas of Italian Fascism. This embrace of Italian ultra-nationalism developed into high-profile activism when, in 1927, Barnes became the Secretary General for a new institution, the International Centre for Fascist Studies (CINEF), set up in Lausanne, Switzerland.[12] Here, he published two books, and a range of other material, promoting the ideals of "universal fascism." This was a visionary project that finally came to an end in the wake of Mussolini's isolation from the wider international community following the invasion

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[10] Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 2011).
[11] For full details on the life and times of Barnes, we can refer to his two volumes of autobiography *Half a Life* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1933), and *Half a Life Left* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1937).
[12] Thomas Linehan, *British Fascism 1918 – 39: Parties, Ideology and Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000) especially 128-29.

of Ethiopia. Yet "universal fascism" had really waned by the early 1930s, after it was clear that the new Nazi regime was not interested in seriously pursuing such themes.

The first of Barnes's volumes calling for "universal fascism," *The Universal Aspect of Fascism*, was published in 1928 and received further official endorsement as a later edition included a Preface by Barnes's hero, Mussolini. A key text for Anglophone fascist sympathisers, as well as the curious, the volume was well read in England and elsewhere. Indeed, as Thomas Linehan points out, both Barnes's theoretical volumes had a second print run.[13] *The Universal Aspect of Fascism* set out an intellectualised justification of the Italian variant of fascist ideology, and a model for its wider adoption. Looking at the tenor of the early reception, we can also note that Barnes's first book got a fair airing, as a quote from a review of the text in *The Times* suggests:

> Fascism is a system of thought, and as such is destined to dominate this century as surely as Liberalism dominated the last. Mr Barnes' book is, in the main, a closely reasoned amplification of this… contention… Originally it was a party of action with a mission to correct the incompetence of the old *regime*. That accomplished, it had to ask itself by what principles the strength of Italy could be maintained and developed. Philosophic Fascism is the answer to this question... [14]

The book developed Barnes's core reason for endorsing Italian Fascism, stressing it was the only political ideology that could overturn the forces of liberal "agnosticism" and communist "atheism," core themes in his subsequent theorising. Moreover,

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[13] Linehan, *British Fascism*, 128.
[14] "Book of the Day. The Fascist State: A Philosophic Justification," *The Times*, 17 January 1928, 8.

Barnes did not see Italian Fascism as an alternate to the sacred authority of the Catholic Church, but rather as an augmentation of it in an age that was tearing away the security offered by a truly religious worldview. So here Barnes clearly develops a critique of modernity that styled modern life as losing its spiritual identity, as falling into decadence, while also highlighting that the contrasting strength of the new Fascist state in Italy was its embrace of the Catholic Church. Unsurprisingly, he would later regularly celebrate the Lateran Pacts of 1929. In sum, here Barnes framed Fascism not only as a new political philosophy for the twentieth century, but also one that would uniquely foster not merely a restoration of the spiritual unity offered by the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages, but would somehow transcend this era.

We can see these themes extended when turning to Barnes's second theoretical monograph, simply titled *Fascism*. Here too, Barnes offers much detail on how he regarded the early twentieth century as a time marked by a "sense of an ending," thus creating the possibility for a radically new order to emerge. He again stressed that the political milieu that surrounded him was characterised by competition between three key ideologies: liberalism, communism and fascism. Typically, he styled the first two as essentially similar, grounded in the promotion of agnosticism and materialism respectively. Indeed, he decried both as "a shocking doctrine—a grossly immoral attitude."[15] Yet unlike these products of the nineteenth century, Barnes stressed that the core feature of Italian Fascism was that it was truly modern and revolutionary. Liberalism and communism, meanwhile, would only hold back the development of the world into a purer, and thus more moral, realm.

So it is important to underscore that Barnes's appreciation of fascism stressed it offered an alternate modernity, not merely regression into the past. It was this future

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[15] James Strachey Barnes, *Fascism* (London: T. Butterworth, 1934), 110.

orientated vision, which, claimed Barnes, allowed Mussolini and other Fascists to justify violence too. Force was vital to forging the new era. As Mussolini deployed violence in a revolutionary context, one that was trying to create a new future for western society, it was deemed acceptable and was presented as a regenerative force—as were the other, repressive aspects of the Fascist regime. Such action was necessary to stave off the larger scale violence that would be unleashed by forces of reaction if liberalism and communism were left unchecked. Typically, Barnes set this out while describing Mussolini as a revolutionary leader in passages such as the following: "Mussolini has said: there is a liberty for times of war, another for times of peace; a liberty for times of revolution, another for normal times; a liberty for times of prosperity, another for times of stringency."[16] Furthermore, praise for Mussolini's guidance of the revolution extended to celebrating the what he saw as the relatively non-violent quality of the Italian experience: "There is little doubt indeed, were it not for Mussolini, that the fascist revolution, like most other revolutions, would have progressed in a trail of blood."[17] So for those who criticised Italian Fascism for being violent, or for reducing liberties, this was the answer. The wellbeing of the national community, and securing its future, were being put first by Mussolini, and these ideals were ultimately more important than individual freedoms. Moreover, we again see Barnes's speaking of Mussolini's regime in terms of a project bringing about revolutionary change.

To further evoke a sense of the present as a time of radical change, Barnes often drew on the reference point of the Renaissance too. For example claiming that the fascist

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[16] Barnes, *Fascism*, 111
[17] Barnes, *Fascism*, 242

movement, unlike that of the Renaissance, possesses a quite definite and conscious aim… no less than the gradual construction of a new world civilisation, which would be the reflection of the Greek and Roman spirits, a conciliation of the ideals of the modern era with those of the old.[18]

So it was right to silence those who did not agree with repression in the name of Italian Fascism's modern "Renaissance", while Barnes was happy to explain how many in Italy who rejected Fascism were swayed by what he dismissed as "the prejudices acquired during their youth."[19] We even learn that, in his estimation, it would take at least another generation—one fully socialised in Fascist schooling and supported in adulthood through the culture established by the Fascist leisure clubs—to fully value the positive socio-cultural changes being brought about by Mussolini's revolution. In other words, repression of dissenters would be required for some time. Finally, such suppression of freedoms, and promotion of state authority, had a sacred justification too. The strongly hierarchical state now run by a new Fascist elite was developed in the mould of the Catholic Church, and was entirely compatible with it. As Barnes argued:

> A government… founded on [the Fascist authoritarian] principle, would, indeed, be one strictly in accordance with Roman tradition and the government of the Roman Church offers a perfect example of such a government in being.[20]

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[18] Barnes, *Fascism*, 53.
[19] Barnes, *Fascism*, 243.
[20] Barnes, *Fascism*, 113. For a longer discussion on relationships between British forms of fascism, including Barnes' ideas, and Christianity, see Paul Jackson, "Extremes of Faith and Nation: British Fascism and Christianity," *Religion Compass*, 4.8 (2010), 507 -17.

After his time promoting "universal fascism" via CINEF came to an end, Barnes worked as a reporter for Reuters during Italy's invasion of Ethiopia. Again, his politicised position became clear as contemporary commentators found his views notably partisan.[21] After this turning point in interwar European history, Barnes then moved his Anglophone, pro-Fascist publicism to an American setting. He established himself as a regular writer for the American Catholic publication *Social Justice*. This was the political organ of Father Charles Coughlin, the populist, Catholic broadcaster and leader of the anti-New Deal organisation the National Union for Social Justice.[22] By tapping into the large audiences cultivated by Coughlin's iconoclastic views, Barnes's work for *Social Justice* gave him a new voice. To give a sense of scale, at its height *Social Justice* had a circulation of approximately one million, and in the late 1930s Father Coughlin's broadcasts themselves were seen as influential media events, promoting populist nationalism alongside isolationist themes, and were seen as a potential source for cultivating anti-Roosevelt votes. Aside from Barnes's own anti-Semitism, which will be explored in more depth below, it is worth stressing that *Social Justice* voiced deeply hostile attitudes toward Jewish people too. Strikingly, it published the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, while Coughlin himself was a supporter of Nazism as a bulwark against the rise of Communism, for example defending Kristallnacht. Indeed, according to Coughlin, Roosevelt was part of the same Jewish plot that had willed the Russian Revolution, and was now crippling America through its control of capitalism. Within this populist, pro-Catholic and anti-Semitic milieu, we find a less coded attitude towards anti-Jewish sentiment coming to the fore, when compared to Barnes's earlier texts. Indeed, via his fears regarding the

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[21] For example, this was noted in his obituary in *The Times*, "Major Strachey Barnes: A Paladin of Fascism," *The Times*, 29 August 1955, 9.

[22] For more on Coughlin, see Donald Warren**,** *Charles Coughlin: The Father of Hate Radio* (New York: The Free Press, 1996).

corruption of a spiritual European ideal as a result of liberalism and communism, the hidden forces of Jewish plotting appear at the forefront of his pro-isolationist commentary.

He devoted a number of articles to this topic. For example, 1938 saw Italy introduce anti-Semitic legislation based on Nazi ideals. Responding to this development, Barnes was keen to claim that the new Italian approach to suppressing Jews was superior to the Nazi model of anti-Semitic legislation. Strikingly, he also stated that Jews "have always been the protagonists of racial purity (and, for that matter, also of racial superiority)," so Jews should not be surprised when "other races, hitherto careless in this respect, have at long last wakened up to the importance of racial purity." Moreover, aside from blaming Jews for the need for anti-Semitic legislation, Barnes developed further *ad hominem* commentary on the invisible threat posed by Jewish infiltration of institutions, typical of anti-Semitic arguments: "The Jew has a way of insinuating himself into key positions of influence and of taking advantage of the positions thus gained to exploit the Gentile and forward the policies favouring his own racial ambitions."[23] Putting flesh on the bones of such prejudice, in a subsequent article we find the root cause of Jewish liberation in the modern world being linked to the French Revolution, described as "the spark which made Liberalism a political reality." Barnes's retelling of the story of the rise of liberalism during the nineteenth century then set out how its gradual adoption was also a narrative of ever-growing freedoms for Jews. This "march was only arrested," he asserted, "when its ultimate logical consequences became more and more apparent, namely, the blurring of national personality (running counter to the contemporary intensification of the nationalist movement), the breakdown of the Christian religion

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[23] "Italy's Race Campaign," *Social Justice*, 26 September 1938, 4.

into agnosticism and atheism, and class warfare."[24] So here, when it comes to describing the alleged Jewish conspiracy, we see Barnes asserting that strong national cultures were both being denigrated and were the natural counterweight to the decadence-inducing forces of liberalism and communism. Despite his earlier internationalism, we do see a strong promotion of the national ideal in Barnes's ideology: powerful nations are capable of overturning the secularizing impact of a modernity ultimately promoted by Jews.

Barnes also believed that the solution to the Jewish threat was ultimately nothing less that the removal of Jews from Europe. A major social revolution, based on race not class lines, was needed in Europe to remove the corrupting milieu promoted by Jewish people. Yet though his ideas stressed mass relocation, we find no mention of endorsing mass killing in these articles. According to Barnes in repeated statements on the topic of "solving" the largely hidden threat posed by Jews, the country that needed to act, and to bear the full cost of mass relocation of Europe's Jews, was Great Britain. Before September 1939 at least, Barnes stressed that Britain needed to create a new, Jewish homeland—not in Palestine, but rather in Northern Rhodesia. He felt that Britain would benefit commercially from the new colony, thus the country "could well afford to shoulder the entire cost of removing the whole of the present white population to Southern Rhodesia and resettling them there fully compensated." Moreover, he concluded his article outlining the need for the mass movement of millions of European Jews to the space in Northern Rhodesia thus created as follows: "It would be a glory to our civilisation and an achievement that would fill us all with new hopes and confidence for the future of civilised mankind."[25]

[24] "The Jewish Question and Its Solution," *Social Justice*, 27 February 1939, 3.
[25] "The Jewish Problem – and a Solution," *Social Justice*, 17 April 1939, 7, cont. 15.

With the coming of war in the summer of 1939, Barnes was also keen to stress that the secret forces of world Jewry were ultimately causing a general conflict to develop in Europe. In one article on the outbreak of war in Europe, he argued that there is "*a certain class* of Jews who, quite naturally, desire to see the overthrow of Christendom," and so the unfolding war could be understood as a war of ideas between "*the Church of Christ … and the lodges of Lucifer in rebellion against God!*"[26] A few weeks later he reiterated this hidden, but nonetheless powerful, role allegedly played by Jews in the outbreak of the conflict as follows:

> If there had been any question of Palestinian Zionism solving the Jewish problem in a national sense, the majority of Jews would never have given it any support whatever. A national solution of the Jewish problem is the very last thing these Jews desire. Their solution is the international solution. Their solution is to promote by every means in their power the anarchy of Liberalism and the consequent emasculation of Christianity, so that on the ruins of Christendom they may construct a new Jerusalem: an international Order dominated by their own compact international, racial and esoteric religious organization, which is the essence of Jewish power today … International Jewry—for the time being anyhow—has abandoned Zionism, because international Jewry is now throwing all its weight into provoking a European conflict, into bringing about a war to crush "Fascism.".[27]

With this existential war being posed, ultimately between international Jewry and national fascism, we again detect clear endorsement of an extreme nationalist agenda

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[26] "Tragedy of Chamberlain," *Social Justice*, 24 July 1939, 7.
[27] "The 'British White Paper' on Palestine," *Social Justice*, August 14, 1939, 9.

in Barnes. Finally, following the German invasion of Poland, we can even find Barnes suggesting that, when it came to terms whereby the Nazi regime could compensate Poland "for their losses, few things would give them [i.e. the Polish] greater satisfaction that relieving them of their Jewish population."[28]

Yet the issue of what to say about Nazism, for Barnes ultimately an alternate form of fascism, was a complex one. On the one hand he was regularly critical of the anti-Catholic policies developed by the Nazi regime, yet on the other he felt the need to defend Nazism as part of the same family of youthful, nationalist movements as represented by Fascist Italy. So Nazism was certainly seen as broadly akin to the type of regime he approved of, and a believed was also emerging in Italy, and in Spain and Portugal. Yet the latter three were distinct from, and superior to, Nazism because of their clearly pro-Catholic profiles. So Barnes's strategy was to present Nazism as an erring member of the family of fascisms, and likely to mend its ways and come under the greater influence of Catholicism soon. In doing so, it would moderate its more extreme, sometimes openly pagan, tendencies. For Barnes, the influence of his own hero figure, Mussolini, would be significant to the process too. As he, somewhat hopefully, described the influence of Mussolini over Nazism:

> German Catholics… do not wish to return to "democracy". Their efforts are being directed to establish their religious rights within the framework of the Nazi State. And since, as a whole, they constitute a courageous and steadfast community, and while behind them stands Catholic opinion throughout the world, it is probably only a question of time for the evil counsellors of Hitler to give way… The Catholic hierarchy in Germany are working hard for it; and

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[28] "After Peace What?" *Social Justice*, 30 October 1939, 9.

it is a well known fact that Mussolini is doing his best to bring about a satisfactory solution by mediation.[29]

Thus, despite religious differences with Nazism, he regularly stressed there were core similarities between the ideals of Hitler's state and Fascism in Italy.

The more important division in Europe, meanwhile, was as follows: the "old" regimes of France and Britain (corrupted by Jewish liberalism) were the true cause of strife, while Italy and Germany "claim that they represent fresh vital civilizing forces," and were also justified to expand "because they are young and vital, they feel time is working on their side. These young nations have aimed at getting what they want without war, if possible." So we find here too an interesting, quite mythic language juxtaposing age and decay, attributed to liberal states, with one of youth and vitality, ascribed to fascist ones. Moreover, this can be seen as an iteration of the isolationist viewpoint of *Social Justice* more generally at this time.

There was also discussion on the abilities of these "young" states to more authentically reflect the will of the people, while also being autocratic: "if we look below the surface, the Nazi, and still more, the Fascist regimes are more democratic than the Liberal, which are dominated by the money-interests." Here, he links back to a sub-text of anti-Semitism and a critique of global capitalism corrupting the "old" liberal states. In this approach, we also find justification of the need to temporarily suspend full liberties in the "young" regimes, due to the revolutionary nature of the times. As he stressed, "Inevitably in times of revolution, and in times of strife, liberty must be curtailed in the public interest; and only because Germany and Italy have been passing through a revolutionary period has it been deemed necessary to curtail

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[29] "Mussolini's Warning," *Social Justice*, 27 June 1938, 9.

certain liberties which in normal times would be readily granted."[30] In other words, fascist excesses are legitimised via a language of radical transition and renewal, and so paradoxically such states could even be both more authoritarian and more democratic at the same time.

Yet despite his sympathy for aspects of Nazism, following the outbreak of the war in Europe in 1939, Barnes did begin to put more distance between the aggression of Nazism and the ideals of Fascism in Italy. Nevertheless, he was keen to highlight that, however "much we may dislike certain aspects of Naziism [sic], it is not the same as Bolshevism; for Naziism is neither atheist nor destructive of individual wealth or personality." Furthermore, there was a strong, geopolitical factor that legitimatised Germany's actions, as "Germany is Europe's main defense against the spread of Bolshevism," and thus offered "the best hope of preserving Catholic civilisation in Poland. With all Germany's grave faults therefore, and not withstanding the war, she is still fulfilling an important European function."[31] So again, even following the Nazi Soviet Pact of August 1939 and Germany's subsequent invasion of a Catholic country, we find in Barnes's commentary a rationale for Nazi violence that links to war against "Jewish" threats, especially as posed by the spread of Bolshevism, while styling Germany as an, albeit erring, promoter of Catholic values. Justifying isolationist views, we see Barnes shifting ultimate blame for European conflict back to the "old" liberal states, we can even find him suggesting that Britain and France had willed the outbreak of war in Europe in order to defeat "the new youthful nations who in 30 years time, unless crushed in the interval, will have developed an overwhelming strength." Consequently, the outbreak of hostilities in Europe crystallised the war of ideas between:

[30] "The Real Issues of the War," *Social Justice*, 9 October 1939, 7.
[31] "Big Drive to India: Soviet Aim in 1940," *Social Justice*, 8 January 1940, 3.

Liberalism, which represents the outworn nineteenth century materialist ideology, Bolshevism, which is the logical development of Liberalism (since it is founded on the same essentially materialistic conception of life), and Fascism, which represents the new twentieth century philosophy of the State and may be considered sound or unsound in proportion to the degree in which it allows itself to be animated by the universal values and the fixed principles of the Church.[32]

So while war was on the one hand about staving off threats from both "old" imperialism and an allegedly related spread of communism, for Barnes it was also a conflict for the right form of fascism—which for him was one fully animated by the values of the Catholic Church.

To help explain all this to his American audience, there was also much commentary on why liberalism was incompatible with Catholicism, leaving Fascism as the only credible ideology for true Catholics. For example, one *Social Justice* article stressed that an encyclical by Pope Leo XIII had claimed liberalism was a "vile perversion," and so it was high time that "Christians began to undertake a spring cleaning of their minds in relation to it. Many of us would be surprised at the quantity of dirt that we have unconsciously absorbed."[33] Then, once war had broken out, Barnes stressed that the future for the continent lay with a much more widespread rebirth of a Catholic Europe. This regular trope clearly connects to the theme of spiritual rebirth, or palingenesis, commonly found in fascist discourses of all types.

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[32] "The Real Issues of the War," *Social Justice*, 9 October 1939, 7.
[33] "The Jewish Question and Its Solution," *Social Justice*, 27 February 1939, 3.

As Barnes set out this visionary position shortly ahead of Italian entry into the conflict:

> Italy is the hope of Europe—that is, of civilized Christian Europe. Acting in the closest collaboration with her is Catholic Spain. Out of this war therefore, there may yet dawn a new and more glorious era. If so, it will be due to the renewed vitality of the Roman conception of religion and statecraft which Italy, the land of the Caesars and the home of the Popes, will have rendered possible.[34]

Barnes sketched out further dimensions to this leading role for Italy and Catholicism in a coming new era. He stressed that Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Ireland comprised a core of Catholic Europe, with the first three already conforming to what he considered an international form of fascism. Here, he also discussed the potential future of other Catholic states, including a constitutionally reordered France in Western Europe, and Poland and Hungary in Central and Eastern Europe, and how they might become further bases for international fascism and strongholds for Catholicism in the coming years. As he opined in 1940, the war in Europe "could be the beginning of a "united states of Europe" no more dominated by sinister international financial interests nor contaminated by usury. A Europe freed of the neo-Judaic spirit, a Europe that would… bring back into a common fold all the errant sheep of a now divided and scattered Christianity."[35] We also see criticism of Germany developed in this visionary analysis for the Catholic future for the continent. Indeed, Barnes stressed that "a peace imposed by Germany would not be but a copy upside down of the peace

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[34] "The War Profiteers," *Social Justice*, 11 December 1939, 11.
[35] "Hope of Christian Europe lies in Rome," *Social Justice*, 5 February 1940, 7.

of Versailles. All the good that can safely be said for a German victory is that it would release in Germany the forces of Christianity for the work of transforming Naziism [sic] into something better."[36]

Finally, returning to the theme of Italian Fascism as a modern, political revolution, the close synergy between the role of the Catholic Church and the Fascist state was also a frequent topic in Barnes articles for *Social Justice*. The Lateran Pacts were regularly referred to as a positive example of the Church and the state overcoming tensions that Italian liberals were unable to resolve.[37] Moreover, Barnes was keen to discuss the ideals of the corporate state. These principles were not only regularly praised as a radically new type of modern state system, but also clearly linked to the pro-Catholic nature of Italian Fascism. As he put it, the "Holy Father, himself a conservative, has recommended the "Guild" or "Corporative" organisation of society as the specific Catholic solution to the problem of the relationship between Labor and Capital."[38] Elsewhere, his discussion on the Fascist state raised the positive impact of the corporate state model on Italian living standards too, while again pronouncing that the liberal states of the previous century was a tool to tear down the religious social order, and so formed a stark contrast with Fascism's renewed promotion of it.

Moreover, he argued that Mussolini's new state as the first of its kind, and so was still an on-going "experiment," one seeking to find perfect configuration for corporate structures, the introduction of progressive social measures, and a revitalisation of the Catholic order. Thus, Mussolini needed to be given more time to fully resolve tensions being generated by introducing a revolutionary new system. Yet despite such teething problems, in this context too Barnes praised Italy's dictatorship

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[36] "The Prospects of a Good Peace," *Social Justice*, 18 March 1940, 9
[37] "Hope of Christian Europe lies in Rome," *Social Justice*, 5 February 1940, 7.
[38] "Mussolini's Warning," *Social Justice*, 27 June 1938, 9.

for creating a new and more "democratic" link between worker, employer and the state—even steeping such commentary in a reference to successfully creating Aristotle's notion of the "polity" for the modern age. Despite the lack of meaningful elections, he claimed workers were better represented than under liberal systems. Moreover, the enlarged state played a central role in the wider life of the individual under Fascism, ranging from promoting recreation to offering social security, boons that Italian liberalism had failed to fully develop. A further, central example of how Barnes viewed Fascism as taking Italian life to new standards was an article from 1939 dedicated to expanding the benefits of Italy's new school charter.[39] Analysis here again stressed the harmonious relations developing between Church and State in Fascist Italy, and highlighted how the Fascist regime offered policies that not only improved the educational standards of the Italian masses, but also strengthened the role of the family in the public life of the regime too. Indeed, this crystallised the message found in Barnes's embrace of the Italian Fascist social order: Fascism offered a radical blend of traditional Catholic values and a revolutionary experiment in organisation a modern state, thus transcending the corruption of the liberal era, and so offering Griffin's "sense of a new beginning."

With Italy poised to enter the war, Barnes stopped writing for *Social Justice*, though he still remained an active supporter of Italian Fascism. Indeed, though beyond the scope of this discussion, later in the war period Barnes continued his active promotion of Italian Fascism by becoming a propagandist for the regime. This fascinating chapter of the Barnes story needs to be told via reference to a detailed diary that he developed while working as a propaganda broadcaster, which again allowed him to develop material steeped in his sustained ideological syncretism

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[39] "Italy's New School Charter," *Social Justice*, 31 July 1939, 7.

between Italian Fascism and Catholicism. However, detailed exposition of Barnes's publicism later on during the Second World War cannot be explored here, and, so although publication of an annotated reproduction of this diary is imminent, at the time of writing this material has yet to be placed in the public domain. Once Barnes's wartime diary has been published, future study of this striking fascist intellectual will be able to pick up where this analysis has left off, and explore further the development of Barnes's ideas during wartime.[40]

So to bring this chapter to a conclusion, we can return to the core themes set out in the "cluster concept" for exploring a figure such as Barnes developed at the outset of this analysis. From the themes taken from Eatwell and Mosse in particular, we can see that Barnes's version of fascism was an ideology that incorporated a wide range of ideas and views, yet used these to evoke a revolutionary political agenda. In particular, the trope of transcending liberalism and communism as part of a new constitutional experiment, especially his embrace of the modern corporate state concept, clearly promoted the ideals of a political revolution for nation states such as Italy. Moreover, this language of political revolution, and the creation of the corporate state, was often used to justify repression and violence too. As Eatwell's work stresses, fascists view their ideology as offering a "holistic third way" between capitalism and communism. Moreover, as Mosse contends, there is no "authentic" variant of the ideology, merely a wide variety of *ad-hoc* iterations, each flavoured by the particular interests of the protagonists concerned. The synthesis of Catholicism and Italian Fascism, the strong promotion of "universal fascism" via this fusion being developed across Europe, and the relatively hostile commentary on German Nazism, all clearly evoke this sense of Barnes as a radical, but independently willed, supporter

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[40] Forthcoming Claudia Baldoli ed., James Strachey Barnes, *A British Fascist in the Second World War: The Italian War Diary of James Strachey Barnes, 1943-1945* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

of Mussolini's Italy. He was clearly a fascist commentator who was quite able to reach his own idiosyncratic positions. Indeed, his distinctive perspective was also expressed, most forcefully perhaps, via his arguments on alleged threats posed by Jews, and his radical—though again not unique—proposals for the mass removal of Europe's Jews via the creation of a new Jewish homeland in Northern Rhodesia. Moreover, this aspect of his work also shows him embracing a social revolution based on racial lines, which would call for the uprooting of millions of Europeans based on their identity alone.

Meanwhile, from figures such as Gentile and Griffin, we derive approaches that stress fascist ideologies are trying to grapple with the problems of secularisation, and overcoming a crisis of modernity, by combining radical politics and a language of myth and faith, in order to create new, experimental "political religions." Again, this seems quite clear in Barnes, though again his solutions are typically "syncretic" ones. As discussed earlier, fascists attempt to achieve a sense of higher purpose to their political cause by developing approaches that, somehow, propose to re-establish a form of sacred unity thought to exist in earlier periods, though doing so in a modernised format too. The trope of a return to a unified community, one being shattered by the forces of capitalist modernisation, is rife in many fascist commentaries, and we can see this clearly in Barnes's writings too. He is both deeply nostalgic for an imagined earlier time, one felt to possess a stronger sense of sacred community, as well as calling for a new type of state, and a new international order. To achieve this rebirth, his synthesis between politics and the sacred aura of an earlier incarnation of the Catholic Church can also be seen as a combination fused together to offer a new "sacred canopy" to stave off the radical forces of modernity. As figures such as Kermode also contend, the early twentieth century was a time of profound

cultural crisis, and the traumas of transition to modernity were exacerbated further by the legacy of the First World War. This was the damaged cultural milieu in which fascist movements across Europe emerged, and sometimes thrived. They were thus steeped in the "sense of an ending" that Kermode suggests is crucial to understanding the thinking of this era, yet they combined this identification of an end of an era with the vision of a new beginning that Griffin addresses. Peter Osborne describes this nexus between calling for a radical sense of renewal and a programmatic political project "political modernism". Following this approach, we can describe Barnes as a typical political modernist. Not only was his ideology derived from a rejection of the liberal and communist visions of modernity that surround him, but it strove to create a new and "alternate" modernity too—one combining a new "sacred canopy" to evoke the spiritual order of he believed could be found in pre-reformation Christendom, which he synthesised with the modern ideal of the corporate state.

And finally, while Italian Fascism represented the "rooted" European ideal, the ultimate bogeyman for Barnes was, unsurprisingly, the "international" figure of the Jew. As for so many fascists, Jewishness came to crystallise all the threats posed by modernity to national identity, and could be presented as the hidden, international force controlling both liberalism and communism. As Europe entered into a second general war in 1939, this Jewish conspiracy theory gave Barnes a further, crucial mechanism to explain the why the world was tearing itself apart, and even offered a vision for its purification too. Thus, defeating Jews was crucial to establishing the Catholic revival that he believed was the historical mission of fascism. So to conclude on this issue, we can make some sense of the delusional "inner logic" found in Barnes's writings on the "real" conflict that gripped the world as the Second World War broke out:

Christendom must reject the solution to the Jewish problem advocated by the majority of Jews today, namely Liberalism of which Communism is one logical outcome and the dictatorship of the moneyed interests the other. This indeed is the supreme issue today: The great war of ideas in which we are all willy nilly involved, wherein nation is divided against nation and even individual loyalties are set at daggers… If Liberalism grows, Jew and Christian are bound to come into conflict. The result of that conflict means either the smashing up of Christendom and of all the ideals of Christian society or the persecution of the Jews in a manner hitherto undreamed of. It has already become a matter of paramount importance to Christendom to put an end to the influence of Jewry as the protagonist of Liberalism, or we shall be swept by Jewry into a world war which will have for its purpose the establishment of Liberalism with, in many parts of the world, all the horrors of Communism as a half-way house.[41]

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[41] "The Jewish Question and Its Solution," *Social Justice*, 27 February 1939, 3.

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