CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

After the death of George Bernard Shaw in 1950 May visitors, hailing from different parts of the world, thought it important to pay a visit to Ayot St. Lawrence, and thereby show their reverence to this most controversial personality of the 20th century. R. J. Minney, an associate of Shaw, visited the abode of the latter, and in his study room found a picture of the inside view of a church. The house-keeper, Mrs. Laden, explained to the visitor that the picture was that of the inside view of the church of Dublin, where Mr. Shaw wanted to be buried after his death. This was a simple wish of a complex man. But, we must not take it lightly. This is certainly indicative of the inherent religiosity of Shaw, who is roughly encrusted with repulsively irreligious exterior.

The religiosity of Bernard Shaw has been traditionally treated with a sense of doubt, as if, Shaw had nothing to do with religion. As if, the idea of religiosity was something alien to his nature. Shaw is very well known as an iconoclast, a philosopher, an economist, a sociologist, a humorist, and as a great dramatist.

The critics on Shaw have utterly neglected the religious side of his personality. Practically, no full-length attempt
has been made to explore this area of Shaw's writing. As a matter of fact, an exclusive study on his religious ideas is just not available. The critics on Shaw have either made only a poor 'casual' comment on his religious ideas or ignored this particular aspect from the purview of their studies. Many books on Shaw have been published from different corners of the world during the last three decades. Many books were published even during his lifetime. Most of the writers on Shaw have been his close associates or people who had the opportunity to see him from close proximity. But, we have sufficient reason to wonder as to why most of the writers on Shaw during the last three decades have ignored this important aspect of his personality, while Shaw himself told volumes on his religious beliefs in different forms. Barely a year before his death (i.e. in 1949), i.e. at the age of ninety-three, Shaw published a small book called *Sixteen Self Sketches*, where he has made free and frank statements on his religious beliefs in the chapter, "What is my religious Faith?". And that is undeniably the most faithful record of Shaw's religious ideas.

Shaw has also expressed his religious ideas in the plays like *The Devil's Disciple* (1897), *Man and Superman* (1901), *Major Barbara* (1905), *The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet* (1909), *Androcles and the Lion* (1913), *Back to Methuselah* (1921), *Too True To Be Good* (1931), *On the Rocks* (1933), *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles* (1934); and also in the prefaces attached to all these plays. The tale, *The Adventurers*... contd. .......
of the Black Girl in Her Search for God (1932) also remains a good record of his religious ideas.

Yet, Shaw's religious convictions have not drawn the attention of the critics. The reason is that he was a "Christian" in his own way. The religiosity in him remained covered with an "irreligious" exterior. He criticised not only the Bible, but also Jesus Christ. According to him, Jesus Christ is a "son of God" as much as we are the sons of God. He considered Jesus Christ as a great humanist and as an ethical teacher with most of our strengths and weaknesses.

Despite of his revolting utterances on Christ and the Bible, Shaw's religious ideas, it seems, failed to evoke any critical attention. Archibald Henderson in his biographical book, Bernard Shaw—Playwright and Prophet has said nothing specific about Shaw's religious ideas except some casual remarks here and there about them but he could have done a lot in this regard, because what Boswell was to Dr. Johnson, Henderson was to Bernard Shaw.

St. John Ervine and Hesketh Pearson are the other two important British biographers of Bernard Shaw. These two writers have been able to maintain a large amount of objectivity perhaps because of their personal knowledge of the man. St. John Ervine's book, Bernard Shaw—His Life, Work and Friends (1956)
has been an invaluable book throwing sufficient light particularly on Shaw's early life and his socialist connections. That Shaw had to work under a 'hectic' socio-religious climate is also made very much clear by St. Irvine.

Hesketh Pearson's book, *Bernard Shaw: His Life and Personality*, was published as early as 1942, that is during the lifetime of Shaw. But, Mr. Pearson, even inspite of his full knowledge of Shaw's religious activities at a fully matured age did not pay sufficient attention to this particular issue in an exclusive way.

Janet Dunbar has given excellent account of the contemporary social climate of Ireland and of Shaw's marriage to Charlotte Payne-Townshend in the book, *Mrs. G.B.S.*, without paying any attention to the religious character of Shaw.


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Shaw speaks practically nothing about Shaw's religion.

Again, writer like Eric Bentley in his book, Bernard Shaw, spoke only about the dramatic aspects of the Shavian plays. An actor himself, Mr. Bentley had every justification to devote specifically to that subject. C.B. Purdom's book, A Guide to the Plays of Bernard Shaw, is a commentary on the plays of Shaw.

Dan Lawrence in his book, Bernard Shaw: Platform and Pulpit, tried to explore the political philosophy of Bernard Shaw. G.K. Chesterton wrote his book, Bernard Shaw, in the year 1909, when Shaw was only fifty three. That is why, he did not perhaps find any reasonable chance to probe into the religious side of one of his closest friends. Maurice Colbourne's book, The Real Bernard Shaw, has made specific probe into the theatrical side of the Shavian plays with the eyes of an actor. He also adds an informative chronology of the various activities of Shaw. He also writes on the production of the Shavian plays both at home and abroad. E.J. West has made a nice collection of what Shaw himself wrote on the different aspects of theatre. In this regard, Mr. West's book, Shaw on Theatre, is really praiseworthy. Similarly, Edwin Wilson's book, Shaw on Shakespeare, also throws sufficient light on the dramatic aspect of Shaw's personality. Both Raymond Mauder and Joe Mitchenson in their joint venture, The Theatrical Companion to Shaw, have made an attempt to present a pictorial record of the first performances of the plays of Bernard Shaw. They also remain silent contd...
on the religious aspect of Shaw.

Even a writer like J.M. Robertson, while making Joan of Arc the central topic of discussion in his book, _Mr. Shaw and the Maid_, said practically nothing on the topic. As actor himself, he looked at the play, _Saint Joan_, with the eye of an actor.

Mr. Robertson criticized Shaw for having taken liberty with history in relation to the characterization of Joan. According to him, Joan has been made an Amazon by Shaw, who attributed to her character all the military skills of high order. Robertson keeps himself busy only with such technical details.

Miss M.Morgan also has not said anything on the subject of Shaw's religion in her book, _The Shavian Playground_. Throughout the voluminous book she has not found time to come out of the 'playground'. Mr. Fred Mayne, another Shaw scholar, kept himself busy only with the wit and satire of Shaw in his book, _The Wit and Opinion of Bernard Shaw_. (London, Edward Arnold; 1967). Again, writer like M.Meisel also kept silent on the topic of Shaw's religion. His book, _Shaw and the Nineteenth Century Theatre_ is an exclusive study on the stage performances of the Shavian plays. E.Streuss kept himself busy only with the artistic and political ideas of Shaw. His book, _Bernard Shaw: Art and Socialism_ speaks nothing concrete about Shaw's religion. Same is the case with E.L.Watson's book, _A Shavian Guide to the Intelligent Woman._

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Mr. R. J. Kaufmann in his introductory article to *G. B. Shaw: A Collection of Critical Essays on Twentieth Century Views* (Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1965) has written nothing about the religious ideas of Shaw. He has made some general comments on Shaw, without being specific on any single point. In his words, "If an artist continues to compel the interest of such a jury of readers and critics, his greatness is assured. The work of George Bernard Shaw has been undergoing this trial by scrutiny in the last two decades; his reputation has been rendered firmer by this ordeal." (A-1)

Bertolt Brecht, one of the most important modern German playwrights, in his essay entitled *Ovation for Shaw* (A Collection of Critical Essays on G. B. Shaw, Ed. R. J. Kaufmann) kept himself confined only to the dramatic aspect of Shaw. According to R. J. Kaufmann, "Brecht shared Shaw's conviction that the theatre can be a palace of truth if the playwright knows enough about the two essentials which make drama vital: actual human circumstances and the craft of the theatre." (A-5)

According to Bertolt Brecht, Shaw is a terrorist. "It should be clear by now that Shaw is a terrorist. The Shawian terror is an unusual one, and he employs an unusual weapon—that of humor" (A-15). Of course, Brecht has written a simple paragraph on Shaw's theory of evolution. It reads thus: "I feel that a theory of evolution is central for him, one which, in his

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opinion, differs considerably and significantly from another theory of evolution of definitely lower calibre. At any rate, his faith that man is capable of infinite improvement plays an important role in his works. It will be clearly recognised as a sincere ovation for Shaw when I admit without blushing that I unconditionally subscribe to Shaw’s view although I am not thoroughly acquainted with either of the two theories mentioned above. The reason? A man with such keen intelligent and courageous eloquence simply deserve my complete confidence. This is all the more true as I have considered—always and in any situation—the forcefulness of an expression more important than its immediate applicability and a man of stature more important than the sphere of his activity.”(R-18)

Erik H. Erikson has written a nice article under the title, *Biographic G.B.S*(70) on George Bernard Shaw(20). Erikson is essentially a psychiatrist, and he does one good thing to see Shaw, the youngman, through the eyes of Shaw, the oldman. Erikson quotes Shaw: “In my childhood I exercised my literary genius by composing my own prayers........they were a literary performance for the entertainment and propitiation of the Almighty.”(R-23) Now Erikson states in his own words: “In line with his family’s irreverence in matters of religion, Shaw’s piety had to find and rely on the rockbottom of religiosity which, in him, early became a mixture of “intellectual integrity........synchronised with the

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dawning of moral passion. "At the same time it seems that Shaw was (in some unspecified way) a little devil of a child." (R-23-24; G.B. Shaw, ed. R. J. Kaufmann) He also states: "Thus, "the complete outsider" gradually became his kind of complete insider: "I was, he [G.B.] said, "outside society, outside politics, outside sport, outside the church" - but this "only within the limits of British barbarism......." (R-24) Erikson further quotes G. B. S. - "If I am to be entirely communicative on this subject, I must add that the mere reasonlessness which so soon rubs off was complicated by a deeper strangeness which has made me all my life a sojourner on this planet rather than a native of it. Whether it be that I was born made or a little too sane, my kingdom was not of this world; I was at home only in the realm of my imagination, and at my ease only with the mighty dead." (R-34)

Erikson concludes his article with the following saying of G. B. S. - "I had the intellectual habit; and by natural combination of critical faculty with literary resource needed only a clear comprehension of life in the light of an intelligible theory; in short, a religion, to set it in triumphant operation." Erikson makes his own assessment of the above saying: "Here the old Cynic has circumscribed in one sentence what the identity-formation of any human being must add up to. To translate this into terms more conducive to discussion in ego-psychological and psychosocial terms: Man, to take his place in society, must acquire a 'conflict-
free', habitual use of dominant faculty, to be elaborated in an occupation; limitless resource, a feedback, as it were, from the immediate exercise of this occupation, from the companionship it provides, and from its tradition; and finally, an intelligible theory of the process of life which the old atheist, eager to shock to the last, calls a religion." (P-25)

Through this article Erikson has tried to throw some light on the subject of Shaw's religion, but without being very specific on the topic.

Bruce R. Park writes an interesting article under the title, "A Note in the Critic's Eye: Bernard Shaw and Comedy" (G.B. Shaw—A Collection of Critical Essays, Ed. J.K. Kaufmann). Mr. Park in the said article refers to the unsympathetic treatment accorded to Shaw by many unsympathetic critics. For example, Ezra Pound said very disparagingly of Shaw that he is "fundamentally trivial", "a mere louse in comparison with Hardy, Joyce, or H. James." (P-43) Mr. Park also refers to what G.K. Chesterton said about Shaw: "Any Latin, or member of the living and permanent culture of Europe will sum up all I say in one word: that Shaw has never had piety" (P-43). In the words of Mr. Park "The context of Chesterton's remark shows that he meant that Shaw was not a part of the European literary tradition." (P-43) He also tries in the article to bring out the poet in Shaw. In this connection, he refers to what Edmund Wilson said in Bernard Shaw at Eighty: "There was a poet in Shaw, still partly suppressed;" Contd............
or at any rate terribly overtaxed by the round of political meetings, the functions of Vestryman and borough Councillor."

(R-44) Park goes to the extent of comparing Shaw with Plato. In this regard he refers to what G.K. Chesterton and Edmund Wilson said. According to Chesterton—"Bernard Shaw has much affinity to Plato—in his instinctive elevation of temper, his courageous pursuit of ideas as far as they will go, his civic idealism, and also, it must be confessed, in his dislike of poets and a touch of delicate inhumanity" (R-53) Edmund Wilson is stated to have put the comparison on literary grounds: "Bernard Shaw is a writer of the same kind as Plato....." (R-53)

Bruce R. Park, however, has not said anything specifically on the religion of Shaw.

Eric Bentley's book, Bernard Shaw: A Reconsideration, has already been referred to. Eric Bentley's article under the title, The Making of a Dramatist (1902-1903), is also silent on the religious aspect of Shaw. The article has been discussed under two heads—Structure and Emotional Substance. His exclusive attempt has been to project Shaw only as a dramatist, with a different mental makeup. Even when discussing plays like Man and Superman and Candida Bentley has kept himself busy only with the dramatic aspects without going into their philosophical import.
Norbert F. O'Donnell in his article, *The Conflict of Wills in Shaw's Tragicomedy* also has not said anything about Shaw's religious ideas. The "Conflict of Wills" among the different characters constitute the fabric of the whole discussion.

Louis Crompton's article, *Shaw's Challenge to Liberalism*, attempts a discussion on *Major Barbara*. "Major Barbara," together with *Man and Superman* and *John Bull's Other Island*, Crompton states, "forms part of a trilogy of philosophical comedies, all of which deal with the bankruptcy of nineteenth-century liberalism in the face of the brute facts of sex, nationalism, and poverty." *(P-88, G. B. Shaw, A collection of Critical Essays, Eds. R. J. K.)* "For his German edition, Shaw suggested that they be grouped and given the title *Comedies of Science and Religion*", Crompton quotes *(P-88)*. Mr. Crompton explains why Professor Casias (Major Barbara) calls Andrew Undershaft as "Dionysos". He very nicely shows what "Dionysianism" really stands for. In his words "It may be well at this point to ask what Shaw means by his idea of a "new" Dionysos. What has the ancient Greek God to do with modern society? The answer is to be found in the meaning Dionysiac religion had in the Greek world." *(P-93)* Referring to Bergson he states: "Thus Dionysianism is what Bergson calls a "dynamic religion" *(The Two Sources of Morality and Religion-1935)* with its

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basis not in conventional morality or institutionalism but in a mystical union with the divine will. It breaks down social barriers, taking the intellectual into University settlements in the slums, and pitting him actively against evil. It carries its devotees beyond the bounds of logic and reason." (P-93) Thus, Louis Crompton makes an exclusive study on the play, Major Barbara, without referring to Shaw's other plays on religion.

Mr. Robert Brustein's essay, Bernard Shaw: The Face Behind the Mask" (J. B. Shaw, Ed. R. J. K) talks a lot about Men and Superman and Heartbreak House. He too does not specifically say anything on Shaw's religion. In his words: "Shaw's messianic philosophy has alienated him from us; the myths of Shawianism neither console nor convince; his "scientific religion" has come to look neither like science nor religion; and his own illusions seem just as pronounced as the ones he sets out to expose—but there are still areas of Shaw's work which remain perfectly valid." (P-105) Regarding the comedies of Shaw Brustein remarks: "As a writer of high comedy, Shaw has no peers among modern dramatists; but his ambitions are larger; and he lacks, as a rebel artist, the stature of the men he admired and wished to join. If Strindberg thought he failed to be the man he longed to be, then Shaw's failure is the opposite: pursuing his ideal role, he failed to face the man he actually was. Yet, we measure this failure only by the highest standards, and it is because of his

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genius mind and talents that these standards continue to be applied to his art." (A-118)

Prof. G. Wilson Knight starts his essay under the title *Shaw's Integral Theatre* in the given words: "Bernard Shaw combines the officers of critic, humorist and visionary. His thinking may be related economically to Marx, metaphysically to Goethe and Lamarck, and dramatically to Wagner, Ibsen and Nietzsche. Nietzsche's works he regards as the Bible of the modern consciousness" (G. B. Shaw: A Collection of Essays, Ed. R. J. K; A-119)

Prof. Knight also states: "Shaw has used Spiritualism to fill out his evolutionary statement, and we can always ourselves use it, should we so choose, to make sense of Superman claims. They, and Ibsen's "third empire" too, may be unrealizable in this dimension, and point to another. Both processes are rational, more, they converge. For, as Shaw says in his Preface ("The Artist-Prophecy") "we aspire to a world of prophets and sibyls. His aim is never for long limited to the religious or occult. His desire is to blend inspiration with sociology, politics and, above all, with great men. That is why he compares himself to Shakespeare, to seek as to his true message, which exists strongly within the unfolding humanism of Renaissance drama." (A-125)

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Miss Margery M. Morgan has written an impressive article, exclusively centering around the play, *Back to Methuselah*, under the title "*Back to Methuselah: The Post and the City.*" Miss Morgan's article throws sufficient light on the play on which we have made a separate study in a succeeding chapter. At the beginning of the essay Miss Morgan states: "None of Shaw's plays has been more strongly disliked than *Back to Methuselah*. On the most superficial acquaintance it invites the charges of untheatricality, verbal incontinence and incoherence of form; its vision is found repellent; and the teasing, if naive, question of whether Shaw means what he says, when he is evidently talking nonsense, is more sharply provoked than by any of his other works." (P-130, C.R. Shaw, Ed, RJK)

Louis L. Marts has discussed the play, *Saint Joan*, in his essay under the title, *The Saint as tragic Hero*. We have presented a separate study on the play. T. R. Hess in his essay, *The Shawian Machine*, (occurring in RJK's Collection), remains silent on the issue of Shaw's religion.

The most important essay is Irving Fiske's *Bernard Shaw and William Fiske*, occurring in R.J. Kaufmann's collection. Fiske attempts to find out the points of similarities between

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William Blake and Bernard Shaw. Even Shaw himself appreciated the essay in the given words: "Hundreds of articles have been written about me and forgotten. This is the one I would have published and circulated as widely as if I had written it myself." (Quoted from R. J. K.'s Collection of Critical Essays on Shaw, Introduction, p. 9)

According to Fiske, both Shaw and Blake hold almost identical views regarding religion. "Bernard Shaw, in the Preface to the volume of his plays containing The Devil's Disciple, acknowledges his indebtedness to William Blake for the philosophical basis of that play in these words: "Let those who have praised my originality in conceiving Dick Duffee's strange religion read Blake's Marriage of Heaven and Hell and I shall be fortunate if they do not rail at me for a plagiarist." (p. 170)

In his Preface to Man and Superman, Shaw names Blake, together with Bunyan, Hogarth and Turner—"(these four apart and above all the English classics)"—as prominent among those "whose peculiar sense of the world I recognise as more or less akin to my own." (p. 170)

Fiske also adds—"Blake, elsewhere, is to Shaw the most religious of our great poets. "The clue to the nature of the kinship that he feels with Blake is provided, it is true, by the

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fact that Shaw appraises both Blake and himself as dealing with
men and the world from a point of view essentially religious." (P-170)

"Art has never been great", says Shaw, "when it is not
providing an iconography for a live religion. "To Shaw, to be an
"iconographer of the religion of my time, and thus fulfill my
natural function as an artist." (P-170)

According to both Blake and Shaw religion is not very
different from politics, Fiske states. According to Blake, "Are
not Religion & Politics The Same Thing?" (P-173) Again to Shaw "A
vocation for politics is essentially a religious vocation.
"(P-173) For both Blake and Shaw Jesus Christ is essentially an
artist. "Shaw alludes to Christ as "an artist and a Bohemian in
his manner of life"; and "Jesus & his Disciple were all artists,
"says Blake." (P-173)

Writing about the awesomeness of the religious beliefs
of Blake and Shaw Fiske states— "Both are particularly incessant by
the corruption of the substance of religion into its forms and
shadows. "Christ's Crucifix shall be made an excuse for executing
Criminals," says Blake, and Shaw: "Christianity means nothing to
the masses but a sensational public execution which is made an
excuse for other executions." Abstruse theological mysticism

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is to Shaw merely "artificial intellectual mystification," but to Blake "the dismal shade of mystery," "the Ashes of Mystery," "and" Mystery Accused." (P-176)

"The key to the creative point of view shared by Shaw and Blake is to be found in their insistence on the fundamental unity and validity of all human drives and human appetites. From this point of view, the profoundest and most significant of man's appetites is his appetite for religion-and the central one lying behind all his activities. "There is only one religion, though there are a hundred versions of it," Shaw writes. "All religions are one," says Blake, and "have one source," which he calls "the poetic genius." "Art, science, and religion," says Shaw, "are really identical and inseparable in their foundations." "The Thing I have most at heart," Blake affirms, "is the Interest of True Religion & Science." But while all religions are true enough in origin and inspiration, all established religions, to both, are otherwise greatly in error.

"Our religion," Shaw says, is "greatly wrong," and: "At present there is not a simple credible established religion in the world. "Formal religion is to Blake" a pretense of religion to destroy Religion," of which he says

Jesus died because he strove Against the current of the wheel; its Name Is Caeaphum. .............

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The most formidable obstructions of man's religious impulse, to Blake and Shaw, are the self-negating concepts invented by man himself as substitute for a genuinely satisfying religion. Among such substitutes are nature-worship, morality, humility, and the idea of man's insignificance in the universe. "Where man is not, nature is barren," Blake maintains. *(P-174)*

Regarding the conception of Hell also both Blake and Shaw are stated to have held similar opinions. "Hell, in short? says his (Shaw's) *Man and Superman*, "is a place where you have nothing to do but amuse yourself." "Hell," says Blake, "is the being shut up in the possession of corporeal desires which shortly weary the man." *(P-175)*

Regarding the concept of sin also both Blake and Shaw are stated to have held similar views—"Man's only real original sin, to Blake and Shaw, is his subjection to the conception of sin itself, which fills his mind and diverts it from the genuine issues. Man forgets that there was in the Garden of Eden not only the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, to eat of which was death; but also the tree of life, of which he was not forbidden to eat, but did not taste." "The Original Sin", Shaw says, "was not the eating of the forbidden fruit, but the consciousness of sin which the fruit produced." The concept of sin Blake describes as one of Satan's own delusions. "Satan thinks that Sin is

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displeasing God," says Blake, "he ought to know that Nothing is displeasing to God but Unbelief & Eating of the Tree of knowledge, of Good & Evil."(A-177)

Irving Fiske also states—"A free exchange of ideas is therefore, to Shaw and Blake alike, a prime requirement of men's welfare, no matter how dangerous or appalling those ideas may at first appear. "The counsel men agree with in vain; it is only the echo of their own voices," Shaw's Jesus replies to Pilate. "But he who does not fear you and shews you the other said is a pearl of the greatest price." Freedom of expression Blake regards not merely a human right, but a divine necessity." As the breath of the Almighty such are the words of men to men", he writes.(A-177-178)

This essay on the similarities between Shaw and Blake throw sufficient light on the religious ideas of Shaw.

Thus, very little has been written on the subject of Shaw's religion. Only a handful of writers have been seriously concerned with this problem. But, what they have written on the subject are more a description of what they have seen or heard personally rather than an exhaustive study on the topic. Authors like R.J. Minney, Ivor Brown, H.C. Duffin, Allen Chappelow, Richard M. Griffin, Stanley Weintraub, Leon Hugo, and C.R.M. Joel have tried to throw some

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light on the subject. Among the Indian writers S.C. Sengupta's name is worth mentioning. Sengupta in his book, *The Art of Bernard Shaw*, states: "Shaw's religion has been oriented by his economics; like Tolstoy he has often spoken of Christ and meant Marx. But he does not identify economics with religion; only he thinks that sound economics is a necessary preliminary to sound metaphysics. . . . So long as there is no socialism with adequate subsistence for all, there can be no talk of real religion. Till then religion will act only as an auxiliary to the police (The Shaving-up of Blanco Posnet) or as a parasite on irreligion; it will have to take money from dealers in Whisky and explosives (Major Barbara)." (A-32-33)

Though Shaw looks upon sound economics as a necessary preliminary to sound religion, his religion is more biological than economic. . . . . . . . . .

Mr. Leon Hugo instead of writing anything on the subject simply quotes in his book, *Bernard Shaw—Playwright and Preacher*, what Shaw himself stated about his religious beliefs: "I am not an ordinary playwright in general practice. I am a specialist in immoral and heretical plays. My reputation has been gained by my persistent struggle to force the

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public to reconsider its morals. In particular, I regard such current morality as to economic and sexual relations as disastrously wrong; and I regard certain doctrines of the Christian religion as understood in England to-day with abhorrence. I write plays with the deliberate object of converting the nation to my opinions in these matters.  \textsuperscript{2}

What is most interesting is that Professor Hugo has not said anything of his own on the topic of Shaw's religion.

Richard K. Ohmara, another Shaw scholar, is primarily interested in the style of Shaw. In his book, \textit{Shaw: The Style and the Man}, he has clearly said- "My treatment of Shaw comprises, first, an effort to specify the modes of expression he finds most congenial in his non-dramatic prose and to judge their semantic import; second, a discussion of his habitual patterns of thought and feeling; and third, a search for lines of connection between style on the one hand and thought or feeling on the other." \textsuperscript{3} But Mr. Ohmara has also written a few lines on the religious character of Shaw, and most of what he has written by him are simply quoted from the different texts of Shaw.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{2} Hugo, L.; \textit{Aesthetics and Ethics}, R-75, Methuen & Co., Ltd., London, 1971.
\item \textsuperscript{3} Ohmara, R. M.; \textit{Introduction}, P. xi-xii.
\end{itemize}
The chapter entitled, *The Universe as Humanist*, is a useful commentary on the religious ideas of Shaw. (P-199-127) He observes: “Shaw’s grudge against non-creative evolution is a reaction to its very partial account of progress, and to its enmity towards all religions, Shavian as well as conventional. “Religion” is one of those words that he uses in two opposite senses: traditional religion is a hodgepodge of fairy tales that the nineteenth century did well to purge itself of; but in doing so it blinded itself to genuine religion, which human existence must feed on. ... For Shaw, art is essentially religious activity, the very greatest of artists (Michelangelo, Beethoven, Goethe) build their work on a metaphysic just as surely as Bergson does. They move in a region where science cannot of its own force enter, the region of the Holy Ghost, whose apostle Shaw repeatedly declares himself to be.”

Mr. Ohmann continues: “A much younger Shaw, preoccupied with problems of morality, had already hit on the ideas: the “pure law of thought (Quintessence of Ibsenism, 186), he said, is the law of Godhead, which only compromises temporarily with stupidity by relying on the impure law of commandments. Shaw is too much oriented towards human beings and their shifting needs to

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stake his total commitment on any fixed morality or any philosophical system. Men, not ideas, are the important thing, since ideas are merely the artifacts of mind, which is the constantly improving servant of living men." ⁵

Mr. Ohmann also adds: "But if Shaw's anthropocentric doctrine has in it some pockets of eccentricity, and if it falls short of scientific or philosophic rigor, it is at least good humanism, and he is a good humanist. His socialism springs from humane attitudes: distaste for exploitation of one man by another, concern for the suffering of the poor and, more important, for the cramping of the human spirit by social limitations; impatience with the inefficient floundering of a chance-ridden society; aspiration towards improvement of the breed. And when he espouses antihumanistic policies, such as extermination of the incorrigible criminal and sterilization of the yahoo, he does so out of a larger humanism that prefers the good of the whole race to the unlimited licence of individuals." ⁶

Mr. Ohmann has not said more than this. He has not gone deeper into the subject.

Ivor Brown in his book, Shaw in his Time, (Nelson, 1965) has, of course, written a full chapter (18 pages) on the religious

⁵. Ibid. P-125.
⁶. Ibid. P-126.
beliefs of Shaw. In the first chapter under the title, *Shaw’s Ireland*, Mr. Brown has spoken about the religious climate of Ireland where Shaw was born and brought up till the time of his departure for London. In this chapter he has stated: "The word Protestant acquired a negative sense in Ireland. It primarily meant 'not a Roman'. What was believed was much less important than what was disbelieved, especially with regard to the great enemy, Rome. To be 'Prot' was a social safeguard; it did not necessitate piety and regular church-going. The father of GBS was no pillar of the church. His son found him humane and generous as well as alcoholic. Religion was not a subject for hushed and solemn mention in the home. Shaw recorded in the eighth of his Self-Sketches his opinions that, as far as the Protestant gentry were concerned, Ireland was the most irreligious country in the world."

Mr. Ivor Brown in the chapter entitled, *Things Believed*, starts with a quotation from the chapter called 'Religious Summary' of Everybody's Political What's What (1944), - "I am religious enough to have spent a great part of my life trying to clean up the heavily barnacled creeds and make them credible, believing, as I do, that society cannot be held together without religion."  

8. Ch. Things believed, P-165.
Mr. Bimm states in his own language: "Here certainly is not the confession of an atheist. During his early years in London he had stood on atheist platforms, but he found many of the unbelievers to be as rigidly fundamentalist as the Bible Christians. He disappointed the hard-shell devotees of secularism. Merely to throw the Bible out of the window he found as foolish an exercise as insisting that every word of it was divinely inspired and that of the old Testament's tribal Jehovah was a universal father in heaven, when asked about his creed he said that atheism was an empty reply since sensible folk want to know what people do believe and not what they do not believe. He disliked negations. A philosophy of life must have its affirmations with appropriate action to make faith effective. There should be no dogma without praxis, the word made into the deed. He moved on to his ideas of the Life Force, an immanent vitalism of the spirit. Materialism he rejected. His faith in Creative Evolution, through which the Life Force promoted change through choice, could fairly be called a religion."

Mr. Brown also makes a brief analysis of the play, *Antigone and the Lion*, on which we have made a separate study in a succeeding chapter. In the last chapter, *Achievement*, Mr. Brown sums up, saying, "In the Victorian and Edwardian home

be acted as a vacuum-cleaner, sucking up and expelling all the clutter and dust of stale traditions. He was a window-opener and a window-cleaner; he tore down lace curtains and exposed a new vista of the social scene. He achieved a tremendous feat of ventilation. 10

Brown does not go further. He has said nothing about the other important plays of Shaw on the same topic. Anyway, his treatment of the subject is essentially valid, but he does not go far enough; he has not made any full-length and systematic study of the subject in reference to his plays.

Mr. Allan Chappelow also has not said anything original on the subject. He has simply quoted what one of his friends said on Shaw in this regard. Mr. Chappelow has quoted what Rev. R. J. Davie, Rector of Ayot St. Lawrence, said "Shaw was a Christian in his own special way—isn't it? He believed in Christianity, of a sort, but not in Christanity." 11

Mr. Chappelow has done one good thing. Instead of making a cursory remark on the subject he has elicited the opinions of the local people, who had the opportunity to know about Shaw's private life better.


presents a vivid description of Shaw's study room at Ayot St. Lawrence. But he has not said anything beyond this on the subject, showing more interest in the acting diaries of the plays of Shaw.

Both M.C. Duffin and C.E.N. Joad also did not want to go deeper into the subject. The same is the case with Mr. S. Pole, another Shaw scholar.

(II)

In the official and doctrinaire sense of the term 'Christian' Shaw cannot be called a Christian. There is a great deal of difference between the public image of Shaw and the private Shaw. If the public Shaw was anti-religious, the private Shaw was devoutly religious. In almost all his works he has attacked the traditional idea of religion and God. Everywhere he developed his own idea concerning religion and God. In the public life he denounced the church, but in private life he regularly went to church, in most cases alone. Everyday he read the Bible which was neatly kept on his study table. There was another pocket Bible which he used to read when he was in journey or when he was staying outside Ayot St. Lawrence. He called it "My travelling Bible."
Shaw hates Christianity, but adores Jesus Christ. According to him, Christianity which is primarily founded on the explanations of St. Paul, has nothing to do with Jesus Christ. He believes in the Christianity of Jesus Christ, and not in the Christianity of St. Paul, who made Christianity, he states, corrupt and depraved. Shaw treats Jesus Christ not as God himself but as a great humanist and as a perfect man or as a superman. He treated the Bible as a book of literature without any reverential awe. He found fault with many of the writings of the New Testament stories. With the view of an objective and purely scientific critic he looked at the structural and thematic contents of the Bible. Despite all these criticisms Shaw was a churchgoer and a devout reader of the Bible. Interestingly, still, he wanted to get himself buried in the church of Dublin as we have noted at the beginning of this introduction.

His utterances against Christianity and Priesthood are extremely venomous. Such utterances are aimed against our ordinary religious and moral sentiments. None of us want to displace and disregard our century-old religious and moral beliefs under any conditions. Ordinary popular sentiments are often like sub-psychology. In both the cases sentiments are more important than reason. Even if we do find some inconsistency in our moral code we just close our eyes and pass on with a reverential awe. Such sentiments lead to fanaticism, obscuration.
and dogmatism. Shaw was powerful enough to outstep and overpower such negative pulls of our ordinary religious sentiments. A dare-devil, he did not fear to break down our century-old religious beliefs and idols. He frankly, freely, and fearlessly questioned every defective and inconsistent article of Christianity. In this regard, we can call him a religious iconoclast. His very approach was rebellious. This rebelliousness has earned him the appellations like "anti-religious", "heretic", "atheist" etc. Religion, according to Shaw, should permeate every aspect of man's life. Religion is said to be the life-blood of human civilization. He clearly stated: "For I had always known that civilization needs a religion as a matter of life or death." In other words, religion was the most vital subject for him. In the play, Major Barbara, Shaw expressly declared: "It (religion) is the only one that capable people really care for."  

Shaw wanted religion to operate on every level—personal, social, governmental and state. In the preface to the play, Androcles and the Lion, he stated: "Government is impossible without a religion."  

2. Preface to Back to Methuselah, Ch. My Own Part in the Matter, P-545  
4. Preface to Androcles and the Lion, Ch. Christianity and the Empire, A-CXVII (LOBOMANIS)  

Contd...
The superficial reader will discard Shaw's beliefs as a "libertine's philosophy". Even in his own time he was repudiated as an immoral person. Many of his contemporary opponents called him a "rascal". By and large, this was the attitude held by the ordinary people towards him.

Shaw had no faith in the established form of religion. In almost all his plays and also in his letters and famous speeches he stood against the organised form of Christianity tooth and nail. But, his struggle against the organised form of Christianity was not directed towards the demolition of religion but towards its reformation, or in the language of Shaw himself "redisillusion."

In every individual play Shaw looks at religion from a different angle. It is mainly because for Shaw religion cannot have a completely isolated existence untouched by any worldly consideration. If religion does not take the material considerations of life into account it becomes anti-life.

In the play, Major Barbara, Shaw looks at religion in the light of man's economic situation. A healthy economic environment is said to be the precondition of a healthy religion. The latter cannot be meaningful in complete defiance of the former. In the play poverty is said to be the worst of all the crimes.

Costd........
In Man and Superman Shaw's attitude to religion is mainly evolutionistic and biological in nature. Religion has been looked at in the same manner also in the play, Back to Methuselah. In both the plays Shaw the evolutionist and Shaw the religionist are rolled into one. Religion must make man fully aware of himself and of his part in fathering the will of the Life-Force.

Saint Joan is an attack on the Church and the Priestly class. Shaw denies the intermediary status of the Church and the divine affiliation of the priestly community. The play is also a crusade against the dirty alliance that does exist between the church and the political powers. What is funny, the church serves as the handmaiden of the political powers.

In the play, Androcles and the Lion, Shaw remains an objective critic of the Bible. He daringly repudiates many of the Biblical explanations mainly concerning the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Again, in the plays like Shawing up of Blanco Posnet and The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles, Shaw once again places the emphasis on the question of cosmic purpose, which has to be fulfilled through man. In the play, The Devil's Disciple, Shaw opts for a self-acting hero, approximating the range of the

Contd......
Superman. The self-acting hero of Shaw invariably does the right thing. He is above emotions and ordinary human instincts.

Thus, in almost all the plays and in the Prefaces (some of which are later added to the plays) he proceeds to convey as to what he personally believes. Of course, it should not be understood that Shaw wanted to establish a new religious philosophy absolutely of his own. Shaw simply wanted to free the true spirit of religion from the morass of conventions, romances, and dogmas. His attempt was to give a scientific explanation of the vitals of religion. In the preface to the play, Back to Methuselah, he clearly declares—"In short there is no question of a new religion, but rather of redistilling the eternal spirit of religion, and thus extricating it from the sludge residue of temporalities and legends that are making belief impossible, though they are the stock-in-trade of all the churches and all the Schools."5

Such views might seem as contradictions to his usual religious convictions. But, such views should not be interpreted as mere contradictions. Our assessment will be correct if we interpret them as the marks of his catholicity.

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5. Preface to Back to Methuselah, Ch. The Homoeopathic Reaction Against Darwinism, P-538 (Complete Prefaces: Hemlyn)
Shaw was not exclusively wedded to any particular sect of Christianity. He appreciated the better part of every sect. In this regard, he was highly objective.

In the essay entitled "What is my religious Faith" (Sixteen Self Sketches) Shaw starts: "I am by infant baptism a member of the Protestant Episcopal Church of Ireland; but I cannot believe more than two tenets of its creed, and these (the communion of Saints and the Life Everlasting) only in an entirely unconditional sense, nor in its Thirty-nine Articles, which, compiled for the sake of political peace and quietness to face both ways between Roman Catholicism and Puritanism, are too self-contradictory to be accepted by anyone capable of consecutive thinking."  

Religion, according to Shaw, does not imply faith. It is understanding: "Understanding and not faith is what the world most needs."  

Shaw asks himself: "If you are not a Protestant Churchman, what / you?" Answering his own question he says: "At first I used to reply that I was an atheist. But this was no answer, for what sensible people need to know is what people believe, not what they do not believe." The above statement seems to be

6. From "What is my religious Faith" (Sixteen Self Sketches)  
7. Ibid  
8. Ibid Contd. ...........
contradictory. But, Shaw explains what atheism really meant in his time. "Belief in God in his time meant belief in the old tribal idol called Jehovah," I preferred to call myself an atheist," writes Shaw, "because belief in God then meant belief in the old tribal idol called Jehovah, and I would not, by calling myself an agnostic, pretend that I did not know whether it existed or not." He also adds: "I still, when I am dealing with old fashioned Fundamentalists, tell them that as I do not believe in this idol of theirs they may as well write me off as for their purpose, I am an atheist." 10

When Shaw's name was proposed as the successor to G. W. Poole, the then President of the National Society, his address to the Society proved so shocking to the members, that the proposal had to be finally abandoned. Shaw himself said: "My demonstration that the Trinity is not an arithmetical impossibility, but the Spirit in one Person, that the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is an installment of the sacred truth that all conceptions are immaculate; that the Roman Catholic worship of the Madonna is in effect a needed addition of the Mother to the Father in the Godhead, and that any clever Jesuit could convert an average Secularist to Roman Catholicism, from the narrow in their bosom." 11

10. Ibid
11. Ibid
Shaw refers to the case of Charles Watt, an able Secularist leader, who called himself neither Atheist nor Agnostic, but Rationalist. Although this implies a stronger and safer position, the "profession of Rationalism implies the belief that reason is not only method, but motive, and I was too critical a reasoner to make this mistake." 12 I knew that Robespierre, when he setup only a machinery of thought, and had to agree with Voltaire that if there were no God it would be necessary to invent one. 13

Shaw further reinforces his idea: "As I used to put it prosaically, reason can discover for you the best way-out of a tram, underground train or taxi-to get from Piccadilly Circus to Putney, but cannot explain why you should want to go to Putney instead of staying in Piccadilly." 14 Shaw further adds: "Rationalism was also associated with Materialism; and I was and still am a Vitalist to whom vitality, though the hardest of hard facts, is a complete mystery. I have to deal constantly in reason and with matter, but I am neither a Rationalist nor a Materialist." 15

He calls himself an evolutionist. In his language:

"At least, it may be said, I might have called myself an Evolutionist." 16 But as we have stated in the 6th chapter (The Creative Evolutionist) Shaw differed a lot from the Darwinian breed.

Darwin is said to have banished mind from the universe. Shaw calls himself a creative evolutionist.

Does God come to religion of Bernard Shaw? No final statement can be made on the question of God, the Almighty. Often the invention of God becomes a practical necessity. "The churches have to postulate a God Almighty who, obviously, is either not Almighty or not benevolent; for the world is crowded with evil as much as with good to such an extent that many of its ablest thinkers, from Ecclesiastes to Shakespeare, have been Pessimists; and the optimists have had to postulate a devil as well as God."17 This Almighty Power is called Elan Vitale by Bergson, Kant called it Categorical Imperative, Shakespeare called it Divinity, and Shaw calls it Life-Force or the Evolutionary Appetite. But there is a basic difference between Shaw's Life-Force and the other Gods. Shaw clearly states: "Thus much of the difference between the crudest Evangelism and Creative Evolution is found in administrative practice to be imaginary. Certainly the Bible Gods, of whom there are at least five, are all held on paper to be almighty, infallible, omnipotent and omniscient, whereas Life-Force, however benevolent, proceeds by trial and error and creates the problem of evil by its unsuccessful experiments and its mistakes."18

As a believer in Life-Force, Shaw does not find any

17, Ibid
18, Ibid
meaning in the infallibility of God. "The infallibility of God is a fiction", writes Shaw, "that may be as necessary Politically as the infallibility of the Pope or of the Judicial Committee of the House of Lords, but it is a fiction all the same." 19

Shaw does not want to impose forcibly his ideas on others. Nor does he want to convert peoples of other creed on to his side. He refers to the warning of Jesus Christ: "If we try to clear established religions of their weeds we may pull up the wheat as well and leave the husbandman without any religion." 20 A deeply religious-minded man, Shaw has been misunderstood only because of his irreligious exterior. He was a devotee of Jesus Christ, and not a blind Christian. We have elaborately discussed the matter mainly in the Fourth Chapter.

Even in his personal and domestic life Shaw exemplified his religious bent of mind. He had a deep devotion to the Bible, the whole of which was at his finger's end. He was a regular visitor to the church. That was partly owing to his devotional bent of mind, and partly owing to his aesthetic taste. Mr. Ninney writes "I discovered that he used to go into the church quite often in the evenings just to sit there."

20. Ibid
I wondered what he thought about, for he used to pretend that he did not believe in God. But what would he be doing in a church if he had no religion? 21

In an article entitled "On Going to Church" contributed to The Savoy magazine (January, 1898), Shaw wrote "... But then I go to Church. If you should chance to see, in a country churchyard, a bicycle leaning against a tombstone, you are not unlikely to find me inside the Church if it is old enough or new enough to be fit for its purpose. There I find rest without languor and recreation without excitement, both of a quality unknown to the traveller who turns from the village Church to the village inn and seeks to renew himself with shandygaff." 22

The above statement vindicates what we have already said concerning the Church-Visit of Shaw. He did not visit the Church for any religious purpose alone. He loved the serenity that reigns inside and outside the church.

Dr. William Maxwell, the managing Director of the famous printing house, R & R Clark, of Edinburgh, printed almost all the works of Shaw in between 1898 and 1950, and in this connection he came in close contact with him, whom he declared

22. From The Savoy (Magazine), January, 1898.
to be a sincerely religious man with a firm faith in God and in the vitality of human soul. To support his statement, Dr. Maxwell points to the dialogue between Franklyn Barnabas and Conrad Barnabas in *Back to Methuselah*, where there is a forceful attempt to point out that the creation of man is not necessarily the last word of God. It is subject to further modification.

This is, however, not a Biblical belief. But Shaw was all along conscious of this divine plan and programme aiming at absolute perfection. Religion, Shaw believes, would make men conscious of this divine purpose. The church has to execute this noble purpose of religion. So, the primary duty of the church is to develop free thought and a sense of catholicity. In *Everybody's Political What is What* Shaw clearly declares—"Every church should be a church of All Saints, and every cathedral a place for pure contemplation by the greatest minds of all races, creeds and colours." 23

Shaw almost always wanted to reserve his religious opinions, treating them as purely private, not to be exhibited to the public. He was never dogmatic even in his own religious opinions. He once declared—"I would be a catholic if they would accept a free-thinker." Shaw makes this point clear in the preface to

Saint Joan in the chapter "Catholicism Not Yet Catholic Enough."

There is a great deal of difference between the public image and the private image of Bernard Shaw. Every researcher has to take this fact into account. Shaw was also aware of this difference himself. Once T.E. Lawrence complained to him, "Your public image is not even a caricature of you. It does not resemble you at all." To this question Shaw answered, "I know, I manufactured it myself." Similarly, once the press asked him what he thought of G.B.S; and to this question Shaw's answer was: "The most fictitious character I have ever created."

Thus, any superficial statement made on Shaw would be an injustice to him. For an objective assessment of his personal convictions we must not lose sight of his behind-the-screen activities. Shaw also admitted this himself. "Until you know me from behind the scenes", Shaw wrote to his biographer, Archibald Henderson, "you may be my dope, but not my biographer."

Interestingly enough, the Manchester 'Daily Dispatch' informed its readers on the 23rd October, 1904—" G.B.S., overhauls the ten commandments. " More interestingly still, on the same day Bishop James E.C.Welldon ( 1854-1937 ), the newly appointed Dean of Manchester also levelled a similar charge against him. Addressing a local meeting of the British and Foreign Bible Society the Bishop said—" We don't want men of letters coming down to tell us the commandments are of no use. Let that man of..."

25. Ibid
27. From Collected Letters (1898-1910);
28. Ibid.
letters (Shaw) go home and learn the rudiments of morals and religion, and let him never come to Manchester again. "This violent allegation was made against Shaw when he addressed the Ancoats Brotherhood, founded in Manchester in 1877, on 21st October, 1906. Hence the opposition from the Bishop on the third day, Shaw gave a fitting reply on the statement of the Bishop—"It is true that I do not profess myself a Christian; yet though, as I gather, the Bishop does not object to me on that account, but because I am a clever man from London. I think even a clever man, no matter where he comes from, should be allowed to agree with Christ occasionally without being denounced for it by the Bishop. If I had preached the higher criticism, or even passive resistance, I could understand the Bishop's indignation; but why should he quarrel with me for preaching the Gospel ?....

I am a Socialist because I have learnt from the history of Manchester and other places that freedom without law is impossible; ....... that men without religion have no courage. ....... Why he (Bishop James L.C. Welldon) himself, like Christ, systematically breaks the fourth."

(III)

The rebellious nature of his philosophy has its roots partly in his own family life, partly in the socio-economic background of the contemporary world, and partly in the general

29. Quoted from— What is my religious Faith?
   (Sixteen Self-Sketches)
religious revolts of the 19th century. Another most important influencing factor, which stands by itself, is the phenomenal and spectacular progress of science and technology in the late 19th Century.

Shaw from his very infancy developed a rebellious and non-conforming attitude towards Christianity. In this case, his mother's influence was significant. His mother, Mrs. Carr Shaw, was a protestant, though she always declared herself to be an atheist. Mrs. Lucinda Elizabeth Shaw was a disillusioned lady. She had very little emotional relation with her tippling husband, and also with the children fathered by him. St. John Ervine gives a vivid account: "It (the house) was ruled by a disillusioned young woman who had neither taste nor talent for domesticity, and was married to a furtive drunkard whom she despised; a 'thorough other' house, as the Irish say, where the meals were erratic and ill-cooked and monotonous, and the children were brought-up in an untidy kitchen by slatternly servants. They had a nurse, even a peripatetic governess, Miss. Caroline Hill, a distressed gentlewoman who was paid by the hour; education by piecework. Those were the days when servants were overworked and underpaid. The Shaw paid them 6 s a year, three shillings a week, plus bed and board. The pay was small, but the services rendered for it were not worth their reward." 30

In a word, the Shaw household was a completely disorganised one. In the Preface to London Music, 1888-1889, Bernard Shaw wrote: "I should say she (Mrs. Lucinda Elizabeth) was the worst mother conceivable. . . . we children were abandoned entirely to servants who. . . were utterly unfit to be trusted with the charge of three cats, much less three children. I had my meals in the kitchen, mostly of stewed beef, which I loathed, badly cooked potatoes, sound or diseased as the case might be, and much too much tea out of brown delft teapots left to "draw" on the hob until it was pure tannin."31

By the time Shaw was ten, the habit of going to the church was totally abandoned in the family. Instead, there occurred frank discussion on the topics of sectarian dissension and on the ineffectiveness of Christian faith itself.

The house of the Shaws was an assemblage of different singers of different sects. Music was above all sorts of sectarian differences. In this connection, Shaw wrote in T.P.O.(Connor's weekly paper, N.A.[mainly about people]) for September 17, 1898:

My first doubt as to whether God could really be a good Protestant was suggested by the fact that the best voices available for the combination with my mother's in the works of the great composers had been unaccountably vouchsafed to Roman Catholics. Even the divine gentility was presently called in question, for

31. Quoted from Bernard Shaw-His Life, Work and Friends, Irvine, J7

some of these vocalists were undeniably shopkeepers. If the best
tenor, undeniably a Catholic, was at least an accountant, the buffo
was a frank stationer. There was no help for it: if any mother
was to do anything but sing ballads in drawing-rooms, she had to
associate herself on an entirely unsectarian footing with people
like artistic gifts without the smallest reference to creed or
class. She must actually permit herself to be approached by Roman
Catholic priests, and at their invitation to enter that house of
Belial, the Roman Catholic chapel, and sing the masses of Mozart
there. If religion is that which binds men to one another, and
irreligion that which sunders, ............ I found the religion
of my country in its musical genius, and its irreligion in its
churches, drawing-rooms."

During Shaw's childhood the sectarian dissensions in
Dublin were more or less bitter. One sect hardly visited the
house of the other sect. Not to speak of family relations, there
was hardly any social relations between the sects. Although, many
confirmed Papists attended the musical parties in the house of
Mrs. Shaw, the latter did not pay any return or courtesy visit to
them. Shaw during his childhood never got the chance of visiting
any Catholic house. Of course, their visits to their Roman Catho-
lic nurse were exceptions.

Shaw recorded in the eighth of his self-sketches his
opinion that, as far as the Protestant gentry were concerned,

Contd. ....
Ireland was the most irreligious country in the world.

Shaw himself was duly christened but his appointed godfather was drunk at the appointed hour and did not appear, so the Sexton acted as understudy. Thus, oddly introduced to the protestant church he was never confirmed in it. He believed that his parents also remained in that state of no grace. Irish Protestantism, he wrote, 'was not a religion, but a side in political faction, a class prejudice, a conviction that Roman Catholics are socially inferior persons who will go to hell when they die and leave Heaven in the exclusive possession of Protestant ladies and gentlemen. He noticed that the Protestant clergy did not want any poor parishioners of the working class in their congregations; poverty and Papism went together and both were deemed disreputable.'

As Shaw’s father, Mr. George Carr Shaw, was a parasitic sort of man he could not dominate the family and therefore, distinctly leave any impress on the highly sensitive and receptive mind of young Bernard Shaw. Yet, Shaw the humorist owes a lot to his father’s inherent giggling nature. As the entire family had to rely on the incomes of Mrs. Shaw, George Carr Shaw became just a persona non grata in every respect. His milling business brought very little to the household. In such a state of affairs Mrs. Shaw became the vital influencing factor in the

household. The rebellious nature of his mother pulled him on
to her side.

George Vandaleur Lee, Mrs. Shaw's teacher in music,'
admitted young Bernard to a catholic school. But, before the
expiry of a period of hardly six months Shaw transferred his
name to a protestant school.

The chronic poverty of the family is another vital
influencing factor, moulding and shaping the Shawian mind. In
the Preface to his novel, *Imbecility,* Shaw clearly points to
the chronic poverty of the family—"Imbecility was necessa-
riely chronic in the household".  
33 He also jocularly add-
"I was a downstart and the son of a downstart."  
Maybe,
that is why, Shaw identifies poverty with sin and irreligion
in *Major Barbara.* In his early childhood he probably realized
the all-comprehensive influence of money in controlling
human moralities. In the Preface to *Irrational Doubt* he
clearly declares :— "Money controls morality."  
35 He also
adds— "Money is indeed the most important thing in the world,
and all sound and successful personal and national morality
should have this fact for its basis, Every teacher or
traddler who denies it or suppresses it, is an enemy of
life."  
36

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35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
So, his domestic life is to a large extent responsible in moulding and shaping his non-conforming and non-compromising attitude towards religion.

The socio-economic background of the 19th century is no less important. Due to the phenomenal progress of science and technology there had also been a great social change. This was the direct or indirect outcome of industrialisation, and England's imperialistic achievements.

This industrial and commercial civilisation divided man into two groups, the rich and the poor. The first group wanted to make larger profit at the cost of the second group. Shaw belonged to the second group. Socially depressed and economically beaten, Shaw began to lose faith in the existing social and moral order. Even religion, he thought, became the handy weapon to rob the poor. Religion has never been a unifying force; rather it proved to be a dividing force. *Major Barbara* talks volumes on this.

By that time, the entire philosophical world of Europe in general rebelled against traditional religious values. Almost all the schools of contemporary philosophers began to scrutinise and anatomise the age-old religious doctrines in the light of science and technology. "If the

Contd....
eighteenth century was dominated by the physics of Sir Isaac Newton, then the nineteenth century must be said to have been commanded by the evolutionary school of philosophers like Herbert Spencer, Charles Darwin, Alfred Russel Wallace, Thomas Henry Huxley, Julian Huxley, Herri Bergson, C.L. Morgan, and C.D. Board and their ardent followers. Their forceful writings turned the entire philosophical world upside down.

Almost every evolutionary philosopher of the time violently revolted against the established form of religion and the church. Their views and reviews were published in the journal called "The Nonconformist."

Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) wanted to see religion against the background of science in his well-known book, *First Principles*. Charles Darwin's epoch-making book, *The Origin of the Species* (1869) brought about revolutionary changes in the philosophical world. Thomas Henry Huxley's (1825-1895) *Man's Place in the Universe* had to face violent attacks from almost all the ecclesiastical Heads.

Persons like Frederick Temple wanted to bring about a great deal of liberty within the church. C.W. Goodwin wanted to find out a reconciliation between Genesis and the periods of geological time.

Contd.....
Henry Bergson (1859-1941) expressly denied the age-old Biblical belief "And God saw that it was good." Such beliefs, he contended, would surely bring about a state of stagnation in the process of human progress. C. L. Mays (1852-1936), in his Gifford lectures of 1923, delivered in St. Andrews University, sought to happily reconcile a thoroughgoing materialistic interpretation of the universe with his idea of what he called a Divine Purpose. Dr. Rudolf Otto's famous Das Heilige (1917) created a large number of ardent followers.

Shaw was greatly influenced by the evolutionary philosophers concerning his attitude to religion. Although he could not accept their theories in toto, yet he clearly admitted his indebtedness to them. He sought to modify their theories with his personal convictions.

In the Preface to Back to Methuselah Shaw expressly declared: "Creative evolution is already a religion, and is indeed now unmistakably the religion of the 20th century, newly arisen from the ashes of pseudo-christianity." An evolutionist himself, he put special emphasis on the term

37. Genesis, ch. 1–v. 25 (Revised Standard Version)


'creative', and sought for a state where both man and his beliefs would concertedly evolve.

Even from within the church some of the most liberal minded people came out with a protesting voice. This breakaway group was known as that of the Sacramental philosophers. The most important churchmen of this breakaway group were John Henry Newman (1801-1890) and William Temple (1881-1944). Henry Newman was a man of great talent and intellectual maturity. Intolerant of the inside and outside malpractices and misdeeds perpetrated within the church, Newman came out of the church of England and joined the church of Rome, and there he was elevated to the position of a Cardinal. The basic objectives of the famous Oxford Movement were to combat the malpractices of the church.

William Temple, the wellknown Archbishop of Canterbury, vehemently rebelled against the non-dynamic tendencies of the religious doctrines of the time. He made an attempt to bring about mobility and creative dynamism in the moral laws, corresponding to the changes in society with the lapse of time. Besides, he wanted to explain the religious doctrines in close relation to economic considerations of life. He also stood for a large-scale liberalisation of many of the christian doctrines.

Contd.
Opposition to the established religion came even from the utilitarian group of philosophers. Both Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill were rebels against the established religion. Religion, they thought, hindered man's real intellectual progress. According to Bentham, religion forms an "unholy alliance" with the "sinister interests of the earth." His works like *Church of Englandism and its Catechism Examined* (1818), *The Analysis of the Natural Religion on the Temporal Happiness of Mankind* (1822), *Not Paul, Not Jesus* (1823) and *Analysis of Natural Religion* shocked the ecclesiastical circles of the time. His last three books were published under his three pseudonyms, Philip Beauchamp, Gamaliel Smith, and Richard Carlile respectively. A confirmed utilitarian, Bentham found the emotional and metaphysical values of religion totally useless and ineffective for the larger interests of mankind. Bentham was followed by John Stuart Mill, who wanted to point out that the ancient, irrational powers of church and state were the enemies of progress.

Shaw is also greatly indebted to Kant (1724-1804). Although, Kant belonged to the 18th century, yet he was one of the leading channels of inspiration for the succeeding philosophers of the 19th. The German philosopher aimed at the "highest good"; and for the attainment of that stage of goodness he often vindicated certain actions, which are branded as

*Contd....*
irreligious and immoral by the yardstick of traditional rela-
tion. Bernard Shaw also wanted to vindicate the so-called im-
moralities and irreligious activities of Andrew Undershaft (Major
Barbara) on the ground that his character "stood the Kantian
test", whereas the character of Bill Walker did not pass that
test. This shows Shaw's direct indebtedness to Kant. Kant stood
for an "ethical commonwealth" which is against the established
church. The "ethical Commonwealth", he defined, was the kingdom
of God or the "church invisible". The "church invisible", he
argued, pre-existed the "church Visible". The church visible is
said to be the handmaiden of political authority, or say, the
tennisball of the clerical community. Kant in his book *Religion
Within the Limit of Reason Alone* showed his disbelief in the
ineffectiveness of prayers, which, he thought, to be even 'mora-
ally dangerous' as they presuppose the existence of a lenient
divine power, that can be very easily propitiated by rituals
and religious ceremonies. In short, Kant stood for an "ethical
religion" rather than for "religious ethics". In the following
chapters we have made an attempt to show as to how far Shaw
is Kantian as regards his religious convictions.

F. Nietzsche is another extraordinarily powerful
channel of inspiration for Shaw. In many respects both of them
hold identical views. Nietzsche said of himself—"I am no man,
I am dynamite." He also called himself an "immoralist" and an

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"atheist". He wanted to propound a "morality-free philosophy" which would never be poisoned by "moralic acid". "There was only one Christian", says Nietzsche, "and he died on the cross". The church is precisely the thing against which Jesus inveighed. What did Christ deny? Everything which to-day is called Christianity", adds Nietzsche. He also clearly points to the distinct deviation of Christianity from the actual principles of Jesus Christ. What we have to-day is the Pauline Christianity, and not the Christianity of Jesus Christ; and the traditional institution of the church owes its origin primarily to St. Paul.

Nietzsche developed the idea of "superman" before Shaw. Shaw modified the image of the Superman in his own way. We will discuss their respective ideas in this connection in details while dealing with Man and Superman. In short, Nietzsche's Superman aims at "Become what thou art." Similarly, Shaw's Superman aims at "self understanding" and "Self-realisation."

Another most important personality, who greatly influenced the mind and the philosophy of Bernard Shaw, was Karl Marx (1818-1883). Marx did not believe in Christianity on the ground that it had been distorted and conditioned to suit the vested interest of a privileged class. Christianity, according

41. The will to Power, 88 168, 158.
to him, divorges the materialistic considerations from men's religious life. As a result, religion has become a handy weapon in the hands of the privileged class for the material as well as moral exploitation of the poor. Like Marx, Shaw was also against this dissociation of materialistic consideration from religion.

Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), the supposed cornerstone of the existentialistic philosophy, also added to the fire of religious revolt in the 19th century. He may not have been a direct and distinct influence on Shaw, yet he was a soldier of the same battle that was both individually and collectively launched against the organised form of religion. In this regard, both Shaw and Kierkegaard can be called the crusaders of the same cause. He stood for the "transvaluation of values." Besides, he questioned the intermediary status of the church between God and man. Shaw also strikes the same note in Saint Joan.

Opposition to the organised form of religion came even from the royal authority. In many European countries the church had been completely stripped off all the secular powers. The church was treated to be hostile to the smooth and healthy functionings of the state. For example, Bismarck, the Imperial Chancellor of the German Empire, had to have a fierce

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fight with the catholic church for the solidarity and integrity of the state. This struggle against the catholic church is historically known as "Kulturkampf", meaning the 'struggle for culture'. Bismarck was bent on subordinating the church to the state; and for this reason he passed certain repressive laws, which directly went against the vested interest of the clerks. In 1872 the Jesuits and their affiliated orders were made null and void, and all relations with the Vatican city severed. Then followed the well-known "May-Laws" in 1873. According to the historic "May-Laws" compulsory civil marriage was legalized. All the priests had to be German citizens and educated in the secular German educational institutions; and no church official could be appointed without the formal approval of the government. In 1877 Gambetta made the historic declaration that the church was the veritable enemy of the Republic of France. He thoroughly X-rayed the church. The entire education system of the state was snatched away from the control of the church fathers.

The Nihilistic movement in Russia towards the closing years of the 19th century is another case in point. The advocates of this movement violently crusaded against all the ecclesiastical, social, and economic orders of the time. The violent crusaders of this movement assassinated Alexander II in 1881.

Thus, the church had to eat the humble pie everywhere. The religious authority was subordinated to the secular authority in every European state. This religious revolt blooming in Contd...
the brains of the philosophers and the masterful statesman of the 19th century was largely owing to the phenomenal progress of science and technology and advanced human understanding.

Science and technology had offered man a scientific as well as an investigative outlook towards every ideal of life. Fostered and inspired by the investigative outlook the philosophers of the last century sought to emancipate religion from the octopus of romance, conventions, and heartless dogmatizations. They individually as well as concertedly wanted to pave the way for a transition from superstition to enlightenment and imperfection to perfection.

This was the general climate of the age. Bernard Shaw was the product of such a time when every philosophic brain was violently crusading against the institutionalised form of religion and against its negative pull. Both within and without Shaw breathed this atmosphere. Again, being affiliated to the camp of the Fabian socialists, Shaw was more or less wedded to the socialistic attitude to religion; and Karl Marx was the supposed harbinger of this outlook. Interestingly enough, Shaw to a large extent, upheld the Marxian outlook on religion, without being a thoroughgoing Marxist himself. On the whole, with the support of his age Shaw developed his own convictions towards religion in general and Christianity in particular. Judged in this light, his personal religious revolts, fairly

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simplified in a number of his plays, cannot be detached from the contemporary flare-up against the traditional religious values, deeprooted in the minds of the people.

In the following chapters Shaw's religious ideas will be studied in detail in reference to the plays through which they seem to have been projected. It is true that these religious views have been expressed, directly or indirectly, by the dramatic characters and they may reasonably be supposed to be their own views and not their author's. But Bernard Shaw being the kind of dramatist as he is— a dramatist of ideas, it is equally reasonable to think that they represent his own convictions as well. The dramatic detachment in his case may appear to consist not merely in allowing all these characters to speak for themselves but also to speak for their author in certain dramatically contrived situations.