CHAPTER THREE

MAJOR BARBARA

(I)

So long Shaw has been busy with the 'cosmic' issue facing mankind in its various ramifications in the play, Man and Superman. The idea of creating the superman through a systematic philosophical revolution practically intoxicated him, and this virtually made him unmindful of the down-to-the-earth issues confronting man. In the play, Major Barbara, Shaw for the first time feels the necessity of looking at man from his own plane; and he abruptly jumps from the 'cosmic' to the 'economic' level. He makes an economic surgery of the traditional concept of religion. This change of front is really significant, as we have already pointed out earlier that for Shaw religion cannot have an isolated existence away from the mainstream of man's day-to-day economic problems. Religion, according to him, should cover every aspect of man's life. The religion that ignores the economic issue of a man's life is basically anti-man; and it cannot bring about his real progress.

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It is often said that behind the writing of this
comedy Shaw had two real persons in mind: Professor Gilbert
Murray, the Professor of Greek, and Lady Rosalind Frances, the
Countess of Carlisle, his real mother-in-law. Critic like
Louis Crompton goes to the extent of saying that Shaw modelled
the portrait of Prof. Cusins after the character of Mr. Murray,
and that of Lady Britomart on the character of his mother-in­
law. Shaw is also stated to have jokingly written a letter to
Prof. Murray that he was working on a play under the title,
Murray's Mother-in-law.1

Written in 1905, Major Barbara is a magnificent play.
It is his fifteenth play, written when Shaw was almost fifty.
It is a play against the stereotyped doctrines of orthodox
Christianity. "Shaw was at that time regarded as a Godless
person who aimed to overthrow, if he could, all religion," writes
A.C. Ward. "Yet it should have been apparent to all his oppo­
nents," he further adds, "that Major Barbara is a deeply
religious play, even though it shows no reverence for certain
belief and conduct. That was the play's chief source of offence
to the orthodox: its purpose might be good, but the terms and
tendency of the argument in which the purpose is stated were
found disturbing."2

1. Crompton, Louis; Art. Shaw's Challenge to Liberalism, 1953;
2. Ward, A.C; Introduction to Major Barbara (Orient Longmans);
   p-170.
3. Ibid- p-170-171. contd....
Instead of seeing religion as an isolated entity Shaw associates it with economics. He firmly believes that man's economic life conditions and determines his religious life. Hence his grudge against poverty. He considers poverty to be the breeding-ground of all other crimes and sins. Shaw discards any religion which is unmindful of this organic relationship.

Established Christian doctrines associate poverty with virtue and goodness. Poverty, according to Shaw, is basically anti-religious, and, what is worse, anti-life. Thus, such religious doctrines, and organisations, he believes, cannot bring about any spiritual uplift in man. One such religious organisation is the Salvation Army, whose failure is embedded in its ignorance of the cause-and-effect relationship between religion and economic factors.

Mr. Undershaft, from this point of view, may seem to represent Shaw. He does not find any sense in the doctrines preached and practised by his daughter, Barbara. The plane and purposes of the Salvation Army are noble, but all its noble endeavours end in fiasco mainly because it wanted to pamper and justify poverty, the so-called glorious legacy of our religious die-hards. The poor slum-dwellers are made to think of heaven and divine bliss, awaiting them in the next world. They are taught to be proud of poverty.

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Any artificial reader will be inclined to brand Shaw as an atheist, and as an ardent advocate of death and destruction. But it is not true. Shaw is a life-worshipper. Dr. Underahafft wants to find out the ways of heavenly happiness through his 'factory of death'. "Then the way of life", says Prof. Cusine, "lies through the factory of death"? Here Shaw does not aim at death. He aims at life. But while moving towards life if he has to pass through death he will gladly accept it. Unless we try to understand this implication we will surely misunderstand Shaw. In a nutshell, his religion is above the church, above the cross, above the so-called religious organisations, and also above the traditional religious ethics.

(II)

In the preface to the play Shaw clearly suggests what the play is really about, and what he really stands for. In the first chapter entitled First Aid to Critics he indicates that like F. Nietzsche (1844-1900), the famous German philosopher, he also treats Christianity as a mere 'slave morality'. Shaw admits his indebtedness mainly to late Captain Wilson, the inventor of the term 'creativity', thirty years before the emergence of Nietzsche, and also to Stuart-Glennie, the Scotch philosopher.

4. Major Barbara, iii, p-152 (Penguin).
Like John Stuart-Glennie, Shaw also believes that Christianity has been employed as an effective device by the numerically inferiors to subjugate the numerically superiors, with the result that people are mis-taught to think drudgery, poverty, cowardice as the essentials of religion. This is what is precisely meant by slave-morality. Shaw concurs with Stuart Glennie. Christianity feeds and fosters such slave-morality.

Shaw attacks what he calls the worst of all human crimes - poverty. "In the millionaire Undershaft," says Shaw, "I have represented a man who has become intellectually and spiritually as well as practically conscious of the irresistible natural truth which we all abhor and repudiate: to wit, that the greatest of our evils, and the worst of our crimes is poverty, and that our first duty, to which every other consideration should be sacrificed, is not to be poor." So, in order to fight for religion we will have to fight against poverty.

Undershaft was conscious of this cause-and-effect relationship. His conduct stands the Kantian test," writes Shaw, "which Peter Shirleys does not." The implication being, Undershaft's actions would lead to better results, i.e. to 'highest good'.

5. ref. ch., The Gospel of St. Andrew Undershaft; p-15 (Penguin)

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Like Immanuel Kant Shaw is also of the opinion that the real and objective test of a man's conduct can be judged only by the consideration whether his actions served the 'highest good' or not.

Peter Shirley is a religious man judged by the traditional Christian standard. "Well, the misery of the world", says Shaw, "is due to the fact that the great mass of men act and believe as Peter Shirley acts and believes." Peter Shirley's actions serve only the immediate purpose, ignoring the 'highest good'.

Shaw is aware of the organic relationship between religion and money. "Money is the most important thing in the world", he says, "it represents health, strength, honour, generosity and beauty as conspicuously and undeniably as the want of it represents illness, weakness, disgrace, meanness, and ugliness". So, any religion that glorifies poverty fights against itself. "All genuinely religious people", repeats Shaw, "have that consciousness."  

In the chapter entitled The Salvation Army Shaw once again emphasises the importance of money for the maintenance of any missionary organisation. The Salvation Army is a case in point. The Salvation Army is a religious organisation, set up by William Booth (1829-1912) in London in 1878. This religious

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9. * = Ibid = p-22. contd...
organization had to have a large fund for the finance of
its various schemes. "It must take the money because it
cannot exist without money", writes Shaw, "and there is no
other money to be had. Practically all the spare money in
the country consists of a mass of rent, interest, and profit,
every penny of which is bound up with crime, drink, prostitution,
disease, and all the evil fruits of poverty". 10 By implication
therefore, Shaw means that the Salvation Army was also an
accomplice in these evil ways, and, as such, equally shared the
crimes and sins associated with money and poverty. It was
necessitated by its servile dependence on the fat donations
and grants made by the rich tycoons, trading in crime and sin.

Major Barbara, the daughter of Mr. Undershaft, realizes
this unpleasant and horrible truth. "Her discovery", Shaw
writes, "That she is her father's accomplice; that the Salvation
Army is the accomplice of the distiller and the dynamite
maker; that they can no more escape one another than they can
escape the air they breathe; that there is no salvation for
them through personal righteousness, but only through the
redemption of the whole nation from its vicious, lazy, competi-
tive anarchy". 11 In this regard, Shaw differs from the conven-
tional religionists. Because, he firmly believed that there
can be no 'personal righteousness' unless there is 'national
righteousness'.

11. Ibid, p. 27. contd....
Further, in the chapter, *Barbara's Return to the Colors*, Shaw adds that like any ordinary poorman the Salvation Army itself is hungry and dependent on corrupt money. Depending so much on such factors, the Salvation Army can hardly think of saving the souls of others. In the language of Shaw: "The Salvationists themselves are not saved yet." 12 A finger can hardly remain unaffected in a diseased body. Shaw had this awareness of the absolute inalienability of a single individual or his 'personal righteousness' out of the morass of the rotten social debris.

In the chapter, *Weaknesses of the Salvation Army*, he further pinpoints the inherent weaknesses of the Salvation Army. The Army underestimates the importance of money, although it is irrecoverably dependent on it.

Shaw is also critical of the hierarchical form of administrative setup of the Salvation Army, which, he thinks, is no better than the hierarchy of the church of England or the military administrative setup. He is also highly critical of the vicious relationship of the Army with the great tycoons of the society. "It is even more dependent than the church", says Shaw, "on ... rich people who would cut-off supplies at once if it began to preach that indispensable revolt against riches". This unhealthy and undue dependence on the rich people has

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indirectly made the Salvationists mere stooges in their hands to carry out their vested interests at the cost of the larger interests of the whole nation. So, their first approach is self-defeating, distorted, and biased.

Shaw is also indignant at the 'other-worldliness' of the army. 'Further, there is still too much other-worldliness about the Army', he complains. This attitude of 'other-worldliness' has indirectly nourished the idea of poverty, eventually leading to its glorification.

He also objects to the confessions of the Salvationists. 'Then there is the nasty lying habit called confession, which the Army encourages because it lends itself to dramatic oratory, with plenty of thrilling incidents. For my part, when I hear a convert relating the violences and oaths and blasphemies he was guilty of before he was saved, making out that he was a very terrible fellow then and is the most contrite and chastened of Christians now, I believe him no more than I believe the millionaire who says he came up to London or Chicago as a boy with only three halfpence in his pocket'.

Confessions are nothing but hypocrisies, he believes. What is done cannot be undone through the stereotyped pattern of confessions.

Similarly, Shaw does not find anything divine in the

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15. -Ibid- p. 31.

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cross. He admits, "And here my disagreement with the Salvation Army, and with all propagandists of the cross (which I loathe as I loathe all gibbets) becomes deep indeed." 16

Regarding forgiveness, absolution, punishment and atonement, as have been practised in the name of Christianity, Shaw does not have any good opinion. Such things, he believes, cannot lead to man's spiritual and moral progress. "Forgiveness, absolution, atonement, are figments: punishment is only a pretence of cancelling one crime by another, and you can no more have forgiveness without vindictiveness than you can have a cure without disease." 17 He does not attribute any religiousity to such Christian ideals. "You will never get a high morality from people who conceive that their misdeeds are revocable and pardonable, or in a society where absolution and expiation are officially provided for us all". 18

This is undoubtedly a dig at the Salvation Army, although Shaw admits that the way Barbara punishes Bill Walker is purely Christian, unlike our conventional form of punishments.

Shaw concurs with Barbara when she says that there are no absolute scoundrels. "In short, when Major Barbara says that there are no scoundrels, she is right: there are no absolute scoundrels", continues Shaw, "every reasonable man

17. Ibid.
18. Ibid. contd....
(and woman) is a potential scoundrel and a potential good citizen. What a man is depends on his character, but what he does, and what we think of what he does, depends on his circumstances.¹⁹ That is to say, Shaw does not detach religion from the larger context of circumstances, mainly socio-economic circumstances, as other religionists do. The good potentialities of a man may germinate and flower only when he finds a fertile environment in and around him.

Shaw also categorically remarks that the religious bodies are no better than the police force. Both of them equally rob and oppress the poor for the preservation of the class-privileges of a handful of fabulously rich people. Shaw calls the religious bodies a kind of 'auxiliary police' - both the forces have the same target - rob the poor. If the police rob the poor by pistols and wands, the church robs them through morals, in the manner of a declaration Shaw remarks: "Churches are suffered to exist only on condition that they preach submission to the State as at present capitalistically organised. The church of England itself is compelled to add to the thirtysix articles in which it formulates its religious tenets, three more in which it apologetically protests that the moment any of these articles comes in conflict with the State it is to be entirely renounced, 

¹⁹ Preface; ch. Weaknesses of the Salvation Army, p. 35.
contd...
abjured, violated, abrogated and abhorred, the policeman being a much more important person than any of the persons of the Trinity. And this is why, no tolerated church nor Salvation Army can ever win the entire confidence of the poor. It must be on the side of the police and the military, no matter what it believes or disbelieves. And, as the police and the military are the instruments by which the rich rob the poor (on legal and moral principles made for the purpose), it is not possible to be on the side of the poor and also on the side of the police at the same time. Indeed, the religious bodies, as the almoners of the rich, become a sort of auxiliary police, taking off the insurrectionary edge of poverty with coals and blankets, bread and treacle, and soothing and cheering the victims with hopes of immense and inexpensive happiness in another world when the process of working them to premature death in the service of the rich is complete in this.

as so long the church and the other religious organisations remain as the 'auxiliary police' and the 'almoners of the rich' they cannot serve any truly religious purpose. So long they cannot emancipate themselves from the octopus of the rich tycoons they cannot do anything for the salvation of the people at large.

20. Preface; ch. Weaknesses of the Salvation Army, p-39
contd....
In the chapter, Christianity and Anarchism, Shaw reinforces the same ideas: the weaknesses of Christianity in general and other religious bodies in particular. He has already pointed out that he does not find any fundamental difference between the church and the police force. If the police robs the poor legally, the church robs them morally. "Such is the false position," writes Shaw, "from which neither the Salvation Army nor the church of England nor any other religious organisations whatever can escape except through a reconstitution of society." 21 "Nor can they merely endure," repeats Shaw, "the State passively, washing their hands of sins. The state is constantly forcing the consciences of men by violence and cruelty." 22 In short, under such a social order man cannot lead an independent moral life in complete isolation from the ambit of the state; that is to say, his morality and his religiosity are shaped by the state itself. So, for the true salvation of people Shaw puts emphasis on the 'reconstitution of society'. As a matter of fact, this is the key-note of his religious philosophy.

He presents before us a sensational example of a royal marriage (the marriage of Alfonso XIII of Spain to the English princess Victoria Eugénie of Battenburg on 31st May, 1906) which was followed by a cruel killing of...
a bull by the matador after a prolonged bull-fight, played as a mark of jubilation after the other sacramental rites being over. But the ironic contrast, writes Shaw, "between the bull-fight and the sacrament of marriage does not move anyone. Shaw was always against such brainlessness. He is astonished how could such heartlessness be associated with the idea of religiosity.

Talking about Christianity he once again repeats, "Christianity has two faces. Popular Christianity has for its emblem a gibbet, for its central mystery an insane vengeance bought off by a trumpery expiation. But, there is a nobler and profounder Christianity which affirms the sacred mystery of equality, and forbids the glaring futility and folly of vengeance, often politely called punishment or justice. The gibbet part of Christianity is tolerated. The other is criminal felony." This is doubtless a vehement attack against the popular Christianity, imputing religiosity to 'sanguinary execution' meted out to people cherishing free thought and liberal moral attitude, which is considered as 'criminal felony'.

Concluding his discourse in the last chapter, Sane Conclusions, Shaw once again repeats his militantly reformatory attitude to religion in relation to our socio-economic behaviour. A healthy and progressive religion is the

23. Preface, Ch. Christianity and Anarchism, p-40.
24. -Ibid- contd...
natural outcome of a healthy socio-economic set-up of a state, he reaffirms. So, Shaw is all for breaking down the existing socio-economic order, and only after that, a healthy and creative religion will find a fertile soil to grow up in the hearts of men, eventually leading to their salvation and complete identification with Life-Eternal.

Moreover, Shaw is of the opinion that mere creed is not enough. "Creeds must become intellectually honest," 25 On the basis of honesty of creeds there is practically not a single religion in the world. That is perhaps the most stupendous fact in the whole world situation. Shaw deplores such a state of affairs: "At present there is not a single credible established religion in the world. That is perhaps the most stupendous fact in the whole world situation." 26 If we are to avert such a gloomy state of affairs, we must invariably reconstitute the entire socio-economic fabric of the society.

(III)

The first act of the play is mainly expository in nature. Shaw's ideas of religion are presented through Mr. Andrew Undershaft, a canon dealer and a multi-millionaire, the virtual ruler of Europe in military wars. He is introduced

26. -ibid- contd...
only towards the later part of the act. Interestingly enough, for a long time Mr. Andrew Undershaft did not have any family attachment because of a family dispute concerning the question of inheritance, and the so-called 'Undershaft tradition'.

Almost all the characters introduced in the first act, excepting Mr. Andrew Undershaft, are conventional people. For them the violation of any established convention, social or moral, was gross immorality. Mr. Andrew Undershaft did not have any confidence in the religion of the established set-up. He developed his own religion and believed in it. The unconventional pattern of his faith shocks and perturbs everyone. Lady Britomart, his wife, being fed and nurtured by the established moralities, grudges her husband's stand: "I really cannot bear an immoral man. I am not a harisee, I hope; and I should not have minded his merely doing wrong things; we are none of us perfect. But your father didn't exactly do wrong things; he said them and thought them; that was what was so dreadful. He really had a sort of religion of wrongness".

This paradoxical nature of Andrew Undershaft's religion produced a great deal of misgivings about him, almost dehumanizing him to the status of a brute. While preaching morality he adopted immorality: "So I couldn't forgive Andrew for

(penguin) contd....
preaching immorality while he practised morality". The wrong with the general people with conventional ideas is that these people put their emphasis mainly on the means rather than on the end. So, Lady Britomart could not 'bridge over moral disagreement' with her husband.

Lady Britomart's antagonism is shared by all. Stephen, Undershaft's only son, remarks about his father: "he is either a fool or a rascal; that's all". So, by the conventional standard Andrea Undershaft is grossly blasphemous and heretic, while Lady Britomart and Stephen are good people. Shaw in his preface very clearly suggested that the apparently destructive personality of Mr. Andrew Undershaft "stands the Kantian test", because he aim at the 'highest good'. Herein lies the actual crux of the problem. On the one hand, Lady Britomart and Stephen mistook means for an end, whereas Andrew Undershaft was primarily conscious of the end, and for him end justified the means. In this sense, he is a typically Machiavellian hero.

Mr. Undershaft clearly indicates that his motto is 'blood and fire', through which he wants to achieve the 'highest good' of the Kantian sense. The idea of 'blood and fire' horrifies all. But, Undershaft defends and justifies

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28. Britomart, Lady; act-1; p-59.
29. Stephen; act-1; p-59. contd...
his stand saying: "My sort of blood cleanses; my sort of fire purifies." The idea is something like breaking the egg to prepare an omelette.

For Undershaft his religion and his business are rolled into one. Like our traditional moralists he does not have any duality in his personality, which necessarily make men hypocritical. He himself admits: "I am not one of those men who keep their morals and their business in watertight compartments." 31

Bernard Shaw ridicules the hollow conventional form of religion through Mr. Undershaft: "Therefore your Christmas card moralities of peace on earth and goodwill among men are no use to me. Our Christianity, which enjoins you to resist not evil, and to turn the other cheek, would make me bankrupt. My morality - my religion - must have a place for cannons and torpedoes in it." 32 The very expression 'the Christmas card moralities of peace on earth and goodwill among men' must be taken seriously. Because, it sufficiently suggests the savian attitude to the traditional idea of religion. People, Shaw believes, ignore the genuine spirit of religion in the name of outward rituals and conventions.

30. Andrew Undershaft, act-I, p-68.
31. —bid— p-70.
32. —bid— p-71. contd...
Eventually, religion has become the costly luxury for the rich and unbearable liability for the poor, with the result that the rich exploit the poor beyond any rational limit.

Regarding ethics, Shaw holds the view that the true morality of one man differs from the true morality of another man. Everyman has his own true morality. In this sense, the idea of true morality is a relative one. Undershaft rightly remarks: "For me there is only one true morality; but it might not fit you, as you do not manufacture aerial battleships. There is only one true morality for everyman; but everyman has not the same true morality." 33

But, Shaw’s objection to the so-called Christianity is that it opposed this sense of relativity to religious ideas. Christianity denying this sense of relativity denies liberty to religious ideas. This perturbs Shaw. Barbara also shares this view. She thinks: "there are neither good men nor scoundrels: they are just children of one father." That is to say, like Shaw she also does not find any basic difference between a so-called virtuous man and a so-called vicious man. She further adds: "I've had scores of them through my hands: scoundrels, criminals, infidels, philanthropists, 34

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missionaries, county-councillors, all sorts. They are all just the same sort of sinners; and there the same salvation ready for them all". In this sense, Barbara's conception is a distinct departure from our age-old conceptions of good and evil.

(IV)

The second act very aptly demonstrates the hollowness of the Salvation Army. The Salvation Army has become the veritable asylum of the starving poor people. Starving people join the Army camp not for any spiritual motive but to fill their empty stomachs. What is more interesting, some hungry people in order to get food and shelter lie to the Salvation authority as having perpetrated many inhuman crimes, and thereby manage to get some roof under the camp. Kummy tells lies. Price also lies. Kummy pretended to be a bad woman: respectable married woman, Kummy, getting rescued by the Salvation Army by pretending to be a bad un. Same old game". Kummy flatly answers: "What am I to do? I cannot starve".

The Army did not take these facts into account. Instead, it wanted to open up the wide of Heaven to these

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35. Barbara; act-ii; p-71.
1. Price; act-ii; p-77.
2. -Ibid- contd...
poor souls, offering them a piece of bread in one hand and the Bible on the other. In his preface Shaw has vehemently attacked this tendency of too much other-worldliness of the Salvation Army.

Poverty looms large in the Army camp. All the poor people like Nobby Price, Jenny, Shirley, Bill Walker are poor to the backbone. Peter Shirley joins the camp only out of intolerable hunger. His was a miserable life: "I'm only 46, I'm as good as ever I was. The grey patch came in my hair before I was thirty. All it wants is three pennorth of hair dye: am I to be turned on the streets to starve for it? Hdy God! I've worked ten to twelve hours a day since I was thirteen, and paid my way all through; and now am I to be thrown into the gutter and my job given to a young man that can do it no better than me because I've black hair that goes white at the first change?" 3

Shaw has given a graphic description of how Peter Shirley was fed after a plate of food. Jenny brings him a plate of food, and Shirley in the words of Shaw 'attacks the meal ravenously'. For such feedings the Aray needed a large amount of money. And the money invariably came from the rich people.

3. Peter Shirley, act ii, p-78. contd...
Barbara did not properly understand this very weakness of the Army. Jenny did not know it. They rather foolishly ascribed everything to the favour of God. Jenny Hill, consoling Shirley with a poor plate of food foolishly says: "Come, come! the Lord sends it to you."

Tragic still, Shirley's hunger was so acute and devilish that he has licked the plate clean; snatches away the mug from Rumay'a hands, seeing some milk hid at the bottom of it.

But, Barbara and the Army are trying their utmost to allure these hunger-struck bodies with the dreams of heaven. According to Shaw, hungry people can never think of heaven disinterestedly; and any attempt to save them spiritually is mere wastage of energy, time and intelligence. The Army could not grasp this simple truth. Shaw does not totally denounce Barbara because of her innocent stand on the matter. She sees only the superficialities of the whole mechanism, whereas Shaw anatomises its inside threadbare through his dramatic character, Andrew Undershaft. The way Barbara chastises Bill Walker is tremendously encouraging and doubtless the most Christian. But, Barbara is concerned with the idea of spiritual salvation in absolute isolation from the material aspect of it.

This ignorance of fact has made her partially honest. Her disillusionment worked out by Andrew Undershaft pains contd...
her to the fingertips. She is inherently honest. But to Shaw, it is foolish honesty, a thing selfishly exploited by the rich people.

Bernard Shaw holds the similar attitude towards the other articles of established religion and morality, such as, honour, justice, truth, love, mercy and so forth. These virtues cannot have any isolated existence away from the pivot of the whole mechanism—money. Talking to Prof. Cusins Mr. Undershaft says: "Yes: they are the graces and luxuries of a rich, strong, and safe life". Shaw does not have any complaint against such virtues; but what he points out is the fact that poverty and these virtues are incompatible. In short, they cannot coexist. Man's material progress, Shaw thinks, must precede his spiritual and psychic uplift.

Does Shaw adhere to any established religious order? Our answer will be No. Like Barbara Shaw is not a Methodist, not a Calvinist, not a Presbyterian, not a Pagan either. Yet, he was one of the faithful of all the devotees of Jesus Christ.

Shaw could not wholeheartedly uphold the religious stand of Barbara, because the latter was in many senses a

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4. Andrew Undershaft; act-ii; p-93.

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slav* to established religious canons. Barbara did not understan* the organic relationship between money and morality. This was her most remarkable mistake. Undershaft knows about this dirty relationship very well, and so with pride he goes to the extent of saying, "but I can buy the Salvation Army". "All religious organisations exist by selling themselves to the rich", he further adds.

Undershaft pinpoints the vicious relationship between the religious bodies and the rich community, ultimately leading to the moral and material exploitation of the toiling community:

Cusins: I don't think you quite know what the Army does for the poor.

Undershaft: Oh yes I do. It draws their teeth; that is enough for me as a man of business.

Cusins: Nonsense! It makes them sober.

Undershaft: I prefer sober workmen. The profits are larger.

Cusins: Honest.

Undershaft: Honest workmen are the most economical.

Cusins: Attached to their homes.

Undershaft: So much the better; they will put up with anything sooner than change their shop.

Cusins: Happy.

Undershaft: An invaluable safeguard against revolution.

5. Andrew Undershaft, Act II, p. 98.
6. Ibid— contd...
Cusins: Unselfish -
Undershaft: indifferent to their own interests, which

suits me exactly.

Cusins: with their thoughts on heavenly things -
Undershaft: And not on Trade Unionism nor Socialism.

Excellent.

Barbara turns down the monetary offer of Mr. Undershaft,
thinking his money to be sinful. The monetary crisis of the
Army has diverted her mind more towards the collection of
money than towards the central purpose of spiritual uplift.
She admits: "I am getting at last to think more of the collection
than of the people's souls". This economic crisis makes her
realise the weakness of her stand. She expressly admits: "How
are we to feed them? I cannot talk religion to a man with
bodily hunger in his eyes. It's frightful". Shaw repeatedly
harps on this point again and again in different tones.

So, in spite of Barbara's unwillingness the Salvation
Army had to ultimately accept the monetary donations of the
people like Mr. Bodger, the wine merchant, and Mr. Undershaft,
the cannon merchant. Mrs. Caines heartily admits: "...the army
is saved, and saved through you (Undershaft)". Throughout
the play Shaw is giving great importance on the point of


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Dehypnotized and disillusioned, Barbara ultimately realizes this tragic truth, she hitherto ignored. She also finally comes to know that she herself is being fed and nurtured by the money she has been hateful of. To put precisely, her virtuousness was dependent on vice. Her moral world collapses like a house of cards. The tower of her long-cherished faith breaks down: "Drunkenness and murder! Why God! why hast thou forsaken me?"  

(v)

The same agony of Barbara's spiritual confusion persists in the third act. Her moral world is shaken. She realizes that man cannot have any independent moral life. Undershaft's seemingly anti-religious activities appear to be meaningful to her: "You (Undershaft) may be a devil; but God speaks through you sometimes. You have given me back my happiness."

Her attitude towards the so-called 'factory of death' changes radically: "Well, take me to the factory of death, and let me learn something more. There must be

1. Barbara: act-iii; p-128. (Penguin). contd...
some truth or other behind all this frightful irony”. 2 Prof. Cusins also holds the same view towards the 'factory of death': "but it is horribly, frightfully, immorally, unanswerably perfect". 3

Interestingly enough, in the factory of death the workers are better fed, better housed, better clad, better entertained, almost to the point of what Stephen calls 'so much pampering'. Answering Stephen Mr. Undershaft says: "Stephen, our characters are safe here"; because people working there are free from the cancerous disease of poverty.

Barbara also understands the behind-the-screen implication of the so-called heretical philosophy of Mr. Undershaft. She understands that her faith had so long been ill-founded.

Disillusioned, Barbara says to her father: "that is how I feel in this place to-day. I stood on the rock I thought eternal; and without a word of warning it reeled and crumbled under me. I was safe with an infinite wisdom watching me, an army marching to salvation with me; and in a moment, at a stroke of your pen in a cheque book, I stood alone; and the heavens were empty". 4

Mr. Undershaft does not sentimentalize the issue. As a typical Shavian hero he points out that religion or morality cannot be blind to the dry facts of life. Any religion

2. Barbara; act-iii; p-128.
3. Prof. Cusins; act-iii; p-130.
4. Barbara; act-iii; p-140.
which is blind to the dry facts of life should be abandoned forthwith just as we abandon old machineries to suit our fresh demands. Mr. Undershaft clearly puts it: "Well, you have made for yourself something that you called a morality or a religion or what not. It does not fit the facts. Well, scrap it. Scrap it and get one that does fit. That is what is wrong with the world at present. It scraps its obsolete steam engines and dynamos; but it won't scrap its old prejudices and its old moralities and its old religious and its old political constitutions. What is the result? In machinery it does very well; but in morale and religion and politics it is working at a loss that brings it nearer bankruptcy every year. Don't persist in that folly. If your old religion broke down yesterday, get a newer and a better one for tomorrow." That is to say, religion must undergo a corresponding evolution with the evolution of man. In short, this is the pith and marrow of the Shavian attitude to religion.

Mr. Undershaft goes to the extent of saying that the Salvation Army can never save the souls of the poor; whereas he can save their souls easily by removing their "poverty, misery, cold and hunger":

5. Undershaft; act-iii; p-140-141.

contd...
Undershaft: In your Salvation shelter I saw poverty, misery, cold and hunger. You gave them bread and treacle and dreams of heaven. I give from thirty shillings a week to twelve thousand a year. They find their own dreams, but I look after the drainage.

Barbara: And their souls?

Undershaft: I save their souls just as I saved yours.

Barbara: You saved my soul! What do you mean?

Undershaft: I fed you and clothed you and housed you. I took care that you should have enough to live handsomely—more than enough, so that you could be wasteful, careless, generous. That saved your soul from the seven deadly sins.

Barbara: The seven deadly sins!

Undershaft: Yes, the deadly seven. Food, clothing, firing, rent, taxes, respectability and children. Nothing can lift those seven millstones from Man's neck but money; and the spirit cannot soar until the millstones are lifted. I lifted them from your spirit. I enabled Barbara to become Major Barbara and I saved her from the crime of poverty.

Cusins: Do you call poverty a crime?

contd....
Undershelft: The worst of crimes. All the other crimes are virtues beside it; all the other dishonours are chivalry itself by comparison.

That the economic life of man controls his moral as well as religious life is once again reinforced in the above passage. Shaw pooh-poohs the very idea of 'converting starving man with a Bible, in one hand and a slice of bread in the other' as 'cheap work'. Referring to the lives of the workers of the cannon factory Mr. Undershelft comments: "their souls are hungry because their bodies are full". But, surprisingly enough, our conventional moralists and religious people do not understand this fact. For them religion has a separate entity miles away from the snare of 'poverty' and 'starvation'. "Your moralists", says Undershelft, "are quite unscrupulous about both: they make virtues of them". Moralists of this kind can never bring about any spiritual uplift in man, Shaw believes. They spend their whole life only on 'Oughts' and 'Shoulds', which are unpracticable and ineffective. Such 'ought-mongers' can never bring about any positive transformation in man. Mr. Undershelft utters at the top of his voice: "Ought! Ought! Ought! Ought! Ought! Are you going to spend your life saying..."

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7. Undershelft; act-iii; p-142. 6. Undershelft; act-iii; p-141-142.
8. ibid- p-143.
9. ibid- contd....
ought, like the rest of your moralists".  

His words and arguments disillusion Barbara. She starts looking at herself anew. She also realizes the fact that the world is run by the 'wicked people', whom she cannot avoid even if she wishes to only because of the peculiar nature of our socio-economic set-up: "It is no use running away from wicked people, mamma." Barbara repeats her fresh realizations: "... their hands stretch everywhere: when we feed a starving fellow creature, it is with their bread, because there is no other bread; when we tend the sick, it is in the hospitals they endow; if we turn from the churches they build, we must kneel on the stones of the streets they pave. As long as that lasts, there is no getting away from them. Turning our backs on dodger and Undershaft is turning our backs on life".

This all-pervasive nature of the rich class under the present socio-economic set-up does not allow any independent morality to grow up in complete defiance of this big monster. This awareness has produced a great deal of confusion in the mind of Barbara. She does not find any rudimentary difference between a 'good man' and a 'bad man': "There is no wicked side: life is all one ".


contd...
Hereby, Shaw sought to mean that both good and evil are relative ideas, often interdependent. But our so-called moralists under the roof of their so-called religious organisations throw cold water on any unconventional and fresh moral ideas, branding them as heresies. As a result, their activities and their philosophies make a mess of everything, eventually negating the essential purpose of religion itself.