CHAPTER FOUR

SHAW: THE CRITIC OF THE BIBLE ::

ANDROCLES AND THE LION

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After Major Barbara (1905), Shaw's most important play on the subject of religion is Androcles and the Lion (1913). But, these two plays are being hyphenated by another play, The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet (1909), which has been discussed in the seventh chapter under the title Concerning Other Plays along with four other plays. The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet makes a distinct departure from the mainstream of Shavian thoughts. An element of morbidity marks the play, and this element of morbidity is something outside the Shavian line of thinking.

Androcles and the Lion is a powerful document of Shaw's religious ideas. It is a pronounced attack on the traditional religious beliefs centring round the Bible. In the unusually long preface he makes a scientific probe into the Bible. Every individual chapter contd...
talks volubly about his personal religious beliefs. In most cases he talks in first person and not through any dramatic character as he usually does in most of his plays. Thus, the genuineness of what he says or believes cannot be doubted.

In *Androcles and the Lion* Shaw deplores the persecution carried on by the Roman rulers on the early Christians in the name of religion mainly in order to fulfil the former's dirty political designs. "In this play I have presented one of the Roman persecutions of the early Christians, not as the conflict of a false theology with a true, but as what all such persecutions essentially are: an attempt to suppress a propaganda that seemed to threaten the interests involved in the established law and order, organised and maintained in the name of religion and justice by politicians who are pure opportunists, 'have-and-holders'". 

True religion should foster in man a sense of tolerance and universal brotherhood. This lack of religious tolerance on the part of the Roman rulers eventually led many of the Christians like Androcles, Lavinia, Ferrovius, and Spinthe to cruel persecutions.

The play is practically dominated by the voluminous and pregnant preface. Shaw like an anatomist scientifically

1. Shaw, p-50 (Oriant Longmans). contd...
scrutinise the Bible with special investigations on the life and message of Jesus Christ, and critically examines the practical effectiveness of his teachings. Instead of blindly idolising Jesus Christ he points out: "I know a great deal more about economics and politics than Jesus did, and can do things he could not do."²

He does not want to attribute all-round greatness to Jesus Christ, and does not attribute the principal doctrines of Christianity entirely to him: "I do not imply, however, that these doctrines were peculiar to Christ. A doctrine peculiar to one man would be only a craze, unless the comprehension depended on a development of human faculty so rare that only one exceptionally gifted man possessed it."³

Shaw is confirmed in his belief that: "Christianity is a step in moral evolution which is independent of any individual preacher, if Jesus had never existed (and that he ever existed in any other sense than that in which Shakespeare's Hamlet existed has been vigorously questioned) Tolstoy would have thought and thought and quarrelled with the Greek Church all the same."⁴

For Shaw "for some reason the imagination of

² Shaw, Preface, Ch. Why not give Christianity a trial? P-xii.
³ Shaw, Preface, Ch. Why Jesus more than another? P-xiii.
⁴ Ibid—contd...
white mankind has picked out Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, and attributed all the Christian doctrines to him; and as it is the doctrine and not the man that matters, and, as, besides, one symbol is as good as another provided everyone attaches the same meaning to it."  

Regarding the originality of Christian doctrines, Shaw says: "I raise, for the moment, no question as to how far the gospels are original, and how far they consist of Greek and Chinese interpolations. The record that Jesus said certain things is not invalidated by a demonstration that Confucius said them before him." In this regard, Shaw must be said to have displayed a large amount of objective insight and catholicity of judgement in his attitude towards Jesus Christ and the Christian doctrines.

Shaw denies Godhood to Jesus Christ, whom he treats more as a human moralist and as an ethical teacher. Not to speak of salvaging mankind Jesus could not save himself: "Setting aside the huge mass of inculcated Christ-worship which has no real significance because it has no intelligence, there is, among people who are really free to think for themselves on the subject, a great deal of hearty dislike of Jesus and of contempt for his failure to save himself and overcome his enemies by personal bravery and

5. Preface, Ch. Why Jesus more than another? P-xiii.  
contd...
Shaw also denies religious martyrdom to Jesus Christ. Jesus, he says, was punished mainly for his social and political opinions, and for declaring himself to be a God. Jesus, he says, was given a more or less fair trial, and all possible opportunities to defend himself. Instead of utilizing those opportunities offered to him, Jesus went on declaring himself to be God. Shaw calls it madness: "If Jesus had been indicted in a modern court, he would have been examined by two doctors, found to be obsessed by a delusion, declared incapable of pleading, and sent to an asylum: that is the whole difference."  

Our religious ideas and beliefs are largely fed and nourished by the gospels. Even regarding the life and teachings of Jesus we entirely depend on the so-called history presented in the four narratives. But strangely enough, never do we try to realize and understand them without any prejudice and bias. Never does it come to our mind that those narratives might also be partially or wholly fictitious and sometimes erroneous like our day-to-day news items. In this connection, Shaw writes that the "...four narratives... show that the writers were as subject to error as the writers of yesterday's newspapers."  

7. Preface, Ch. Was Jesus a Coward? P-xiv. 
8. Preface, Ch. Was Jesus a Martyr? P-xvi-xvii. 

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Shaw recollects the popular beliefs regarding Jesus Christ:
"Jesus was a baby; and he was older than creation. He was a
God, immortal and all-powerful, able to raise the dead and
call millions of angels to his aid. It was a sin to doubt
either view of him: that is, it was a sin to reason about
him". 10 Such beliefs, says Shaw, are totally prejudiced, prac-
tically leading to the heartless sacrifice of the catholic
as well as independent development of man's spiritual
beliefs.

Regarding the Gospels, Shaw points out that they
are 'now unintelligible to Novices'. Because, the belief in
the Gospels needs the brainless butchery of our normal
intellectual powers. He refers to the case of an intellectual:
"Not long ago I asked a writer of distinguished intellectual
competence whether he had made a study of the Gospels
since his childhood. His reply was that he had lately
tried, but 'found it all such nonsense that I could not
11 stick it'.

The world is largely inhabited by what Shaw calls
'a million Mr. Worldly Wisemen' rather than by Wesleys and
Tom Paines, who are in miserable minority. Human civilization,
he points out, is wrecked more by these 'religious' people,
than by a handful of eccentric atheists, who are only jeered
at.

10 Preface; ch. The Gospels without Prejudice, p-xviii.
11 Preface; ch. The Gospels Now Unintelligible to Novices; p-xix.

contd....
According to Shaw, people like Tom Paine, Wesley and St. Paul are in most cases more destructive. They only disturb and disintegrate the sentiments of the "million worldly wise men", because the latter is in absolute and alarming majority. Shaw is more afraid of those who passionately affirm the established religion rather than of the "million worldly wise men": "The passionately religious are people apart; and if they were not helplessly outnumbered by the worldly, they would turn the world upside down, as St. Paul was reproached, quite justly, for wanting to do". 12 Shaw is tolerant of the worldly people, who, in his words, are less destructive: "They may not be the salt of the earth, these Philistines; but they are the substance of civilization; and they save the society from ruin by criminals and conquerors as well as by Savonarolas and Knipperdollinges". Apparently, such words present some contradictions. Shaw virtually contradicts himself.

The religion of the minority aims at the salvation of souls. In order to save their souls they are to please their God. But how to please him? First, with presents called sacrifices; second, with flatteries, called praises. Shaw calls it bribery. He clearly suggests: "You propitiate these powers with presents, called sacrifices, and flatteries, ___________

12. Preface; ch. worldliness of the majority, p-xix.
contd....
called praise. Then the Kantian moral law within you makes you conceive your God as a judge, and straightway you try to corrupt him, also with presents and flatteries. This seems shocking to us; but our objection to it is quite a recent development: no longer ago than Shakespeare's time it was thought quite natural that litigants should give presents to human judges; and the buying off of divine wrath by actual money payments to priests, or, in the reformed churches which discountenance this by subscriptions to charities and church building and the like, is still in full swing.\textsuperscript{14} Shaw does not approve of such a religious system, because it poses some disadvantages to the poor. Under such a system the poor are deprived of the divine favour and salvation and as a result "its practical disadvantage is that though it makes matters very easy for the rich, it cuts off the poor from all hope of divine favour".\textsuperscript{15} His is basically the result of our 'commercial civilization', Shaw thinks. But before the advent of this 'commercial civilization' religion was within the reach of both the rich and the poor. This commercial civilization has practically divided men into two groups, rich and poor, and hence the vitiation of religion. At a time is coming soon, when the poor section will rise in

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\textsuperscript{14} Preface: \textit{Religion of the Incomplete Salvationism}, p. xxii.
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{-ibid-}
\end{flushright}

contd....
roaring revolt against such a one-sided religious system, Shaw anticipates.

Shaw disregards the conventional forms of atonement and punishment. He objects to their hollowness. "The primitive idea of justice," writes Shaw, "is partially legalized revenge and partly expiation by sacrifice. It works out from both sides in the notion that the two blacks make a white, and that when a wrong has been done, it should be paid for by an equivalent suffering." He calls this the 'utilitarian' practice. "But a moment's reflection will show," Shaw writes, "that this utilitarian application corrupts the whole transaction. For example, the shedding of innocent blood cannot be balanced by the shedding of guilty blood." Such a practice "calls down divine wrath instead of appeasing it."

For the expiation of our sins Shaw puts special emphasis on what he calls 'retrospective atonement'. People, irrespective of their richness and poverty, should aim at the advent of the Saviour, who will come and redeem them of their sins. This 'retrospective atonement' will remove all the possible difficulties faced by the poor, and at the same time liquidate all the undue advantages offered to them by the existing system. Shaw clearly

17. Preface, Ch. -Ibid-
18. -Ibid- contd...
suggests: "But this does not happen at once. Between the old costly religion of the rich and the new gratuitous religion of the poor there comes an interregnum in which the redeemer, though conceived by the human imagination, is not yet found. He is awaited and expected under the names of the Christ, the Messiah, Baldur the Beautiful, or what not; but he has not yet come." 19

The idea is nothing but the play of imagination. Instead of thinking that "the Christ has come, and has redeemed us" we should think "the Christ will come, and will redeem us". The sincerity and genuineness of such an expectation, Shaw believes, will remove a great deal of difficulties and make things easier for general human salvation. But the idea of 'Retrospective Atonement' is not very well-defined and well-expounded by Shaw, leaving a great deal of vagueness in our minds.

Shaw maintains a sincere regard for both Luther and Calvin, two eminent reformers of Christianity. These two saints are primarily responsible for the abolition of many age-old rites, rituals and customs of sacrificing vicariously for personal salvation. They have brought religion within the reach of the poor. Martin Luther is singularly held responsible for the removal of many of our costly rites and rituals. "His reformation", Shaw says,

19. Preface, Ch. Retrospective Atonement; and the Expectation of the Redeemer, P-xxiv. contd...
"was a triumph of imagination and a triumph of cheapness".

What Luther stressed is honest and sincere faith. He instinctively wanted to bring about a state of perfection, and translate his imaginations into reality. What St. Paul 'imagined' to do, Luther really 'did' it, Shaw believes.

What should our redeemer be like? Like 'John Barleycorn', Shaw states humorously. John Barleycorn is the personified name of barley in folklore. Just as John Barleycorn does not die, so also our redeemer is immortal. There is no end of him. God is in the seed, and the seed never dies - the seed becomes the fruit, fruit is then eaten, then again it is buried in the earth, and finally it grows again to fruitfulness, and this eternal circle continues. Our redeemer is exactly like this. He will feed us, leading to His apparent death; and then again rise up to life, and repeat the same process.

People very easily sustain the belief that Jesus is not the son of Joseph but of the Holy Ghost. Interestingly enough, St. Matthew and St. Luke present different accounts of the genealogy of Jesus. But, what is most interesting, people equally believe both the accounts with equal veneration, Shaw states. He believes, this may be the result of some interpolation by some later writers. "As the Gospels

20. Preface, Ch. Completion of the Scheme by Luther and Calvin, P-xxv.

contd...
stand”, writes Shaw, “St. Matthew and St. Luke give genealogies (the two are different) establishing the descent of Jesus through Joseph from the royal house of David, and yet declare that not Joseph but the Holy Ghost was the father of Jesus. It is therefore now held that the story of the Holy Ghost is a later interpolation borrowed from the Greek and Roman imperial traditions”.

The interpolation theory can be justified by the accounts of St. Paul, who believed that Jesus was the son of Joseph, but “rose from the dead after three days as the son of God”. Strangely enough, these three beliefs are equally entertained by the people without any objective review. “These three views”, writes Shaw, “are accepted simultaneously without intellectual discomfort”.

If this unfounded trend continues, Shaw fears, a time will certainly come when the similar kind of divine parenthood would be claimed for all. This divine parenthood would be claimed to “very eminent persons in Roman imperial times”. That is why, he declares: “Let us admit that without the proper clues the Gospels are, to a modern educated person, nonsensical and incredible, whilst the Apostles are unreadable”.

22. *ibid-
23. *ibid- p-xxix.
24. *ibid- contd...
He further holds that if these difficulties are properly settled "Jesus becomes an intelligible and consistent person. His reasons for going "like a lamb to the slaughter" instead of saving himself as Mahomet did, become quite clear. The narrative becomes as credible as any other historical narrative of the period." 25

Shaw also points out that the four narratives tell four different stories regarding the birth, life, and activities of Jesus. Each Evangelist differs (often basically) from the other. Shaw starts with St. Matthew. The Gospel of St. Matthew, writes Shaw, "does not profess to be the evidence of an eye-witness". Secondly, St. Matthew writes like a Chronicler. "He is telling the story of Jesus", says Shaw, "as Holinshed told the story of Macbeth, except that, for a reason to be given later on, he must have collected his material and completed his book within the lifetime of persons contemporary with Jesus". Shaw further points out that the Gospels were actually written in Greek, while Jesus spoke in Aramaic (a dialect of Palestine). For an objective assessment of the Gospels this fact should be seriously considered.

Shaw compares St. Matthew more with the famous chronicler, Holinshed, than with writers like Benvenuto Cellini, Benvenuto Cellini, according to him, wrote basing his facts

27. Ibid, P-xxx. contd....
and figures on what he had himself seen or did. This is not the case with Holinshed or Froissart, although we enjoy them, but very little do we factually believe them. Shaw repeatedly declares: "Do not forget, then, that Matthew is Holinshed and not Benvenuto Cellini".

After reading the Gospel of St. Matthew (Matthew, ch. 1, vr. 18-23) Shaw comes to the definite conclusion that St. Matthew also believed in the traditional divine parenthood of Jesus. Towards the latter part of the Gospel nothing is said or indicated to prove that Jesus knew anything about it, or was told of it.

The life-sketch of Jesus (Matthew, ch. 13, vr. 13-15) depicted in the chapters mentioned is not accepted by the other Evangelists. Similarly, the Gospel of St. John is completely different from those of the other Evangelists. St. John, in fact, repudiates St. Matthew. Shaw finds the most important point of similarity between St. Matthew and St. John i.e. both of them treated history and biography "as mere records of the fulfilment of ancient Jewish prophecies."

Analytically scrutinizing all these details Shaw holds the view that even if we are to believe in something we must definitely know what to believe and what to throw away.

29. Ibid- p-xxxI. contd...
because we are practically in a cross-road of multi-
various beliefs. Hence the confusion and chaos in our
moral and religious world.

Although Shaw does not disregard John the Baptist,
yet he does not accept his ways, and calls him 'savage'.
The ways of John the Baptist are abnormally crude as
against the ways of Jesus, whom Shaw calls 'civilized'.
Jesus did not like the ways of John the Baptist, such as,
persecution, sacrifices, asceticism and other crude attempts
to satisfy God.

Jesus, according to Shaw, was greatly free from the
conventions of his time. He was tolerant of everything,
even of his sworn enemies. He mixed with all sorts of
people, including people with fatal diseases. He advised
people to remain happy and satisfied because he firmly
believed that man's suffering did not give any pleasure
to God. Incidentally, Shaw points out that Jesus was in
the habit of breaking Sabbath; and he did not have any
special respect for the priestly class; he never visited the
synagogues; and discouraged 'fasting'. Shaw liked these
qualities of Jesus, although he was equally conscious of
bad qualities as well. But what Shaw resents is the fact
that people have either misunderstood Jesus or misinter-
preted him. Thus, the actual ideals of Jesus are not to be
found in the Christianity as it does exist today.

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Shaw does not find the symptoms of a true 'Proselytist' in Jesus. Jesus, according to him, was against the idea of Christianizing people of other religious beliefs. He never wanted to Christianize his disciples from Judaism.

"A point of considerable practical importance today", writes Shaw, "is that he expressly repudiates the idea that forms of religion, once rooted, can be weeded out and replanted with the flowers of foreign faith". Shaw refers to the saying of Jesus - "if you try to root up the tares you will root up the wheat as well". In this sense, the Christian missionary enterprises are "flatly contrary to his advice", Shaw states. Like Jesus, Shaw also firmly believed, "if you convert a man brought up in another creed, you invariably demoralize him".

To recapitulate, Shaw commends some of the good qualities of Jesus. Similarly, he wants to develop those qualities in every man. Those qualities are as follows:

1. Jesus puts no stress on 'baptism' or 'vow'. He puts special stress on 'conduct' rather than on 'creed'.
2. Jesus advocates 'communism', i.e. the "widening of the private family" into a large family of mankind "under the fatherhood of God". He treats every individual as an organic unit of the family of mankind.

31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid. contd...
3. He wants to abolish 'revenge' as 'unjustment' as we have them in their conventional terms.

4. He does not have any regular and fixed prayer house. Nor does he have 'regular congregations'.

5. Jesus does not have good opinion regarding his own miraculous feats, and he always wants to do away with them.

St. Matthew sometimes refers to the ugly qualities of Jesus. He is depicted as a bigoted and as an exceptionally proud man. "Jesus who regards his mission as addressed exclusively to 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel'", 34 observes Shaw. Shaw also refers to the story of a woman of Canaan, who implored Jesus to cure the disease of her living daughter. But, Jesus, instead of curing the disease, rebuked her - "it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." 35 The woman could soothe and soften Jesus by her pertinent reply - "Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table". Thus, St. Matthew sometimes wants to depict the most objectionable and ugly qualities of Jesus. Shaw is conscious of this depiction, and he wants to expose the duplicity maintained by St. Matthew in his characterisation of Jesus.

Basing on St. Matthew's narrative Shaw points out that

34. Preface: Ch. Matthew Imputes Bigotry to Jesus, P-xxxviii.
35. -Ibid-
36. -Ibid- contd...
like any other ordinary man of the world Jesus was also a lover of flattery. He was inebriated with the conviction that he was the 'son of God'; and he wanted others to believe and admit that. St. Peter, his disciple, admitted "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God". Pleased with Peter, he makes him the founder of his church. Even till his death Jesus was preoccupied and obsessed with the conviction that he was the 'son of God'. He told his disciples that if he wished he could "summon twelve million angels to his aid". But at the last moment he was disillusioned, and painfully breathed his last, saying, "Why God: why hast thou forsaken me?" Shaw has been highly critical of this line. St. Matthew ends his narrative saying that Jesus three days after his death rises up and comes in the midst of his disciples and continues his preachings. There abruptly ends the narrative. "The story has no ending", writes Shaw.

St. Matthew's narrative gives the suggestion that Jesus behaved like an aristocrat, as if he belonged to a privileged class. Matthew's image of Jesus is of the 'Ruskin-Morris class', Shaw observes. But, Shaw does not totally accept such a characterisation. Jesus, he says, was a communist; who believed that the conventional domestic

37. *Preface; ch. Class Type of Matthew's Jesus; p-xliii.*

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ties retard the progress of soul. So, he stood for the liquidation of the family in its smaller form. Jesus also firmly believed in the proverb "The nearer the church, the farther from God." In this, Shaw is in conformity with Jesus.

But after a close scrutiny Shaw conclusively declares that the place of Jesus is no higher than that of 'Confucius or Plato', setting aside the theory of his divinity.

Then Shaw comes to St. Mark's narrative. There he finds certain things completely different from those of St. Matthew's. Some important features of St. Mark's Gospel are as follows:

1. Mark's narrative seems to be older than St. Matthew's.
2. Mark maintains brevity in his delineation.
3. According to Mark, Jesus, after his crucifixion, goes on to Heaven. And many women, including Mary Magdalene followed Jesus upto Jerusalem, whereas according to Matthew's narrative Jesus is resurrected after three days and he joins his disciples and continues his preachings, promising to stay with them "to the close of the age".
4. Mark does not say anything about the birth of Jesus. He starts with baptism of Jesus by John.

38. Re: face: ch. less Type of Matthew's Jesus; p-xlii.
39. St. ark, ch. 15; vr. 40-41.
40. St. Matthew, ch. 28; vr. 20. contd...
5. According to St. Mark and St. John, Jesus is the native of Nazareth, and not of Bethlehem as St. Luke and St. Matthew hold.

6. Mark refers to the story of the widow's mite untouched by Matthew.

7. Mark does not make any mention of the traditional Old Jewish prophesies. "Mark earns our gratitude," writes Shaw, "by making no mention of the old prophecies, and thereby not only saves time, but avoids the absurd implication that Christ was merely going through a pre-determined ritual, like the works of a clock, instead of living."

8. Mark tells us that Jesus, after being resurrected, warned people, that those who would believe him would be saved, and those who would not believe him would be damned. Shaw does not mind this report very seriously, because, according to many paleographers, such reports are interpolations by later scribes.

Having considered all these facts, Shaw conclusively declares: "On the whole Mark leaves the modern reader where Matthew left him."

Shaw maintains a derogatory attitude towards the narrative of St. Luke, whom he calls a 'literary artist'.

41. St. Mark, ch. 12, vr. 42-44.
42. ref. ch. Mark, p-xiv.
43. Ibid-p-xiv. contd....
endoed with the 'touch of Parisian romance'. Luke, Shaw observes, tells his story not as a chronicler like Matthew, but as a literary artist, "telling the story for the sake of telling it." Luke has made Jesus more a 'woman's hero' - "Jesus is represented exactly as he is represented in the Lourdes cinematograph, by a handsome actor". Moreover, Luke has interpreted the 'thaumaturgic powers' of Jesus as 'signs' of his divinity; and this, Shaw says, is in complete contradiction to the dogmatic view of it.

St. John, the fourth Evangelist, according to Shaw, offers us "a new story and a new character" of Jesus:

"The Gospel of John is a surprise after the others". What is most important, St. John claims himself to be an eye-witness, because of his being a disciple of Jesus: "The disciple whom Jesus loved". What Shaw complains against is that like St. Matthew St. John also puts special emphasis on the old prophesies, which Jesus is said to have tried to invariably fulfil. For this reason Shaw upbraids him as 'stupid' and 'superficial'.

From the story point of view Shaw finds hardly any basic difference among the four Gospels: in essence all the four are of the same strain. He does not accept them as something very 'sacred'. He, rather, examines and

44. ref: face: ch. The Touch of Parisian Romance: p-xlviii.

contd...
cross-examines thee with the eye of an anatomist carrying on a delicate surgery. In the Gospel of St. John, despite its objectionable points, Shaw finds a better Jesus, a more acceptable Jesus, from a sound religious point of view. Shaw clearly says: "In spite of the suspicions roused by John's idiosyncrasies, his narrative is of enormous importance to those who go to the Gospels for a credible modern religion".

Behind such appreciative statements Shaw has the deep-rooted belief in the original divinity of man. Every man is the son of the Almighty; and in that sense, man has a brighter possibility. The manifestation of that divinity is made by the consciousness of it. This idea of Shaw has been properly expressed in the Gospel of St. John, who for the first time says, saying "I and the Father are one".

And the most significant saying of Jesus told by St. John, that endears John to Shaw, is "I came that they may have life, and have it more abundantly". Such a saying, Shaw points out, reinforces the vital idea conveyed in the 82nd psalm:

"You are gods
Some of the Most High, all of you".

Regarding the credibility of the Gospels, Shaw holds a very liberal view. The question of credibility, he says,

47. Preface, ch. The Peculiar Theology of Jesus, p-1v.
48. John, ch. 10; v. 30.
49. John, ch. 10; v. 10. contd...
may not always depend on truth. It is primarily a 'subjective condition'. Despite all his ratiocinative arguments, Shaw also admits "Life itself is the miracle of miracles". Yet, he wants to make an objective study of all the Gospels and other religious articles, although "belief is literally a matter of taste".

Shaw is violently against the Christian iconolatry, that treats Jesus more as an idol than as a real man. This lack of identification leads to fanaticisms and religious superstitions, which develop into deeprooted beliefs. Such believers create more troubles among mankind than the non-believers or the disbelievers do. "Then it is not disbelief", Shaw says, "that is dangerous in our society: it is belief".

Shaw upholds some of the salient features of the teachings of Jesus Christ, whom he does not want to worship idolatrously, as the so-called Christians do. He admits the personal greatness of Jesus, who said "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you"; and who wanted to liquidate our traditional family pattern. He wanted to broaden it into a family of all human beings, each thinking for the other as his brother. He wanted to abolish 'private property' for the larger interest of humanity as a whole. Shaw has the

51. - Ibid-, P-Iix.
52. Preface, Ch. Christian Iconolatry and the perial of the Iconoclast, P-Ixiv. contd...
highest honour and reverence for such doctrines of Jesus, who, according to him, wanted to bring about a social change followed by the corresponding healthy spiritual revolution, making man sincerely realize his place and worth in the scheme of things. This aspect of Jesus appeals to Shaw. He does not stand for that Christianity, which is isolated from the basic problems of the people.

Furthermore, Shaw seeks to explore Jesus from some other angles too. He finds a first-rank economist and a biologist hid in Jesus. Christ's idea of liquidation of personal property is based on his conviction: "where your treasure is, there will your heart also".

But, alas, Shaw deplores; the true spirit and strain of Christianity pronounced by Jesus are lost. Christianity is said to be crucified with the crucifixion of Christ himself. Once commenting on Christianity in Dublin Daily Express Shaw categorically remarked: "Christianity as a specific doctrine was slain with Jesus, suddenly and utterly". It is the result of misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the apostles. They have practically dragged Christianity down to the level of party politics.


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Shaw holds St. Paul basically responsible for this contamination of Christianity. St. Paul, formerly known as 'Saul,' persecuted the Christians brutally. This Roman Nationalist one day heard Christ say from the clouds: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" From that day he converted himself into a Christian, and sought to preach the Gospels of Jesus Christ. Thereby, he wanted to consolidate the hold of Christianity with a missionary zeal. But the result, according to Shaw, was miserably negative. In the hand of St. Paul, Christianity is corrupted, contaminated, perverted, and completely disfigured. Suddenly, says Shaw, St. Paul became a victim of some debilitating terrors, such as the "terror of sin," the "terror of death," and the "terror of sex," while Jesus Christ was absolutely above such terrors. He accepted them as they are. Jesus Christ freely and unhesitatingly mixed up with the sinners, dined with them, drunk with them, and sought to identify himself with them. But this sense of acceptance and toleration is totally lacking in the Pauline doctrine. In the words of Shaw - "The great danger of conversion in all ages has been that when the religion of the high mind is offered to the lower mind, the lower mind feeling its fascination

54. Acts ch. 9; vr. 4, 5, 6.

contd....
without understanding it, and being incapable of rising to it, drags it down to its level by degrading it. Years ago I said that the conversion of a savage to Christianity is the conversion of Christianity to savagery. The conversion of Paul was no conversion at all; it was Paul who converted the religion that has raised one man above sin and death into a religion that delivered millions of men so completely into their dominion that their own common nature became a denial of life. Paul had no intention of surrendering either his Judaism or his Roman citizenship to the new normal world (as Robert Benson called it) of communism and Jesusism.

Further, complaining against the Pauline theology Shaw says: "Paul reconstructed the old salvationism from which Jesus had vainly tried to redeem him, and produced a fantastic theology which is still the most amazing thing of the kind known to us. Being intellectually an inveterate Roman Rationalist, always discarding the irrational real thing for the unreal but rationalisable postulate, he began by discarding man as he is, and substituted a postulate which he called Adam."

Another point of Pauline theology that Shaw attacks is his undue attachment of sinfulness to sex, almost going to the verge of making celibacy compulsory.

55. Ref. Paul, p. XCV.
56. Ibid., p. XCVI.

contd....
Later on, realizing the futility and impossibility of such a code he sanctioned the institution of marriage only as an instrument of relieving man of his sexual appetites, eventually misinterpreting the necessity of marriage and relegating the status of woman to mere servile and slavery. Having considered all these points of Pauline theology Shaw again says: "In fact, no sooner has Jesus knocked over the dragon of superstition than Paul boldly set it on its legs again in the name of Jesus". That is why, Shaw denies Christianity to Paul, saying, "He is no more a Christian than Jesus was a Baptist; he is a disciple of Jesus only as Jesus was a disciple of John". As this non-Christian apostle vanguarded the whole Christian movement, the result was chaos and confusion.

Shaw is equally critical of the Acts of the Apostles, which, he thinks, often contradict and negate the genuine spirit of Jesus. The Acts of the Apostles, he thinks, are marked by thoughtlessness. The authorship of the Acts is sometimes dubiously ascribed to Luke. In the Acts when Paul speaks to the people he often dwells on his previous misdeeds perpetrated on the Christians, while Jesus Christ always kept silent concern-

57. Preface; ch. Paul; p-xcvii.
58. Preface; ch. Paul's Qualities; p-ci.
St. Paul always threatened people, saying, those who would not listen to him would be punished with divine wrath; and for the first time with him Christianity started becoming intolerant of the non-conformists and the so-called heretics. Hence the advent of religious persecutions and devilish torture. The children were being threatened with the horrors of hell. Shaw calls it "the vilest and most mischievous of them".

What Jesus Christ fought against and died for St. Paul revived. Shaw complains this revivalistic spirit of St. Paul, who revived 'Baptism', denounced and discouraged by Jesus. In the "Epistle to Romans" St. Paul makes a lot of fuss about the necessity of 'circumcision'; whereas Jesus Christ was above all these externals; because he gave more importance to 'conduct' than to 'code'; and he maintained a completely secular attitude to religion.

Concerning the relevance of the Jesuistic doctrines Shaw says that his sociological, economic, as well as biological views are relevant and meaningful even in the context of the modern civilization. "In any other

59. Romans; ch. 2; vrs. 25, 26, 27, 28, 29. (The Bible). contd...
lights", Shaw adds, "they are neither credible, intelligible, nor interesting except to people upon whom the delusion imposes". Besides, Jesus Christ was an exponent of 'Life-force', which he calls 'Heavenly father'. This aspect of Jesus highly endears him to Shaw.

Having made an objective investigation into both the New Testament and the Old Testament Shaw points out that sometimes a single story is being told differently by different authors, leading to a great deal of confusion in the minds of the readers. As a result, they cannot say which one is real and which one is interpolation. There is still a great deal of misgivings associated with the famous 'Sermon on the Mount'. This is often treated as an interpolation. The historical researchers and the paleographers have not yet been able to come to a final decision on this famous sermon. Thus, the Bible has become a medley of both truths and falsehoods, observes Shaw. He wants us to develop an objective attitude towards the Bible in particular and religion in general. He discards absolute credulity. Absolute credulity makes man spiritually dwarf fish, although he feels himself to be happier than the sceptics. "The fact that a believer", Shaw adds, "is happier than a sceptic is no more to the
point than the fact that a drunken man is happier than a sober one. The happiness of credulity is a cheap and dangerous quality of happiness, and by no means a necessity of life. In this regard, Shaw is hopeful more of a Socratic man than a Wesleyan man: "Whether Socrates got as much happiness out of life as Wesley is an unanswerable question, but a nation of Socrateses would be much safer and happier than a nation of Wesleys; and its individuals would be higher in the evolutionary scale. At all events it is in the Socratic man and not in the Wesleyan that our hope lies now".

Despite a lot of approvals and disapprovals, Shaw sincerely admits the crying necessity of a healthy and positive religion on all levels - personal, social, and political - each interdependent and interrelated. "Government is impossible without a religion," he writes, "that is, without a body of common assumptions the open mind never acts." He also appreciates the necessity of 'dogma' only up to a reasonable extent. He does not want to thoroughly rid himself of 'dogma', which, he thinks, is equally necessary up to a certain point on all levels, even on the governmental level: "On the other...

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62. Preface, Ch. The Importance of Hell in the Salvation Scheme, p-cxxv.
63. Ibid.
64. Preface, Ch. Christianity and the Empire, p-cxxii-cxxiv.

contd...
other hand, Governments cannot really divest themselves of religion, or even of dogmas. **Dogmas are sometimes necessary evils, which a man and a Government cannot do without.** "The man who waits to make an entirely reasonable will dies intestate", Shaw observes while making an endeavour to defend the relative significance of dogmas. Absolute perfection cannot be achieved overnight; it is an evolutionary process.

(II)

The importance of the play, *Androcles and the Lion*, is more-or-less shadowy. We do not find any organic connecting link between the preface and the play. And yet the play throws a considerable light on Shaw’s religious ideas.

65. Preface, Ch. Christianity and the Empire, p-cxxi.

contd....
Various interpretations can be made of the story of the play. But, the most important note that Shaw wants to stress is freedom in religion. Religion should not imply compulsion of any kind. Religion should not bind men to strictly codified religious doctrines. The last speech of Androcles is significant - "while we stand together, no cage for you; no slavery for me".

Androcles represents another aspect of Shaw's belief. Shaw always accepted Jesus as a human moralist and not as the son of God in the narrow prejudiced sense, as we have already stated. He treated Jesus as a son of God only in the sense of what Jesus himself said - "The kingdom of heaven is within you". As a socialist, Shaw always accepted Jesus's ideas and application of communism even to family life. Androcles represents that communistic approach. He wanted to get rid of his wife, realizing the fact that conventional family attachments stood in the way of complete devotion to the will of God. Megara, his wife, always tried to divert Androcles from his pursuits. She accuses him of being "addicted to Christianity". She also complains that it is only for her husband's addiction to Christianity that they are dislodged from their home and hearth.

1. Androcles; act-II; p-49-50. contd...
"What can you do! You can return to your duty, and come back to your home and your friends, and sacrifice to the Gods as all respectable people do, instead of having us hunted out of house and home for being dirty disreputable blaspheming atheists".  

Androcles retorts instantly: -  

"I am not an atheist, dear; I am a Christian".  

Anything unconventional or unofficial was treated as blaspheming or as atheism. In that sense, every fresh religious movement has been treated as atheism. 

(III) 

In the first act of the play the Roman Captain forbids the marching Christian prisoners to sing Christian hymns: "There must be an end to the profanity and blasphemy of singing Christian hymns on the march". Lavinia, a woman Christian prisoner, calls it "cruel persecution". But, the Captain foolishly wants to defend the stand of the Roman rulers -

"Persecution is not a term applicable to the acts of the Emperor. The Emperor is the defender of the Faith. In throwing you to the lions he will be upholding the interests of religion 

2. Prologue, p-3 (Grisnt Longmans).  
3. Ibid.  
4. The Captain; act-I; p-8. contd....
in Rome. If you were to throw him to the lions, that would no doubt be persecution.

The Christians laugh at such a brainless and baseless religious belief of the Roman Rulers. Every Christian prisoner was guided by the fearless spirit of martyrdom for a religious cause. Although each held martyrdom in a different way, the question as to whether martyrdom is really a Christian act or not is an important point. Jesus Christ never upheld the idea of martyrdom for any religious purpose. Unlike John the Baptist he rather wanted to get rid of it. In this light, the craze for religious martyrdom opted by the Christians like Androcles, Lavinia, Ferrovious etc. is most unchristian. Each prisoner opts for martyrdom for his or her personal convictions. Lavinia did not accept martyrdom in its narrow sense. She was guided by a strong spiritual faith. She sought to test her belief through her physical martyrdom. To the Captain she said:

"No; but my faith, like your sword, needs testing. Can you test your sword except by staking your life on it."

Spintho, another Christian prisoner, misunderstands martyrdom. He is prepared to suffer; but he foolishly holds

5. The Captain; Act-I; p-9-10.
6. Lavinia; Act-I; p-11. contd....
the view that "every martyr goes to heaven, no matter what he does."

Ferrovious, the so-called 'turn-the-other-cheek gentleman', is also prepared to get killed. He maintains complete passivity. But, he, often turns wild at the demand of situations. He has been successful in converting Lentulus on to his side merely on the strength of his physical force. A sense of toleration was his additional asset.

Androcles, a Christian prisoner himself, does not accept the view of Spintho - "martyrdom pays all scores". He says that the people of the kind of Spintho will find heaven dull and lifeless - "I can't help thinking that heaven will be very dull for a man of your temperament". This is definitely a dig at the narrow and prejudiced sense of the term 'martyrdom'. Androcles admits - "we are all sinners". Thus, he denied the conventional barrier built up between the so-called virtues and the so-called vices. Androcles did not believe in the forced prayers. That is why, he did not accept the ways of Ferrovious, who forced Spintho to pray to God.

7. Spintho; act-I; p-17.
8. Androcles; act-I; p-22. contd....
In the second act of the play Jpintho gives way to fear. But Ferrovious does not abandon his passivity. Instead of passively surrendering, Ferrovious takes the help of physical force, and ultimately joins the rato-rarian guard. In this regard, some comparison can be made between Ferrovious and Anthony Anderson of The Devil's Disciple.

The conversation between the Captain and Lavinia is significant. The Captain wants to pinpoint the baselessness and meaninglessness in dying for the imaginary stories and legends of the holy scriptures. Lavinia instantly retorts, saying, "It meant more than that, Captain. It meant that a man cannot die for a story and a dream. None of us believed the stories and the dreams more devoutly than poor Jpintho, but he could not face the great reality." Maybe, it is the consciousness of some higher reality that Lavinia is going to die for.

Androcles, in the long run, tames the lion, that was let loose to tear him asunder. This astonishes the emperor, who had no other alternative but to admit "I can no longer doubt the truth of Christianity." This power of Androcles is symbolic of his supermanliness that Shaw is madly after. In short, truth prevails over

falsehood. All the endeavours of falsehood are defeated.

Regarding the overall message of the play we must point out that Shaw always advocated for a healthy flexibility in any religious doctrine. Rigidly codified religious doctrines crucify man to immobile and stagnant ideas. This leads to unhealthy conventionalization and dogmatization. Shaw also stands for a deep spiritual belief supplemented by some rationalistic convictions, mainly exemplified by Androcles and Lavinia. Without this spiritual belief man cannot rise to a higher degree of spiritual progress. This spiritual belief, Shaw affirms, will constantly enthuse and inspire man to rise up to a level of higher consciousness.