THE RELIGION OF BERNARD SHAW

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CHAPTER I.

THE SHOULDERS HE STOOD ON

Bernard Shaw discovered early in his life that a private prophet from the other side of the Irish Sea had little chance of winning the public ear in the Capital of Victoria's Empire until he took his trumpet and blew hard and long. The Victorians at this time had had their share of prophets, and one cannot blame them if they were unimpressed when this redbearded messenger mounted his cart and announced again: Lo I am he! G.B.S. the journalist set himself to invent a reputation for Bernard Shaw. He advertised himself so sedulously that, on his own confession, he found himself while still in middle life almost as legendary a figure as the Flying Dutchman. Three generations have congratulated themselves that they were found worthy to share the same years with him; and in deference to his wisdom they have dug up and honoured the bones of many prophets spurned by their own age whom Shaw found worthy of his approval.

The belief that no idea can be original seems to have been an accepted maxim among Victorian critics. Not indeed that it is an unsafe way of thinking, but it irked the young Irishman who had just reacted violently against the pietistic and tradition-bound atmosphere of his Dublin home, and who had, moreover, from his early years taken it as a matter of course that he was to be a great man. He held, "as firmly as St.Thomas Aquineas, that all truths, ancient or modern, are divinely inspired",[1]

1. The Adventures of the Black Girl in her Search for God. p. 59

yet he knew by observation and introspection "that the instrument on which the inspiring force plays may be a very faulty one."[1] It is clear that he regarded critics as faulty instruments. It must be admitted that he spoke as one having knowledge, because his first laurels and his first pay check were won as critic during those struggling times in London when he was a young man; and this period of his career lasted through several ~~paris~~ pairs of hob-nailed boots. While he tramped the galleries wearing this protective equipment, (it was also money-saving equipment), and while he sat in the front rows of innumerable playhouses, conspicuous in morning coat among his well-groomed colleagues, he was learning how to inoculate himself against the germ of professional criticism; and this he turned to good account when later, as a creative artist, he came to be the talk of London and of the world. His method was to beat his wouldbe assailants to the punch by anticipating their objections. These sly protective defenses were fortified with dogmatic dissertations and scientific treatises a la Bernard Shaw, and the whole thing was expanded into a long-winded essay that was delightful for its powerful prose and for its stimulating effect upon the mind, and then attached to the front of the book under the title of Preface.

In the Preface to Major Barbara Shaw took the critics into his confidence concerning the disputed question of his literary relationships. Up to this time critics and professors had had a heyday with their speculations. Everyone, of course, looked to the continent to pick out the lucky thoughtsmith whom the oracle might be said to claim as his intellectual kinsman. At the mention of Superman commentators rubbed their hands

1. The Adventures of the Black Girl in her Search for God. p.59

with glee and shouted with one voice: Nietzsche. When a play came close to debunking the Ideal, or when Shaw drove off the stage with a certain violence and a feeling of well done! the sentimental heroine beloved of late Victorian audiences, or when he wrote "The nation's morals are like its teeth: the more decayed they are the more it hurts to touch them",[1] every dramatic critic ran to his typewriter and wrote: Ibsen. Similarly when Anne Whitefield, under pressure of the Life-Force, began to work her will on Jack Tanner in Man and Superman, the better paid critics who had heard of The World as Will and Idea began to discourse learnedly about Schopenhauer.

All these opinions took severe punishment when the author himself drew aside the veil in the Preface to Major Barbara. He confessed that there was something flattering " in this simple faith in my accomplishment as a linguist and my erudition as a philosopher."[2] He castigated the critics for their "unpatriotic habit" of looking to the Continent for all dramatic material that is not common, and all ideas that are not superficial. They might well search "in these islands" for books that were written in English by Englishmen who thought in English, and even by Irishmen who wrote in English but thought in Irish. Shaw decries the tendency to father his ideas on some heresiarch in northern or eastern Europe whenever his view struck people "as being at all outside the range of, say, an ordinary suburban churchwarden";[3] and he proceeds to explain how ideas that were so completely un-English that no Victorian could even

1. Prefaces, p.434
2. Ibid. p.115
3. Ibid. p.115

conceive of them, had in fact found expression at home in English before Englishman heard that they had found expression in German or Norwegian. It is true that many of the authors mentioned were Irish and Scottish. There was Charles Lever who wrote a story called A Day's Ride: A Life's Romance . Shaw read scraps of it when he was a child. He tells us that he found there a good treatment of a "very romantic hero, trying to live bravely, chivalrously, and powerfully by dint of mere romance-fed imagination, without courage, without means, without knowledge, without skill, without anything real except his bodily appetites"[1]. When, however, in later years, Shaw complains, he deals in the tragi-comic irony of the conflict between real life and the romantic imagination, critics never affiliate him with his "countryman and immediate forerunner, Charles Lever", while they confidently derive him from a Norwegian author "of whose language (he does) not know three words".

It would be a crass error to suppose that Bernard Shaw never came under the spell of the fascination of idealism and romance. Just as Ibsen worked his way through romance to real life, so Shaw found his feet in realism only after tripping several times over the novels of a romantic imagination. Six years of extreme poverty in London and five unpublished novels constituted the bulk of his debt to an immature and visionary view of the world:"nearly a million words, and not one carelessly written sentence"[2]. According to Henderson, when someone, in 1892, suggested that he was,of course, a follower of Ibsen,

"Shaw replied with a great show of indignation: What! I a follower of Ibsen! My good sir, as far as England is concerned, Ibsen is a follower of mine. In 1880, when I was only twenty-four, I wrote a book called The Irrational Knot, which reads nowadays like an Ibsenite novel"[3]

1. Prefaces , p. 115
2. J.P.Hackett. Shaw: George versus Bernard. p.95
3. Archibald Henderson. George Bernard Shaw pp.61,62

The novel undoubtedly has some affinities with A Doll's House. The institution of marriage is not shown to be irrational; rather is marriage studied against the background of contemporary society where the accepted moral code was no more than a cloak for the ingrained snobbery of the middle class, the contempt for those lower in social pretensions if not in social station. If Shaw was an Ibsenite without knowing it when he wrote The Irrational Knot, he became an unqualified champion of Ibsen during the years following the first performance of A Doll's House in London. It was presented in 1889, and then came the Ibsen row. There had been a Wagner row, but that had been a very select affair for musical critics. The man in the street doesn't easily get worked up about music, but he gets wildly excited about the domestic affairs which Ibsen was using as material for his plays. In 1890 Bernard Shaw laid the keel of his dramatic career with the publication of The Quintessence of Ibsenism. Here he laid down the thesis for all that followed as firmly and definitely as he knew how. The argument was developed as a side issue in The Perfect Wagnerite (1898), thrown into dramatic form in Man and Superman (1903), and followed up with full-dress scientific and historic display in Back to Methuselah (1921).

"When Ibsen wrote Ghosts," says Henderson, "his name was unknown to Shaw. But it is undeniable that, in the eighties, Shaw was forging towards precisely similar conclusions. He had felt in his inmost being the loathing of the nineteenth century for itself, and had marked with exultation the ferocity with which Schopenhauer and Shelley, Lasalle and Karl Marx, Ruskin and Carlysle, Morris and Wagner had rent the bosom that bore them. Smouldering within his own breast was that same detestation of all the orthodoxies, and respectabilities, and ideals railed at by these political, social, and moral anarchs."[1]

1. Henderson. op.cit. p.271

Shaw was not slow to grasp the unlimited possibilities for effective propaganda offered by the stage. His master already had made of this possibility a 'happy' reality in Norway; by now the ripple which he had started had become a tidal wave that had left its mark on many a European shore. Bernard Shaw was not an ordinary playwright. He was a specialist in "immoral and heretical plays."[1] He was a Fabian and knew that gradual action could be as effective in the theatre as in the committee room. He could not spring his ideas too suddenly on the public. He set them out boldly for the elect in his prefaces, but it was necessary to wean the people slowly and patiently. Infiltration was the best policy, and in Candida (1894), The Devils Disciple (1897), and Man and Superman ,-or for that matter in any succession of his plays during the pre-war period - it can be seen at work. As he himself said:

"My reputation has been gained by my persistent struggle to force the public to reconsider its morals. In particular, I regard much current morality as to economic and sexual relations as disastrously wrong; and I regard certain doctrines of the Christian religion as understood in England today with abhorrence."[2]

The main effect of Ibsen's plays, according to Shaw, is to keep before the public the importance of being always prepared to act immorally. It must be assumed that in using the word "morality" he is doing so with reference to the Latin root "mores", which means, customs. He has insisted from time to time that such is his intended meaning. The following excerpt from The Quintessence of Ibsenism is valid only in the light of this interpretation:

"Immorality does not necessarily imply mischievous conduct; it implies conduct, mischievous or not, which does not conform to current ideals.

1. Prefaces. p.408
2. Ibid. p.408

All religions begin with a revolt against morality, and perish when morality conquers them and stamps out such words as grace and sin, substituting for them morality and immorality."[1]

The statement that Ibsen's plays have an immoral tendency is, in the sense in which it is used, quite true. It is likewise true, in the same sense, of the plays of Bernard Shaw. When the young Irishman arrived in London at the age of twenty he was already conscious of a mission, but the limitations of his experience, and education necessitated an intensive period of apprenticeship. He confesses that, at this period, he never felt inclined to write anymore than he felt inclined to breathe; and it is a fact noted by his biographers that as a boy his imaginative mood had often expressed itself in artistic outpourings. His destiny, he felt, was to educate London, but he had neither studied his pupil, nor related his ideas properly to the common stock of human knowledge. He was proud of his Irish origin.

"I am", he wrote, " a genuine typical Irishman of the Danish,Norman, Cromwellian,and (of course) Scotch invasions. I am violently and arrogantly Protestant by family tradition; but let no English Government therefore count on my allegiance."[2]

London, in 1876, was the very centre of the commercial world. Iron ships, barely known in 1850, were steaming from her port bearing away the surplus products of the "workshop of Europe", cutting costs, and multiplying profits. Shaw studied his new surroundings with the perplexed awe of a country boy newly arrived in the large city to commence his education. He was not uneducated, but what he knew was exactly what an educated Englishman didn't know or didn't believe. He regarded London

1. The Quintessence of Ibsenism. p.188

2. Prefaces. p.440

as his private laboratory, turning his microscope on the bustling humanity that came and went, seemingly bent on some purpose or other. To the Forsytes of those days, it seemed that all the ages of the world were but a preparation for this great age of Victoria, and that at last in their lifetime mankind, with England wellin the van, had arrived at a suitable resting place after the painful upward struggle of the centuries. Polite society was more interested in events abroad than in the lamentable condition of working-class houses at home, until in 1878 the Glasgow Bank failed for six million pounds, and bankruptcy and unemployment spread over the whole country in the great slump of 1879.

During this time, Shaw was so preoccupied with the problem of discovering himself, that he paid little attention to the world of business or politics. For the moment art was his religion, and Shelley was its prophet,but he was beginning to ~~new~~ feel his way, making tentative incursions into new fields endeavouring to fit into a scheme the endless facts and figures ~~he~~ now stored in his memory,(product of his irrepressible curiosity) and to classify the accumulated data gathered through painstaking research in the British Museum, and through minute observation of his fellowman, particularly of Bernard Shaw.

In the year 1882 a great light shone on him. He heard Henry George lecture on Land and Rent, and he suddenly saw past the people through the system round about him. The phrase "Property is theft" lighted up for him all that which had been in darkness; no progress is possible until human institutions are reformed. The fault, dear Brutus, is not in ourselves but in our stars. Shaw immersed himself in the study of economics, taking Das Kapital as his textbook. He bogged down on the theory of value, turned to Jevons for enlightenment, only to find that

the latter had expressed it in terms of unintelligible algebra rather than unintelligible economic jargon, reducing "value" to $y = f(x)$ and $y\,dx = du$. He bought a text book of mathematics and started a new study. Finally, dismissing Marxian economics as unsound, he struggled out of the quagmire in which the Socialist thinkers of London had become impaled as they wallowed in the hopeless confusion of abstruse economic phraseology. He seized upon that message of Das Kapital which had good propaganda value; he had a gift for laying hold of first principles, of seeing straight into the heart of the matter past the petty rivalries and bickerings of different groups who wasted their energies in endless disputes about petty heresies. At this crucial period in Shaw's career he was exactly in the mood for Marx's reduction of all conflicts to the conflict of classes for economic mastery, of all social forms to the economic forms of production and exchange.

"In Marx" says Henderson, "Shaw found a kindred spirit; for like Marx his whole life had bred in him a defiance of middle-class respectability, of revolt against its benumbing and paralysing influence. As Shaw once said:

"Marx's Capital is not a treatise on Socialism; it is a jeremiad against the bourgeoisie, supported by such a mass of evidence and such a relentless genius for denunciation as had never been brought to bear before."[1]

Next came the Fabian Society and Shaws life-long and fruitful association with Sydney and Beatrice Webb, its twin pillars; with Sydney Olivier, who was secretary of the Society for many years; with Graham Wallas and William Clarke of Oxford who were among the ablest contributors to Fabian literature; and with Thomas Davidson a disciple of Rosmini, who was convinced of the need for founding practical life on philosophical conceptions, and on a basis of natural religion. The

1. Henderson. op.cit. p.97

influence of Sydney Webb on Bernard Shaw, and the part that the Fabian Society played on English life during the past half-century offer ample material for a book. For our purpose it is significant that these things were of paramount importance as moulding influences during this momentous period in the life of Shaw during which he came to believe in Socialism as a creed capable of leading man to salvation, postulating a reform of human institutions as a prequisite to the reform of man. Through his association with the Fabian Society he learned about the practical application of Socialism, both as a religion to satisfy man's intrinsic need for contact with the metaphysical, and as a social philosophy that would help man profitably to adjust himself to his environment in the complicated modern world. In his writings he sometimes uses the term Socialism as synonymous with "the will of God", sometimes he equates it with "the religion of humanity", and it is to be noted that he distinguishes it sharply from Marxism. He writes:

"In short we must make a religion of Socialism. We must fall back on our will to Socialism, and resort to our reason only to find out the ways and means. And this we can do only if we conceive the will as a creative energy as Lamarck did; and totally renounce and abjure Darwinism, Marxism, and all the fatalistic, penny-in-the-slot theories of evolution whatever."[1]

Bernard Shaw looks down upon the world from many windows: to each man he comes in a different shape. In the Autocrat of the Breakfast Table, Oliver Wendell Holmes said that when two people meet there are always six persons present. But Shaw needed no party to sum up the total of his personalities. Like all men he plays many parts; like all men, out of the fulness of his heart his mouth speaks. What man can trace with any degree of accuracy the lineage of his own ideas, what thoughts are his own or what thoughts have been derived from the common fund of human knowledge? Shaw's pages bespeak an intimate acquaintance through their writings with

1. Henderson. op.cit. p.97

the leaders of thought in almost every age, while the history of his own life has been so intimately associated with the history of thought and action in England during the past seventy years that Hesketh Pearson prophesied that the period will in time be known as the Shavian Age. Because he belonged to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Shaw, being thus the heir to all knowledge accumulated during the patient, assiduous quest of past eras, is "indeed in some sort" all these prophets rolled in one, "standing as I am on their shoulders",[1] as he puts it. According to Henderson, "The decisive and revolutionary changes in (his) truly 'chequered' career were due, in almost all cases, to the adventitious or deliberate influence of some dominant personality in literature or in life."[2]

Of the philosophers native to Great Britain and Ireland, whose names he felt it to be a patriotic duty to rescue from oblivion and advertise, as against the more fashionable heresiarchs of the continent, besides Charles Lever, he acknowledges his debt to Steuart-Glennie and "the late" Captain Wilson. The latter believed in a metaphysical system called Comprehensionism, wrote many queer pamphlets, and invented the term "Crosstianity". Stewart-Glennie, a Scotsman, is credited with formulating the idea of a slave-morality long before people began to associate it with Nietzsche. He "regarded the slave-morality as an invention of the superior white race to subjugate the minds of the inferior races whom they wished to exploit, and who would have destroyed them by forces of numbers if their minds had not been subjugated."[3] Wilson's moral criticism of

1. Prefaces. p.126
2. Henderson. op.cit. p.90
3. Prefaces. p.118

Christianity was not a historical theory of it like Nietzsches; the latter however has been the victim in England of a single much-quoted sentence containing the phrase "big blonde beast".

Shaw has ever been a stumbling block to his contemporaries because of the apparently irreconcilable elements in his teaching. More than once his opponents have retreated in exasperation. They learned in due time that it was rash, unless their weapons were of steel, to measure controversial swords with a man who boasted with sincerity that he never undertook to write about a subject until he was sure he knew six times as much about it as anybody else. Those of them who ever came close to understanding the Shavian message discovered the key to it in the man rather than in the writings. Though he takes his religion seriously, Shaw cannot refrain from making jokes on and off the stage, which is his pulpit. He is a congenital leg-puller, and he finds fanatics irresistible. His extravagances are chiefly verbal, consciously committed; he is fond of putting common sense standing on its head, if only because this posture gives an unusual and striking view of it. Because theologians were regarded as serious people in Victorian times, an amusing member of the profession is as apt to be misunderstood. When speaking on one occasion before the followers of Charles Bradlaugh, who were considering him as a successor, the lecturer anxious to shock his Secularist audience, announced that he believed in the Trinity and the Immaculate Conception. He was happy to observe that his hearers were thrown "into transports of rage", which provided "an exceedingly pleasant evening". When asked

later how one person can be three and three persons one, Shaw explained that any man is the father of his son and the son of his father, adding that like Shelley and the million-coloured rainbow he was prepared to believe not only in a trinity, but in a trillion-trinity.

Shaw is an eclectic theologian. He has foraged widely in strange lands and unfamiliar climates for his tests. This weakness of his for gazing across the Channel might have made him unpopular; but the British made allowance for his eccentricities since he was an Irishman, and, moreover, they were finding it a stimulating experience to see themselves objectively for the first time. Shaw went around with the mirror, and found to his pleasant surprise that there was no need to go around with the hat. It is no small tribute to his ingenuity that he netted millions from his pulpit, considering that his congregation regarded the Life-Force as a foreigner, whereas God was an Englishman. He has a habit of resurrecting orthodox prophets and pressing them into the service of the Life-Force on the strength of a text; there are times when he gives the text the kind of interpretation which the unsuspecting prophet perhaps had not envisaged. This is a safe procedure when the prophet is already dead His religion is a house which he built first and foremost for himself; many of its cornerstones had been rejected by other builders. The doors are open always for those who are fortunate enough to understand and accept the Shavian Anschauung, and are willing to cultivate their own garden, working shoulder to shoulder beside the master-builder.

Shaw has struggled successfully against the Irishman in him, whose nature it is never to stop at half measures, towards the

goal of the eclectic, which is to achieve a synthesis of the good elements drawn from a variety of different systems. It would be a mistake, therefore, to assume that in accepting certain tenets of Nietzsche's doctrine he has swallowed Nietzsche whole,-"Big Blonde Beast", "Flock Morality", "Rausch", and "Amor Fatê" all digesting comfortably in the Shavian stomach. It is true that The Quintessence of Ibsenism might have been written by an ardent disciple of Nietzsche, but it is also true that the "Irish Nietzsche" is an ardent apostle of Socialism, a doctrine which had no place is the philosophy of the prototype. For the latter, societies are at best means not superior ends in themselves. The select individual alone can give meaning to life, and he alone justifies the existence of society. "The entire curriculum of the urges of herd and state is concentrated in his core. He can live alone by laws of his own - he is not a lawgiver and does not want to rule"![1] Socialism, according to Nietzsche, will produce results opposite to its intentions: it is really a ferment which will lead to a multitude of state organisms.

In The Quintessence of Ibsenism the thesis is propounded that the will of man is the sole basis of morality, that conformity to ideals is constantly produced results no less tragic than those which follow thoughtless violation of them. "The Ideal is dead; long live the ideal" epitomises the history of human progress for Bernard Shaw as for Ibsen. These two are unanimous in the disbelief that "there are certain moral institutions which justify all means used to maintain them...(they insist) that the supreme end shall be the inspired

1. Nietzsche. Der Wille zur Macht. p.429. G.A.Morgan. What Nietzsche Means. p.200

eternal, ever growing one, not the external unchanging, artificial one."[1] The basis of all sound morality according to this thesis is that there is no golden rule; that conduct must justify itself by its effect upon life, and not by its conformity to any rule or ideal. Says Shaw: "our ideals, like the Gods of old, are constantly demanding human sacrifices"[2]

With Nietzsche unegoistic action is impossible, and all actions are necessarily egoistic. He denies the claims of "Absolute Morality", because it is "nihilistic": the old morality negates life, "because it absolutely condemns qualities - those of will to power - which are essential to life, and because any morality which issues categorical commands to all people contradicts life's need of many sets of values for its varying forms and stages."[3]

The two streams of thought, therefore, unite in one strong current for a stretch of the way, and then resume their separate courses. Shaw has always been at pains to deny any acquaintance with Nietzsche, or with Schopenhauer for that matter, "knowing nothing about them", as he informed his biographer, "except that their opinions, like mine, are not those of the Times or the Spectator."[4] He explains that the habit of referring every idea of his to these philosophers came about partly because to people without philosophy all philosophies seem the same, and partly because he had often referred to them to remind his readers that what they called his eccentricities were part of the common European stock.

1. The Quintessence of Ibsenism. p. 190

2. Ibid. p.191

3. Morgan. op.cit. p.175.

4. Henderson. op.cit. p.486

Though he dissociates himself from Schopenhauerean thought, Shaw has inherited a noticeable strain of it through his later intellectual ancestors - Samuel Butler and Henri Bergson. The quintessence of Schopenhauerism, as set forth in the book The World as Will and and Idea, is the conception of the Will as the ultimate, primeval principle of being, the source of all phenomena. Kant's "Ding an sich" is appropriated and defined, the author being driven to do so through a deeply felt, almost compulsive conviction: it is the Will. As Thomas Mann explains it,

"the world is the product and expression of the will, the objectivation of the will in space and time. But it was at the same time something else besides: it was the idea, my idea and yours, the idea of each one and each one's idea about himself - by virtue, that is, of the discerning mind, which the will created to be a light to it in the higher stages of its objectivation"[1]

When Evolutionism emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century, leaders in philosophical and biological thought lent a sympathetic ear to a system which explained the world in terms of Will. They adapted this conclusion to the theories of evolution which saw all life in the universe as the expression of a blind urge inherent in it towards higher consciousness and higher organisation. The Lamarckians, including Samuel Butler, recognised the will as creative energy: variations, or functional adaptation was not a matter of circumstantial selection or pure chance, but the conscious striving on the part of

1. Thomas Mann. Schopenhauer. p.8.

the living being towards a more profitable and harmonious adjustment to environment. Bergson understood it as "an elan original of life, passing from one generation of germs to the following generation of germs by the intermediation of developed organisms which form the link of union between the germs;"[1] and Bernard Shaw, who was a warm admirer of Lamarck, Butler and Bergson, and of their common ancestor in biological theory, Buffon,("the celebrated Buffoon"), made his religion the expression of faith in Life and in the Will. "In Shaw's view Schopenhauer's treatise on the World as Will is the complement to Lamarck's natural history; for Will is the driving force of Lamarckian evolution".[2]

Schopenhauer exalted the will at the heavy expense of the intellect. According to his view the will, the "in-itselfness" of things, existing outside of time, space and causality, blind and causless, demanded objectivation; and this objectivation occurred in such a way that its original unity became multiplicity - a process which received the name of principium individuationis. The important point to observe is that it was not the intellect which brought forth the will; the converse is the case, the will brought forth the intellect. The will is presented as something unalyseable and mysterious, as if assuming that everybody understood what it was, a point which drew the reproach of Nietzsche, to whom volition appeared to be quite a complicated business. This philosopher holds that

1. Henri Bergson: Creative Evolution. p.92
2. Henderson. op. cit. p.484

Schopenhauer debased the notion of will by making it the same as desire, neglecting the element of self-command; whereupon he follows his predecessor in debunking free-will, using a different approach. What is called freedom of the will, he explains,

"is essentially the passion of superiority with respect to the one who must obey .....-this consciousness is in every will, and likewise .....that absolute valuation 'this and nothing else is needful now', that inner certainty that obedience will occur, and all else that pertains to the state of the commander."[1]

Schopenhauer, it is true speaks of freedom of the will. Indeed freedom dwelt in the will alone, he maintains, but since will is outside of time space and causality, this "freedom" existed only in transcendence, never in the empiric world. Here everything is determined by cause and effect. Such a philosophy had revolutionary consequences when applied to ethics. Good and evil, individual responsibility for actions, and individual guilt are meaningless terms, because the human being who performed a culpable action had indeed acted of necessity. No prescriptions could be issued to the will, since it was free, absolute, and all-powerful. The intellect had no other purpose than to act as the servant of the will, to rationalise its commands, to make excuses for its actions. "In a world entirely the work of the will, of absolute, unmotivated,causless,and unvaluated life-urge,intellect had of course only second place"[2]

1. Nietzsche. Jenseits von Gut und Bose. p.28. Morgan. op.cit. p.92
2. Thomas Mann. op.cit. p.8.

The harmonious relationship between intellect and will which in Europe had kept philosophy sane during the long hegemony of Scholastic thought, and two centuries more, was now shattered beyond a doubt in the German Lands. The passionate pundits of the nineteenth century drew heavily from these twin sources. Nietzsche and Schopenhauer were the precursors; they were the voices crying in the wilderness: Make straight the paths of the Neo-Lamarckians! Make straight the paths of Ibsen and Bernard Shaw! The Victorian Evolutionists could look to the cell, and see therein a plausible reason for the Victorian Era. The apostles of the New Drama, beckoning to the Age of Will,lifted the stage-curtain on the new Utopia where self-expression was enjoying its heyday, where Socialists were unsocial, and women were intelligent. The deification of reason, which was the hallmark of the eighteenth century was followed in due time by the questioning of reason's legitimacy. The ideal human society as conceived by Rousseau and those who spoke of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, where man's moral obligations as a social human being were determined primarily by the needs and values of the whole society, during the nineteenth century was consigned to the Limbo of all things that were dubbed out of date. The ideals and values of the nineteenth century were said to be decrepit with age. This century became the scapegoat for all the centuries. The political,social and moral concepts that it inherited were declared invalid for their scope was too narrow to

contain the healthy energy of the evolving Mars. Human institutions were not the collective expression of the good and evil inherent in the individuals who comprised them: they were good or evil in themselves. Your neighbour's claim came to be counted as of secondary importance when the two spheres of influence impinged one on the other, because the individual will is the criterion of all moral action. How fiercely Schopenhauer and Shelley,Lasalle and Karl Marx, Ruskin and Carlysle, Morris and Wagner railed at its orthodoxies and ideals. Nietzsche and Zola spoke contemptuously of the herd and the herd morality. Ibsen and Shaw, ignoring the Roman proverb "securus judicat orbis terrarum", believed that to be right was to be in a minority; they wrote for the "educated conscience of the age." "The majority is never right!" says the individualist Stockman in An Enemy of the People.

"That's one of the social lies a free thinking man is bound to rebel against. Who make up the majority in any given country? Is it the wise men or the fools? I think all must agree that the fools are in a terribly overwhelming majority all the world over "[1]

Society, according to this way of thinking, must look for salvation to "the saving remnant." Every age produces a few pioneer thinkers - individualists who approach life in the belief that life needs no justification, and must be lived for its own sake as an end in itself;

1. The Works of Henrik Ibsen. pp146

men of strong will who mould rather than are moulded. Caesar is the Shavian type of the naturally great man, great not because he mortifies his nature in fulfilment of duty, but because he fulfils his own will.

The optimism of Bernard Shaw, as revealed in hiswritings is something of a sardonic and ruthless nature. In effect, he believes that man, however unworthy, has within him the seed of the Superman, and is capable of evolving to perfection on condition that he takes the trouble to improve. Muddle-headedness, (which flourishes especially in the thick air of northern countries), and a blind adherence to outworn creeds can lead him to catastrophe. The Life-Force which is using him as an experiment may wipe him out, if he fails to achieve the purpose of his existence to make place for a more co-operative and profitable expression of itself. On the other hand, a study of Shaw the man, pictured against the quiet background of his modest home at Ayot and St.Lawrence would give the impression that with him all is best, though he often doubts about the Englishman. His warmhearted courtesy, his genial disposition, and the soft music of his Irish voice, combine to make him a popular figure on every social occasion.

His portraits, which are a good example of the many facets of the man, reveal him in a variety of moods and poses. He is seen as a Socialist, hirsute and hatted, with an ominous scowl of anarchistic propensity; as an impish deomon, equipped with hoofs and tail, and again as the magnetic personality who has the power to

infect almost everyone with the delight that he takes in himself, from the famous cartoons by Max Beerbohm; more unusual as the philosopher of thoughtful mien in the Lumiere autochrome which Henderson chose for the fronispiece of his book. Of his many facets, the one best loved and remembered by the public would seem to be that which reveals him as the incorrigible trouble-maker, with his tongue in his cheek,-the kind of hybrid Peter-Pan, whose better half has resolutely refused to grow up.

From some of his busts he looks out with a scowl of reproof for humanity, but there is in it a touch of paternal solicitude. It is a storm-cloud that will pass once the correction is administered, whereas the cloud that hovers on the brow of Schopenhauer remains as an integral part of his physiognomy Schopenhauer, though he re-asserted realism, yet conceived a new idealism - a rise above the pain and pleasures of the earthly creature into the vast nothingness of the peaceful Nirvana. As his system developed, however, "In wrath over his own aversions he denied the will to live altogether"[1]. Nursing the repugnance he felt towards his fellow-man, like the insatiate cormorant, which, consuming means soon preys upon itself, he finally turned his gaze in upon his own makeup and found it all-vexatious. Eventually forsaken by his friends, except for his faithful poodle, he died a frustrated and embittered man.

1. Encyclopaedia Britannica. Vol. 20. p.104 (1946)

To Shaw the cardinal Rationalist error into which Schopenhauer fell consisted in making happiness the real test of the value of life. Shaw is the most vigorous possible combatant of the pessimistic conclusion that life is not worth living; the keynote of religion is the pursuit of life for its own sake. Life is realised as activity that satisfies the will, that is as self-assertion. Every extension or intensification of activity therefore is an increase in life. The authorised versions of his biography notes that

"While heartily subscribing to the metaphysics of Schopenhauer, he yet as heartily refuses to accept his pessimistic philosophy[1]..... he has been bold enough to drop the Nirvana nonsense - the pessimism, the rationalism, the theology and all the other subterfuges to which we cling because we are afraid to look life straight in the face and see in it, not the fulfilment of a moral law or the deductions of reason, but the satisfaction of a passion in us of which we can give no account."[2]

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1. Henderson. op.cit. p.476

2. Ibid. Pp460

There is a keynote to the philosophy of every great or pioneer thinker: Shakespeare had is Hamlet, Wagner his Free-willing of Necessity, Schopenhauer his Will to Live, and Nietzche his Will to Power. So Shaw is the Apostle of the Life-Force, as calls it. This, he claims, is the right religion for the twentieth century, because it is in tune with the truths of science revealed by the intense research of the last three centuries. Religion is of no avail unless it can stand the test of science. Instead of Faith, Hope, and Charity, Shaw gives us Physics, Chemistry, and Biology; and the greatest of these is Biology. He maintains that the Church, which had weathered the fierce and persistent attacks of eighteenth century Rationalism went down before the first charge of the Evolutionists, because Darwin, with his biological religion had gripped the imagination of the modern man. Though he held no brief for Natural Selection, which he charged with having banished mind from the universe, Shaw had a grudging admiration for the man who caught the ear of the world with his Origin of Species, and made of Evolution a byword. He summed it up: "One touch of Darwin makes the whole world akin."[1]

Before starting on the new structure of a twentieth century religion, Shaw convinced himself that Christianity was inadequate from the very start, and was now well nigh at the end

1. Prefaces. p.507

of its tether. In the Preface to Androcles and the Lion he hands out peremptory decisions concerning the divine nature and mission of Jesus and succeeds on paper in wrecking the Christian structure by pulling the foundations from under it. He would accept Jesus as a prophet whose message, as interpretated by Shaw, had valid application in modern society. Yea, and more than a prophet! because Jesus was the first Communist. The message as given in the Gospels, we are told, was taken and transformed by the Apostles, in particular by St.Paul, whom Shaw dramatically casts in the role of villain, as opposed to Jesus the hero. The Christian religion then became identified with Salvationism; it postulated Gods and devils, and the buying off of divine wrath with presents called sacrifices and flatteries called praises. This is how it appears to the intensely economical Shavian mind:

"Its practical disadvantage is that though it makes matters very easy for the rich, it cuts off the poor from all hope of divine favor. And this quickens the moral criticism of the poor to such an extent, that they soon find the moral law within them revolting against the idea of buying off the deity with gold and gifts, though they are still quite ready to buy him off with the paper money of praise and professions of repentance.[1]

1. Prefaces. p.530

Shaw makes use of certain texts in the Gospel to bolster up his Life-Force religion. He quotes Jesus as saying that we and our fathers are one. Is not this precisely the conclusion reached by half a century of evolutionary preachers from from Buffon and Geothe to Butler and Bergson? he asks naively. The verse, "I came that you may have life and have it more abundantly", is clearly an endorsement of the main thesis of Man and Superman and Back to Methuselah. "Judge not that you may not be judged", means that society should get rid of judges and punishment, for the official clothed in ermine who sits on a bench is merely perpetuating vengeance. Let pople abandon all idea of marriage and family relationship because Jesus insisted: "he that does the will of my Father in Heaven, he is my brother and sister".

The doctrine of Jesus was transformed, Shaw's exegesis shows, when the great idea flashed upon St.Paul, on the road to Damascus to connect the name of Jesus with the two terriers of sin and death that haunted him. He reconstructed the old Salvationism from which Jesus had vainly tried to redeem him and produced a fantastic theology which discarded man as he is and substituted a postul te called Adam. Christianity died as soon as it was born; Salvationism and atonement - the placation of a jealous and wrathful deity, which Jesus came to destroy - were established as the basis of the seudo-Christianity as propagated by Paul and the Apostles.

A religion that is intellectually acceptable and practical in application is the need of the modern world we are told. For Pilate to acquit Jesus was to overthrow civilization and all its institutions,

"for no state has ever constituted itself on his principles or made it possible to live according to his commandments: those States who have taken his name have taken it as an alias to enable them to persecute his followers more plausibly"[1]

During his early life in London, when Shaw the young journalist was living in obscurity,(entirely against his consent), the theory of Evolution as conceived by Charles Darwin was enjoying great popularity in scientific circles. Between the years 1878 and 1887 Samuel Butler wrote four books on biological theory in which he harked back to the earlier thinkers such as Buffon, Lamarck, and Erasmus Darwin, stressing the vitalistic factor in the development of species. Lacking all recognised tools of science, and the sense of the difficulties in his way, he proceeded to tackle the problems of science with little same the deft pen of the literary expert in his hand. Natural Selection was at this time too solidly entrenched to suffer any setback; but at least Butler gave a jolt to scientific orthodoxy and proved a point for Bernard Shaw, viz., that the layman must keep a vigilant eye on the scientists,otherwise they are apt to lay claim

1. Prefaces. p. 357

to the mantle of authority that Butler and Shaw tried to pull off the shoulders of the Churchmen.

These two lay scientists had more in common than an inveterate iconoclasm and a habit of putting things standing on their head; both of them had a strong revulsion for the bleak picture of human life that emerged from a logical extension of the doctrine of the survival of the fittest. It is true that Darwin the patient industrious observer of species never envisaged such a deduction: he was a scientist, not a philosopher. It was Butler's unhappy experience that scientists looked askance whenever he indulged his passion for drawing his logical conclusions from their experiments: it caused him many an unhappy moment in his life; while Shaw could scarcely resist the urge to exercise his prerogatives as "Bishop of Everywhere", and be - among other things - a philosopher.

Butler, though he used his great literary ability and keen methodical mind to further the Vitalistic view of Evolution, succeeded no more than in causing a ripple on the surface of biological thought during his lifetime. It remained for Shaw, the heir to his beliefs in many respects and a much more able propagandist, to drive home the hard lesson of Natural Selection, and recall the faithful to the true path of Neo-Lamarckism. Here is a sample of his telling invective: -

"I ask myself what spell has fallen on intelligent and humane men that they allow themselves to be imposed on by this rabble of dolts,black-guards,imposters,quacks,liars,and worst of all, credulous conscientious fools. Better a thousand times Moses and Spurgeon (a then famous preacher) back again. After all, you cannot understand Moses without imagination nor Spurgeon without metaphysics . . . . If it could be proved that the whole universe had been produced by such Selection, only fools and rascals could bear to live."[1]

Combining the theory of Vitalistic or Creative Evolution as developed by Lamarck, Buffon, Erasmus, Darwin, and Samuel Butler with the élan vital of the French philosopher, Henri Bergson, Shaw produced a synthesis which, given the proper stamp, emerged as the Life-Force religion:- He wrote the canonical literature himself, one play called Man and Superman (1903), and a second play in five books, after the tradition of Moses, called Back to Methuselah A Metabrological Pentateuch. He introduces it thus:-

"Creative Evolution is already a religion, and is indeed now unmistakeably the religion of the twentieth century, newly arisen from the ashes of pseudo-Christianity, of mere scepticism, and of the soulless affirmations and blind negations of the Mechanists and Neo - Darwinians"[2]

1. Prefaces. p.505
2. Ibid. p.519

It is significant that of all his intellectual progenitors there is none to whom he is more explicit in acknowledging his debt than Samuel Butler. The magnitude of this debt he owed to the writings of this Victorian thinker -at-large may be judged when we come to observe that the dogmas of the Life-Force religion are closely related to the theological and evolutionary hypotheses propounded in these writings. It is more as a portent than for anything he wrote or thought that this strange observer of humankind must be regarded as one of the most significant figures of the Victorian Era. Observing that the English are only too anxious to recognise a man of genius if somebody will kindly point him out to them, Shaw pointed out Butler, as "in his own department the greatest English writer of the latter half of the XIX century",[1] and acknowledged the fact that he himself produced plays in which "Butler's extraordinarily fresh,free, and future-piercing suggestions have an abvious share"[2]. When Butler died in 1902 the world was unconscious that he had even lived. The few people in London who knew his comings and goings remembered him as an oddity, a person of many unrelated interests from sheepfarming to Darwinism to painting. He has been represented as the first great rebel against established creeds and institutions,

1. Prefaces. p.122
2. Ibid. p.123

or as Professor Joad puts it "he took the portentous lay figure of Victorian complacency by the throat and shook it until the stuffing came out." [1] Butler the iconoclast, who looked for images in every temple, whether of politics, science, art, or religion, that he might destroy them, had affinities with Shaw, the "Bishop of Everywhere", whose self-appointed mission it was to bring consolation to those who could no longer put their trust in a good many values they had inherited by proving to them that such things went out when Socialism and Vitalism came in.

Butler was as naive in his demolition of the Christian Faith as he had been in his acceptance of it. His doubts were confirmed when, on learning that some of the boys in his class were baptised and others not, he could see no difference whatever in their daily conduct. If there was no difference, then the Sacrament of Baptism became meaningless, and if it was meaningless, so were other Sacraments too - the whole conception of Sacramentalism in fact; and if that went, what was left of the Church's doctrine? He seriously argued that if there was a personal God it mut be possible to locate Him and investigate His habits, and that, since He had never been located He did not exist.

1. C.E.M. Joad. Samuel Butler. p.16

Butler's religious views like all his other vital beliefs were corollaries of his theory of evolution. The ideas developed in his book Life and Habit relating to unconscious memory in living beings are the starting point of his religio-biological creed. They may be summarised in five main principles: (1) The oneness of personality between parent and offspring; (2) memory on the part of the offspring of certain actions which it did in the person of its forefathers; (3) the latency of that memory until it is rekindled by a recurrence of the associated ideas; (4) the unconsciousness with which habitual actions come to be performed; (5) the purposiveness of the actions of living beings, as of the machines which they make or select.

In 1870 Dr. Ewald Hering, one of the most eminent physiologists of the day gave an Inaugural Address to the Imperial Royal Academy of Sciences at Vienna, entitled "Memory as a Universal Function of Organised Matter", in which he anticipated Butler's main thesis. Though Life and Habit was not published until 1878, the author had been turning over the idea in his head for many years, as was his custom, and committing it to writing from time to time according as it began to take shape. It was in Montreal, in 1874, that he wrote the first passage he afterwards could date with accuracy. For the next four years he kept doggedly on the trail of his 'discovery',

struggling with ill-health and straitened circumstances, oscillating between elation and despair. So great was the nervous exceitement of the chase that he was unable to breathe properly. He dared to hope "that Life and Habit was going to be an adjunct to Darwinism which no one would welcome more gladly than Mr. Darwin himself."[1]

A double disappointment awaited him. In the first place, a friend called his attention to an article in Nature wherein Professor E. Ray Lankester had referred to Hering's lecture with admiring sympathy in connection with its further development by Haeckel. Secondly, Darwin completely ignored Life and Habit, which, we are told by Professor Hartog "was received by professional biologists as a gigantic joke - a joke, moreover, not in the best possible taste."[2]

The book had implications far wider than the merely biological. Butler was seeking to understand the relation of man's soul to the universe. Like Shaw, he wanted a scientific basis for religion, a correlation of man's physical needs and spiritual aspiration into an intelligible whole. His theory of a vitalistic evolution based on unconscious memory, intelligence, and will seemed to him to offer the basis for such a view. This led further to a monistic view of nature - the organic world unites to form a single compound personality,

1. Life and Habit. p.33
2. Introduction to Unconscious Memory. p.xii

whose units are to the whole as buds are to a tree, or as the cells of our bodies are to ourselves. The memories which all living forms show by their actions to have in common prove that they are animated by a common soul,
"we and the mosses being part of the same vast person in no figurative sense, but with as much bona fide literal truth as when we say that a man's fingernails and his eyes are part of the same man. It is in this Person that we may see the Body of God - and in the evolution of this Person, the mystery of His Incarnation"[1]

Here one may detect the expression of a philosophy that conceived of God in terms of a single Being or Animator of all living things - a single Spirit "whom we cannot think of under any other name than God"[2]. From the earliest times Pantheism had identified the universe with God, as with a single force or life animating all things; it held that "God is everything and everything is God", thus including the inorganic which Butler was not prepared to do. Pantheism, nevertheless, contained a vague prophetic sense of something that could not become coherent until interpreted in the light of the evolutionary views of Buffon, Erasmus,Darwin, Lamark, and Butler.

1. Collected Essays, Vol.1. p.35

2. Ibid. p.37

Butler poses the question: What does Living mean when he says : "One sole energy governs all things"? He answers,

"We cannot understand how one sole energy governs, let us say, the reader and the chair on which he sits: if by an effort we convince ourselves that we understand something which can be better expressed by these words than by any others, no sooner do we turn our backs than the ideas so painfully collected fly apart again"[1] Butler was seeking an exposition of the myster of life and the universe that would lead to a "comfortable conclusion." What he sought was a working hypothesis or a handy formula to fit neatly into his method-ical scheme of things; a bridge between man as mortal and man as immortal, that would close the gap which appeared when Butler turned his back on orthodox theism and stopped saying his prayers. He found that Pantheism in the long run had nothing "comfortable" to offer: it was practically nothing else than atheism because "it has no belief in a personal deity overruling the affairs of the world as Divine Providence"[2] With orthodox Theism,on the other hand, he was involved in the same difficulty, inasmuch as he believed that a person without flesh and blood "or something analagous" is not a person. He took issue on the grounds that, Orthodox Theism presented us

1. "God the Known" p.20.

2. Ibid. p.23.

with a God who has no body evident to human sense, a pure spirit, yet according to the Athanasian Creed, in one aspect of its triune nature, "perfect man, of a reasonable soul, and human flesh subsisting". If, therefore, God exists in corporeal form - and Butler could not conceive of an intelligence without a body -

"this body must be reasonably like other bodies, and must exist in some place and at some time. Furthermore, it must do sufficiently nearly what all other "human flesh" belonging to "perfect man" must do, or cease to be human flesh"[1]

The Christian conception of the Deity, therefore, according to Butler, proves to be as incomprehensible as that of Pantheism; it is marked by the same confusion of language which led him to describe the Pantheist as atheistic. Later on he reversed the view he had supported throughout the greater number of his works (a view that would appear to Bernard Shaw to be the more logical) pointing out that, when he separated the organic from the inorganic it was an arbitrary distinction which he found himself no longer able to maintain. He decided to reconstruct what he had written, but this project he never succeeded in effecting, though he returned to the subject again and again in Unconscious Memory (1880), in the Appendix to the edition of Evolution Old and New (1882), and in

1. God the Known p.25

Luck, or Cunning? (1886). In the concluding chapter of Unconscious Memory he writes:

"At parting, therefore, I would recommend the reader to see every atom in the universe as living and able to feel and remember, but in a humble way. He must have life eternal as well as matter eternal; and the life and the matter must be joined together inseparably as body and soul to one another. Thus he will see God everywhere. . . . . We shall endeavour to see the so-called inorganic as living, in respect of the qualities it has in common with the organic, rather than the organic as non-living in respect of the qualities it has in common with the inorganic". [1]

However he might emphasize the wide difference which separated him from the orthodox theologian, Butler remained to the end a Broad Churchman. "He had", says Muggeridge "what he wanted, 'free thought and religion'. The universe became a more hospitable place in his eyes, because more secure, gilt-edged rather than speculative." [2] If God exists, he thought, then he must be personal and material; and if personal then, though inconceivably greater than man, still limited in time and space, and capable of making mistakes concerning His own interests. He must exist on earth, He must have existed throughout all time, He must have a tangible body. "Where then," asks Butler, "is the body of this God?" [3]

1. Quoted in "God the Known". p.35
2. Malcolm Muggeridge. The Earnest Atheist. p.218
3. "God the Known". p.29

God, he answers, is not outside the universe, nor does the latter proceed towards some fixed goal according to a preconceived plan. "God is the animal and vegetable world, and the animal and vegetable world is God"[1] This God, he argues, is not eternal in His beginning, nor is He immortal: His existence coincides in time with the span of organic life, and this life in its diversity of forms is the body of God manifested to mankind. Butler does his best to minimise the difference between this manifestation and the epiphany of the Incarnation. He found no reason to deny that "God has taken our nature upon Him"; in fact he would affirm it literally and "intelligently," whereas the theologian , he believes, uses the language "vaguely".

"He has taken flesh and dwelt among us from the day that He first assumed our shape some millions of years ago until now. God cannot become man more especially than He can become other living forms, any more than we can become our eyes more especially than other of our organs"[2]

In the essay God the Known and God the Unknown the history of ideas is described in terms of an evolution from the belief in a multiplicity of Gods as expressed in pagan religions, to the monotheistic creed of modern times. Among "the more eligible races of mankind" two main streams of thought have been

1. "God the Known". p.31
2. Ibid. p.39

discernible, that from polytheism to monotheism, which means that the world is infused with one spirit, and that from polytypism to monotypism, which means that all animals and plants have gradually come to be seen as differentiations of a single substance. Butler explains how the efforts of long centuries of doubt, of assiduous search for an answer to the crucial question Where is Thy God? have received their reward in the late nineteenth century. The tendency of universal opinion has moved inexorably towards a confluence of these two main streams of thought: the many gods have become one God; the many forms of life are now one form, since all things organic are merely the offspring of a "single God - impregnate substance"[1] which was protoplasm.

From this essay there emerges an idea of God as a person, possessed of a body, not eternal nor yet immortal, bound by the tyranny of space and time like all organic life, and existing in that organic life in its many diversities of form. Butler proceeds to equate this idea with that contained in the dogmas of Christian theology. The confusion arises from the fact that he attempts to express his religio-biological creed in terms of orthodox theism, just as Bernard Shaw uses the theological terminology to explain his religion of Creative Evolution. This arbitrary limitation and expansion of the

1. "God the Known." p.30

accepted meaning of certain terms will send any dissertation on the subject heading for the rocks that does not take into account the special mentality of the writers themselves, and the age in which they wrote.

The Victorians were remarkable for what they considered to be their heroic lack of faith. Huxley's injunction to "sit down before the facts" became more acceptable than the appeal to old authority. In due time the old authority not only was being questioned for its orthodoxy but was also being misinterpreted to the masses by the newly arisen priesthood of Science, which began to appropriate to itself in turn both the claim to infallibility of dogma and the privilege of reforming the language of religion as it thought fit. Bernard Shaw wrote recently that the current bandying of words over the issues of Communism had led to such misunderstanding among the people concerning the meaning of these words that we need a dictionary of Marxism in order to straighten things out. He might well have extended the suggestion to include a dictionary of his Life-Force religion. The Theist, if he did not define certain terms before making use of them - a procedure rigorously adhered to by the Scholastics, - at least had no secrets concerning their denotation.

Butler admitted that he had no intellectual difficulties in adhering to his own creed, and still continuing to be a Broad Churchman. He had no quarrel with the orthodox theologian:

he and the theologian spoke of God as a person; "nor," said he, "do we find difficulty in adopting such an expression as that "God has taken our nature upon Him"[1] Of the resemblance between the two, he said, there could be no doubt; except for this difference, that he adopts the language "intelligently", while the theologian uses it "vaguely"; and this would seem "to reduce the differences of opinion between the two contending parties to disputes about detail".[2] Shaw likewise frequently expresses his neo-theological conceptions in the familiar phraseology of orthodox religion. His practice of personifying God, when in reality he mentally identifies God with a mystical and impersonal "Force", is a practice which many people quite justly condemn. Butler and Shaw were fond of talking science in the language of religion, and religion in the language of science. They also talked politics and psychology in terms of biology and religion, and vice versa.

Butler felt that his God was more admirable than the orthodox God and more comprehensible. He needed no other for this world, and indeed there is no room for any other in his concentric scheme of things. But he thought there might be a still greater and an unknown "God" looming behind this one composed of

1. "God the Known" p.38
2. Ibid. p.39

lesser ones as the first God is composed of the living forms of earth, and as we are composed of the cells of our own bodies. Beyond this second "God" we should not wish to go at present. "It is no reproach to a system," he wrote, "that it does not profess to give an account of the origin of things; the reproach rather should lie against a system which professes to explain it, for we may be well assured that such a profession would, for the present at any rate, be an empty boast"[1]
He offers us immortality, but does not offer resurrection from the dead. To have contributed to the "growth of God" by our having shared His life, thus aiding Him in the development of the fulness of His being should be considered sufficient reward for mortal man. We make our immortalities even as we make our lives. According to this view, then, not all men are born into the life to come. For those who "grunt and sweat under a weary life" the only comfort that Butler offers them is to say that their sufferings "will tend to the happiness of those who come after us, even if not to our own"[2]

This completes the main part of Butler's thesis in which he developed his monistic view of the universe. Not all his theological views found favour with Bernard Shaw. The latter, for instance was not at all concerned with looking for the "body of this God" and trying to locate it. His mind was too flexible, too wide-embracing, and too much in sympathy with

1. "God the Known" pp49

2. Ibid. p.45

the mass of humankind to indulge in a theoretical search for a tidy, gilt-edged,bachelor-minded universe. But he greatly admired the works of his Victorian predecessor, especially when they spoke of the necessity for revolt against what seemed to him anthropomorphism in religion and conventionality in morals. More important still, he found himself furiously fighting on the same sie as Butler when he attacked the Darwinians for banishing mind from the universe, and when he accepted as the biological basis of his Life-Force religion the Vitalistic conception of evolution which returned Will to its dominant place in the world as the urge inherent in all living beings towards a higher and more complex mode of existence.

To appreciate the relationship between the monistic theory advanced in God the Known and God the Unknown and the Shavian postulate of an élan vital, (derived from Bergson),and an evolving Superman, it is necessary to take a glance at the cosmic picture that emerges from a summary of the main tenets of the Life-Force hypothesis.

To Bernard Shaw, the universe is God in the act of making Himself. At the back of the universe, according to this mystical conception, there is a great purpose, a great will. This force behind the universe is bodiless and impotent without executive power of its own. After innumerable experiments and mistakes, the force has succeeded in changing inert matter into the amoeba,

the amoeba into some more complicated organism, and finally has evolved a man with hands and a brain to accomplish the work of the Will. Man is not the ultimate aim of the Life-Force, but only a stage in the scale of evolution. The Life-Force will go still further and produce something greater than man, viz., Superman, and will finally evolve through Angel and Archangel to an omnipotent and omniscient God.

Bernard Shaw, who looked out upon the world and saw that it was not good, at the same time took the measure of evolving humanity and reckoned it as intrinsically disposed to evil, but, on condition that it co-operates with the purpose of the Life-Force, capable of fulfilling its high destiny. This purpose - the unconscious urge to higher life as organic life passes through innumerable gradations of being, is even yet in continuous process of being achieved. The survival value of man, therefore, is valid only in so far as man surrenders himself to the Life-Force as the instrument of Will, as the vehicle of Will's perpetuation and self-determination. And when his course is run, man, bowing out with "Nunc dimittis" on his lips so to speak, will "hand on his burden to new and better men".[1] "Bernard Shaw's religion", writes Henderson in his biographical study, "is the expression of his Faith in Life and in the Will. He regards man as divine, because, actually, he is the last effort of the Will

1. Back to Methuselah. p.36

to realize itself as God. And he does not believe in the doctrine of immortality."[1]

We see in the Shavian cosmic picture, therefore, not the old Pantheism dressed up in modern language, but something very close to Butler's monistic conception of the world as a single complex personality. All life is the expression of Will; This will is not static but evolving towards higher consciousness. God, or the Life-Force is in matter; He is evolving towards the fulness of His being according as matter evolves from the first speck of protoplasm that became charged with life up to the complex organisms so far achieved. Butler's "single God-impregnate substance" which was protoplasm becomes in the terminology of the Shavian religion the conquest of matter by the Life-Force. Lilith, the mythical being of ambivalent sex in Back to Methuselah who first confided the secret of life to the serpent in the Garden of Eden, and who personifies the Life-Force in the artistic bible, explains it thus: "I am Lilith. I brought life into the whirlpool of force, and compelled my enemy matter to obey a living soul".[2]

With Butler, as with Shaw, the adage that God helps those who help themselves is literally true; and those who help themselves are helping God. Like Voltaire, they would advise us

1. Henderson. op.cit. p.484
2. Back to Methuselah. p.300

to cultivate our own garden. But their's was a different garden from Voltaire's; its cultivation meant to them a contribution to human progress. Their eyes were future-piercing; and the vision they beheld in the far distance was rewarding enough to make them want to strive for it here and now, even though the reward is meant only for the generations yet to come. Shaw beheld the Superman. Butler saw a generation of Messiahs. Evolution, they both believed, would cause these visions to become a reality. In terms of the Life-Force, the evolutionary urge meant that as long as man can conceive something better than himself he cannot be easy until he is striving to bring it into existence, or clearing the way for it. This is the law of man's life. This is the working in him "of Life's incessant aspiration to higher organisation, wider, deeper, intenser self-consciousness, and clearer self-understanding."[1] He must look to society for his rule of life, and his moral conduct is to be regulated with an eye to the spiritual and material advancement of the human family. Shaw believes that the real joy of life consists in a total, unselfish surrender of self to the purpose of the Life-Force. Since this Purpose is aiming at the final perfection of the human species, operating according to the laws of evolution whereby the acquirements achieved in one generation are handed on to the next, (the Neo-Lamarckian thesis) any person is aiming at the highest good as long as he

1. Man and Superman. p.175

is co-operating with the Purpose by wearing himself out in its service before finally being "thrown on the scrap heap".

Butler beheld Evolution as the panacea for the lamentable state of man, morals, and religion - these topics which were continually the subject of his satirical writings. "Give the world time" he said in one of his conversations with Chudleigh, "an infinite number of epochs, and, according to its past and present system, like the coming tide each epoch will advance on each, but so slowly that it can hardly be traced, man's body becoming finer to bear his finer mind, till man becomes not only an angel but an archangel."[1]

For Butler then and for Shaw, the last man will be first in excellence of all physical and mental attributes. Evolution introduced a new principle into biology: it showed that the change and flow of time were factors that must be reckoned in the evaluation of living beings. Time now becomes a function of life. For Butler and Shaw these are more like to God who live later than those who were born earlier. Browning's lines assume a more pointed significance:

"The last of life,for which the first was made"[2]

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1. Muggeridge. op.cit. p.92
2. Robert Browning. "Rabbi Ben Ezra". Campbell and Pyre, Editors. English Poetry of the Nineteenth Century. p.559

It is worthy of note that Bernard Shaw does not claim to be a great novelist, or a great dramatist, or a great critic. His attitude is that either he is or he is not great, and that is the end of the matter. But it is highly significant that Shaw claims to be a philosopher, and highly significant too that he has appointed himself the first prophet of the twentieth century religion of Creative Evolution. Hesketh Pearson quotes him as confidently posing the query, "Why am I the best educated philosopher in England"?[1] and his Preface to Back to Methuselah, written in his declining years ("My sands are running out"[2]) is not backward in emphasizing the part he has played in elaborating the New Theology and composing its bible. G.K. Chesterton has written that Shaw is very dogmatic, That is true but that he is also very humble. He talks a lot; and that in itself is something to build on, because the proud man will hold his tongue lest he give occasion to one whom he considers as intellectually inferior to trace too clearly the borderlines of his mental vision. It is to Shaw's credit that he has made his mind an open book to the world. It would seem that he considered it a matter of the utmost urgency to unload his store of wisdom on humanity according as it accumulated, to deliver it fresh from the factory of the Life-Force, to serve

1. Hesketh Pearson. G.B.S. p.234

2. Prefaces. p.524

the news up hot and steaming, as the phrase is in American Journalism. At ninety-two he is still actively engaged in writing, faithfully following out his own prescription to spend himself to the last ounce of strength until the time when he is ready to be thrown on the scrap-heap. He might well take for patron saint the Venerable Bede, who, sitting on his deathbed surrounded by his secretaries, dictated with feverish haste as the last hours of his life ran down the sand-clock, and exhorted his brethren with the words: Write, write.

It has been noted that Shaw very often leaves himself opon to the charge of self-contradiction, because even people with a short memory can see that he will argue with reckless bias in favour of any question, and, on the slightest provocation, repeat the performance in favour of the opposite view. The world cries inconsistent when it detects him saying yes and no to the same question on different occasions; but one may depend on it that he can always rise to the occasion with a disconcerting reply. When one confounded critic exclaimed in desperation: "Mr. Shaw you speak like two people", he calmly replied: "Why only two"? To the same charge he is always ready with the effective rejoinder: l'homme absurde est celui qui ne change jamais. According to this view the stationary is stagnant, evolution is progress.

From the beginning of his literary career commentators have enjoyed themselves with tacking labels on Shaw, deriving him from this and that source, while he himself took great delight in tearing off the labels, exposing the futility of any effort to put a price on him, and enjoying the discomfiture of the self-appointed salesmen. Literary jobbers were warned off the Shavian compound. He had discovered himself in the first place, he had advertised himself without any help from outside, and what was more, he had sold himself to the public as an oracle. It was never his intention to be known as the second Schopenhauer, or the new Samuel Butler, or the right hand man of Sydney Webb. He would be the first Bernard Shaw, or not at all. He was chary of those adventurers of the pen who, like Frank Harris, were over-eager to lend their services as biographers, confident that however authentic or unauthentic the material presented, the story of his life was sure to be a profitable commercial adventure.

The case of Frank Harris was enough to convince him that the Shavian legend was delicate subject matter, and should, therefore, on no account be entrusted to unauthorised biographers. There was the other case of an American, the son of an Irish policeman in Boston who wanted to solve the Shavian dilemma by using detective methods. This ambitious adventure proved troublesome for all concerned: Shaw vetoed the manuscript; the

publisher, therefore, refused to publish; and the policeman's son in his dejection committed suicide.

That Shaw has borrowed ideas from nearly every nineteenth century who had any evidence seems conclusively to confirm. He is willing to admit the fact himself in his serious moments. "I am a crow who have followed many ploughs,"[1] he wrote at the beginning of the century. But he feels a real sense of amusement and self-satisfaction as he observes his former colleagues the professional critics ("I have been one myself"[2]) wandering over wide countryside in anxious search of the proper plough. When he declares his intention to show them the way as he does in the Preface to Major Barbara, what he really accomplishes is to lead them off the main road down some pleasant Irish bohareen. He is talking about the native sanity of Charles Lever when everybody is waiting to hear about Ibsen; he is resurrecting the obscure and harmless Captain Wilson when he should be burying the notorious and dangerous Charles Darwin.

The excellence of Shaw lies not so much in his originality as in his ability to harness every sort of intellectual current for his religious powerhouse. No matter how irreconcilable one set of ideas may seem with another some prestidigitator's trick can always make them serve as supplements to one another. So harmonious does the new relationship appear, and so overwhelming

1. Prefaces p.721

2. Ibid. p.610

is the mass of arguments piled up in its favour lest some foolhardy questioner begins to look puggled, that the casual reader is prepared to admit that this thing was foreordained from the beginning. We are dealing in this essay with one of the most able propaganists of the century, a magician whose touch was enough to recall obscure thinkers already dead to pre-eminence of fame, if not to fortune. It must suffice for these that they helped the master to amass a personal fortune - even while he was preaching Socialism. In the field of literature and ideas he reversed the British invasion of Ireland: he carried the war right into the enemy country, silencing the opposing lines with a heavy barrage of propaganda; and then, as a gesture of peace, he named the prophets of the Sasanach as his precursors and rewarded them finally with niches in his monument. For, like Horace, he can truly say: "Exegi monumentum aere perennius"[1]. Occupying the most prominent niche stands Samuel Butler, and round about the pedestral, besides the lesser British precursors, there are the intellectual leaders of the continent on whose shoulders Shaw chose to stand: Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Lamarck, Ibsen, Marx, Bergson, and "the celebrated Buffoon".

These are the writers whose peculiar sense of

1. Horace. Odes. Book Three. xxx

the world Shaw recognized as more or less akin to his own. The stress has been on those elements of their works which he held to be in sympathy with the religion of Creative Evolution. As the structure of this religion takes clearer shape in the following chapters the materials here described will appear familiar. The Christian ethic and the Shavian ethic will be explained in their agreement and disagreement: and those parts of Shaw's religious writings which have a direct bearing on Biblical exegesis, and which contain his proposals for bringing the Christian religion into closer conformity with his own faith will also be dealt with. It will be seen that the New Theology uses the orthodox terminology, and that the ethics of the Life-Force are usually conceived in their relation to Christian ethics.

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C H A P T E R II

- - - - CHRISTIANITY REWRITTEN - - - -

An American writer once hazarded the opinion that Bernard Shaw was an emissary of the devil, because he stated truth in such a provocative way that noone would listen to it thereafter. To shock the conventionalists is part of the main business of his life and his handling of religion, as of other subjects, is calculated to shock. The great Shavian paradox is Bernard Shaw himself. He rests his case on the Life-Force, and uses his incisme intelligence to battle the pretensions of modern rationalism. He invites his public to witness a circus of intellectual gymnastics; and when the show is over he tells the confused audience that it has in reality been witnessing the birth of a new religion. This purpose is to dazzle and puzzle rather than to enlighten and convince. He is a playboy cutting cerebral capers,- a born mountebank capitalizing on a world of confusion in order to sell Creative Evolution, Socialism, and Bernard Shaw as the only sound and stable values that remain. It is to his advantage that the world has so many puzzles; it is his delight that the tragedy is invariably mixed with the comedy, and that the eternal truth must

he sought for in the heart of the jest. "Every dream is a prophecy: every jest is an earnest in the womb of Time"[1] says Father Keegan in John Bull's Other Island. Shaw is able to see life in its baffling and intriguing complexity. To express this complexity in simple straightforward language is not his purpose, for the simple reason that his religiion is for the few. Leg-pulling and virtuosity are not typical of religious founders. Christ at no point displayed virtuosity to puzzle and dumb-found; but Shaw began to crow when he found that Christ was guilty of a pun in the words: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock. . . "

Bernard Shaw felt that it was his serious duty to rid the world of cant and hypocricy. He decided that the first step in that direction was to bring Victorian London around to his way of thinking. He set himself to put first principles back into circulation, and to strengthen the proverbial British common sense with a wholesome dash of Irish objective thought. His method of pointing out common sense was often very puzzling to the common man, who in his sober solid way likes to see his world standing right-side-up. Shaw, on the other hand saw every advantage in standing a thing on its head if only such a posture made the article more noticeable, more baffling, and therefore worth knowing and acquiring. His approach to the question of religion was unusual and provocative because he refused to treat the subject with gravity. The mere

1. John Bull's Other Island. p.125.

introduction of wit into the discussion of ultimate beliefs appears flippant and irreverant to the orthodox, just as G.K.Chesterton's Defense of Orthodoxy seemed frivolous to a rationalist like Joseph McCabe. For Shaw, on the other hand, there is nothing incompatible between wholesome wit and lofty wisdom. When first he began to prmulgate his opinions, they appeared, he thought extravagant and even insane.

"In order to gain a hearing (he explains) it was necessary for me to attain the footing of a privileged lunatic with the licence of a jester . . . My method is to take the utmost trouble to find the right thing to say and then say it with the utmost levity. And all the time the real joke is that I am in earnest"[1]

It has been the remarkable destiny of Bernard Shaw to pass within a brief span from the position of jester extraordinary to the English speaking people to that of a philosopher with a message so serious that he scarcely dares couch it in serious form. From Widowers' Houses to Androcles and the Lion and Pygmalion he has run the gamut from unrelieved seriousness to fantastic farcicality. Shaw has adopted in general the gentle policy of laughing his adversaries to death.

To tell Bernard Shaw that he is a Christian would undoubtedly provoke another Preface. Considering the fact that he has answered all the outstanding questions of his time in the very bulky collection of Prefaces now in existence, and seeing that

1. Henderson. op.cit. p.199

great areas of these pages have still to be explored by readers of English, one feels that there is no need at the present time to volunteer this information. It is a noteworthy fact that while he is at his best when composing a panegyric on Christianity, a task he feels it his duty to perform at regular intervals, he can also appear a very serious and compelling preacher when he is acting as the infallible authority on the interpretation of the Scriptures, and assuming the role of Christian missionary as he calls on the people - believers and unbelievers - to reconsider the message of the Gospels as being the only panacea for the confusion and questioning of our time. G.K. Chesterton, who claimed to be the only person who understood Shaw, stoutly maintained that he was "the greatest of the modern Puritans - and perhaps the last."[1] Besides a great many other illuminating observations, he noted that this remarkable product of the Irish Protestant Garrison had Bunyan for his favourite author, and that "All his plays were indeed 'plays for Puritans'"[2]

The formative influence in Shaw's early life were of a nature to inculcate in him that disrespect for popular religion, and that contempt for social pretensions which are so deeply ingrained in his work and character. So strong and endur- was his reaction against the sham respectability, the pretentious

1. Chesterton. op.cit. p.42

2. Ibid. p.51

piety parading as religious faith which surrounded him in his early life that his philosophy became, as his biographer expressed it in the year 1911, "the consistent integration of his empirical criticisms of society founded on authority and based upon Capitalism"[1] The impressions received at Sunday church service never left him. They were accountable, he explained years afterwards, for "all the vulgarity,savagery,and bad blood which has marred my lierary work"[2] The rules of conduct, the picture of Heaven, the idea of God, the teaching of Jesus, - all these things as he learned them at home, at school, and at church appealed neither to his reason nor to his aesthetic sense. He looked for a pragmatic code of ethics, a better heaven, a God that was not represented as an "elderly gentleman", a knowledge of Jesus that excluded the disciples and St.Paul. He went straight to the Gospels and found what he wanted. He came to the conclusion that the Christian message which he learned as a boy was polluted with temporalities and legends. The true Gospel was still there, he believed; and the Preface to Androcles and the Lion brought it to light. Finally, he undertook to show that there was no reason to believe that there was anything in the teaching of Jesus contrary to the religion of Creative Evolution.

Under the heading "Why not give Christianity a trial?" he begins his commentary on the New Testament, assuring his public, lest it should lose patience with him and shut the book, that he is

as sceptical and scientific a modern thinker as you will find anywhere. The choice, he assures us, is still between Jesus and Barabbas. If the history of the past two thousand years shows us that the old cry of "Not this man, but Barabbas" is still new, he would not write off Christianity as a failure; on the contrary he maintains that "'This man' has not been a failure yet; for nobody has ever been sane enough to try his way".[1] We are given to believe that Christianity would have got off to a better start had Jesus known as much about economics and politics as Bernard Shaw. In the Preface to Androcles and the Lion we read:

"I must still insist that if Jesus could have worked out the practical problems of a Communist constitution, an admitted obligation to deal with crime without revenge or punishment, and a full assumption by humanity of divine responsibilities,he would have conferred an incalculable benefit on mankind, because these distinctive demands are now turning out to be good sense and sound economics"[2]

At the outset of his career Shaw took every opportunity of publicly terming himself an Atheist, and at one time he appears to have doubted even the historical existence of Jesus. But later the Rev. R.J.Campbell satisfied him that Jesus had actually existed. Believing that it is the doctrine and not the man that matters, he

1. Prefaces. p.525

2. Ibid. p.526

does not press the question of whether Jesus was divine or no; but he mentions the fact that those who claim a literally divine paternity for Jesus cannot be silenced by the discovery that the same claim was made for Alexander and Augustus. He is satisfied that Jesus was an extraordinary person, whose unusual message was future-piercing and thoroughly practical; this message if not wholly original - since the Gospels, we are informed,contain Greek and Chinese interpolations - has in the long run proved itself worthy of consideration by any modern practical statesman.

In contrast to the disciples, Jesus is described as essentially a highly-civilized cultivated person. The Most formidable stumbling blocks of Christianity,according to Shaw, are the first disciples. He is quite resourceful in the way he introduces these latter from time to time as scapegoats,laying on their backs the sins of otherworldiness, of belief in Salvation,and ignorance of Fabianism that crop up without warning in the pages of the New Testament. "There are moments (he writes) when one is tempted to say that there was not one Christian among them, and that Judas was the only one who showed any gleam of common sense"[1] Their idolatry of Jesus is explained as being simply the worship of ignorant men for one who possessed mental powers and insight quite beyond their comprehension: they worshipped this leader as a super-human phenomenon, making his memory the nucleus of their crude

1. Prefaces. p.620

belief in magic, their "Noahism", their sentimentality, and their simple morality with its punitive sanctions.

In dealing with Jesus Christ Bernard Shaw does not follow some of the older historians by putting into the mouth of his subject speeches representing his own opinions. His method has been rather to read personal meanings into the words of Christ. It will be a disputed question, depending on a person's religions affiliations, how far one may go in the private interpretation of the Gospel teaching, but in the case of Bernard Shaw it can scarcely be denied that he has taken the bit between his teeth in this matter. Jesus is described as an advocate of Communism, on the strength of his advice to the young man to distribute his property among the poor; as an artist and Bohemian in his manner of life, because he resorted to the art of fiction by teaching in parables; as an enemy of the idea that forms of religion once rooted can be rooted out and replanted with the flowers of a foreign faith, and hence as an enemy of all proselytizing missionary enterprises, on the strength of the parable of the tares; and as a bigoted Jew who regarded his mission as addressed exclusively to the Hebrew people, because of the manner in which he addressed the woman of Canaan. In this last instance Shaw observes that the woman "melted the Jew out of him and made Christ a Christian"[1].

There follows a more detailed exegesis of the Gospels in turn. We are informed that St.Matthew's Gospel reveals Christ

1. Prefaces. p.538

as being aristocratic in manner, or at the very least the son of a rich bourgeois. Shaw observes:

"We must be careful therefore to conceive Joseph, not as a modern proletarian carpenter working for weekly wages, but as a master craftsman of royal descent. John the Baptist may have been a Kier Hardie, - but the Jesus of Matthew is of the Ruskin-Morris class"[1]

The Shavian commentary has it that the great change in the life of Jesus came when Peter hailed him as Christ. At this Jesus became extraordinarily pleased and excited, declaring that Peter had a revelation straight from God, and he accepted his destiny as a god by announcing that he will be killed when he goes to Jerusalem. St. Mark's Gospel is interpreted as advocating the Shavian view of an independent pragmatic morality. Thus:

"He tells us that Jesus went into the synagogues and taught,not as the Scribes but as one having authority: that is, we infer, he preaches his own doctrine as an original moralist instead of repeating what the books say"[2]

The Gospel according to St.Luke,we are told, has nothing that distinguishes it from the preceding two, save for the artistic flavour of the narrative.

In the commentary on the fourth Gospel Shaw executes some nimble footwork, making of the narrative a propaganda piece

1. Prefaces. p.541

2. Ibid. p.541

for the Life-Force religion. Such texts as "I and my Father are one", "I came that you may have life and have it more abundantly", and the quotation from the eighty-second Psalm, "I said you are Gods," are emphasized as supporting the thesis that God is becoming through humanity and all organic life; that man is evolving through higher stages towards the Superman, and finally towards the godhead; that if today man may be said to have life, his descendents in time may be said to have life more abundantly, because they will possess their virtues physical, intellectual, and moral, in a higher degree than their forefathers possessed them.

As on many occasions it has been contended by the orthodox that Shaw's conversion to Christianity was complete, a few quotations had better be given to show how erroneous is the notion. In his reply to Max Nordau entitled The Sanity of Art (1895) the Christian God ~~is~~ as popularly imagined is described as a "fightfully jealous and vindictive old gentleman sitting on a throne above the clouds."[1] In his essay On Going to Church (1896) he concludes by saying: "I regard St.Athanasius as an irreligious fool - that is, in the only serious sense of the word, a damned fool".[2] Of the pivotal doctrine of Christianity he has this to say: "Popular Christianity has for its emblem a gibbet, for its chief sensation a sanquinary execution after torture, for its central mystery an

1. "The Sanity of Art" Collected Works of Bernard Shaw. Vol.19

2. Quoted by D.A.Lord in "George Bernard Shaw", Catholic World. Vol.102.p.773

insane vengeance bought off by a trumpery expiation".[1] And he adds in the same Preface to Major Barbara; "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".[2]

The Preface to Androcles and the Lion contains the most comprehensive study of Shaw's views on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Bearing in mind his brief summary of the four Gospels, we may with profit consider here his Four Doctrines of Jesus. They are as follows. (1) God and man are one. (2) Private property is essentially wicked. (3) Punishment of criminals must be abolished. (4) Marriage and family relationships are definitely a drawback.

In his interpretation of these doctrines Shaw reads fantastic meanings into the phrases of Jesus, until he persuades himself that Christ was a complete Shavian, who needed only a course in Fabian Lectures to make him the political saviour of the world. Jesus is applauded as biologist, economist, and criminologist rolled into one, arriving at conclusions which the latest science is obliged to confirm. With manipulation and convenient omission, support for almost any view can be obtained from the New Testament; and Shaw has merely followed the example of other religion-makers by adding and taking from the teachings of Jesus whatever was needed to square it with the new evangel. He has adopted the convenient plan of concentrating great attention

1. Prefaces. p.134
2. Ibid. p128

on points where the Shavian teaching coincides with that of Jesus; while those points that are in contradiction can always be attributed to the delusion, or to the intellectual incompetence of the evangelists, who are oftentimes blamed for writing down garbled versions of what they heard.

The first doctrine Shaw attributes to Jesus reads as follows:-

"The Kingdom of Heaven is within you. You are the son of God;and God is the son of man. God is a spirit to be worshipped in spirit and in truth, and not an elderly gentleman to be bribed and begged from. We are members one of another; so that you cannot inquire or help your neighbour without injuring or helping yourself. God is your father: you are here to do God's work; and you and your father are one"[1].

The Gospel injunction to love your neighbour as yourself is given a pragmatic and pantheistic colouring. The reminder that we are members one of another fits well into the idea of a universal self; a theosophical view propounded by Mrs. Besant,and closely related to Shaw's way of thinking, aswe shall see later; and it is bad business from a practical standpoint to injure your neighbour,because you are injuring yourself at the same time. Jesus sometimes speaks of himself as the Son of Man. He certainly never taught that God was the son of every man. Nor

1. Prefaces. p.552

did he teach "you and your father are one" but "I and my Father are one." If man is also God, how can God be a spirit unless man is also a spirit? But Shaw does not believe that God and man are one, because he has stressed the notion time and time again in Man and Superman and in Back to Methuselah that "God" was in the universe long before man, that man is but the expression of "Gods" urge to create something better than Himself, and that man will be superseded if he fails. The assumption that Jesus generallytaught that the kingdon of heaven was inside a man and not a place or state and that man is God is contradicted time and time again throughout the Gospels. Earth and heaven are constantly put in opposition: as "Thy will be done on earth,as it is in heaven; a voice from heaven said 'This is my son'; till heaven and earth pass away" etc. Heaven is pictured in the sky, for stars are to fall from heaven; the sign of the Son of Man is to appear in heaven, and he is to come "in the clouds of heaven" heralded by angels who shall gather his elect from the four winds "from one end of heaven to the other". Similarly God and man are constantly put in opposition. Speaking to men Jesus says: "you are the light of the world", and the light must shine "to glorify your Father who is in heaven". This same heavenly Father is pictured as feeding the birds and making the grass to grow, and the sun to rise and the rain to fall. All these things are impossible to man conceived either in a physical or a spiritual sense. God and man,therefore, are not identical in the teachings of Jesus.

The second doctrine Shaw confirms reads:

"Get rid of property by throwing it into the common stock. Dissociate your work entirely from money payments. If you let a child starve you are letting God starve. Get rid of all anxiety about to-morrow's dinner and clothes, because you cannot serve two masters - God and Mammon"[1]

When Shaw advises us to work without any regard for money payments he is contradicting the view that he expressed so passionately in Major Barbara, where he describes money as the most important thing in the world. We are told that we cannot serve two masters - God and Mammon. But if God and man are one as Shaw maintains, then the distinction between the two masters has no validity. By serving God we are serving Mammon and vice versa. Jesus did not teach Communism as Shaw implies, but alms-giving which is utterly alien to its principles. The Gospels commend the poor in spirit; they speak of the danger of riches as a hindrance to the pursuit of heavenly things that are far more important; and the phrase concerning the poor being always with us is an indication that Christ did not come to regulate the distribution of wealth. He did not preach equality of income for he admitted the claims of a Caesar; nether did he ever hint that equality of virtue would become a reality, even if the obligation to seek perfection is laid upon all. There are many mansions in heaven to correspond to the degrees of virtue achieved on earth.

1. Prefaces. p.552

The evidence of his other writings points to the fact that Shaw's attitude towards material wealth is in sharp contradiction to his view here presented. The Greek maxim, "First secure an independent income, and then practice virtue" is closer to the truth. Economy is the keystone of his religious arch. Hence his persistent pleading for Socialism as the religion of the twentieth century, whereby money and salvation will be made available to the poor, as against the so-called Salvationism of the Christian Churches, which,he thinks, limits salvation to the respectable middle and upper classes who can afford to pay for a reserved seat in heaven. For the sake of economy he would have the State make short shrift of criminals, not because the State is too humane to punish, but because it would be too thrifty to waste the time of policemen and wardens in punishing dishonest men. To uphold economy he grumbles at the institution of marriage, not so much because it makes licentionsness legal, but because a married man will do anything for money, and is therefore a danger to society. And when Jesus called Peter to be his disciple,not only did he sign the death-warrant of Christianity,we are informed,but he spoiled a useful fisherman. This attitude is summed up briefly in the Prefaces this: "The love of economy is the root of all virtue"[1]

Bernard Shaw sets no bounds,legal or moral,to a man's determination to indulge this virtue,even though such a course

1. Prefaces. p.191

might involve riding roughshod over his neighbour's claims. He lamented his own foolhardiness for enduring poverty once in his life; he, a sensitive artist had to be content to visit Hampton Court Place and the National Gallery on free days while philistine millionaires were "yawning miserably over inept gluttonies". In later years he blamed himself for not realizing that "to remedy this I should have been prepared to wade through other people's blood."[1] Is it not this perception that constitutes an aristocracy nowadays? he asks. He continues:

"It is the secret of all our governing classes, which consists finally of people who, though perfectly prepared to be generous, humane, cultured, philanthropic, public spirited and personally charming in the second instance, are unalterably resolved, in the first, to have money enough for a handsome and delicate life, and will, in pursuit of that money, batter in the doors of their fellow-men, sell them up, sweat them in fetid dens, shoot, stab, hang, imprison, sink, burn, and destroy them in the name of law and order. And this shows their fundamental sanity and right-mindedness; for a sufficient income is indispensable to the practice of virtue; and the man who will let any unselfish consideration stand between him and its attainment is a weakling, a dupe, and a predestined slave."[2]

1. Prefaces p.654

2. Ibid. p.654

As against the Christian moral code with its belief in the Ten Commandments written in stone as well as in the heart of man, Shaw presents us with the nineteenth century Rationalistic thesis that morals are mere conventions and become out of date, just as legal and industrial institutions become out of date. He holds that all men are anarchists with regard to laws that are against their consciences, especially in London,where the the "worst anarchists are the magistrates". As for our present morality,it is nothing but "an impudent hypocricy". But he goes a step farther than the Rationalists in his assertion that there can be no morality without an equality of income; and furthermore,that in order to achieve a harmonious relationship between the members of society,there has to be an equality of virtue.

Equality of income is held to be the antidote for the present social disorder - a hideous and inhuman tyranny in the eyes of Fabian Shaw in which the ascendency rests content in callous complacency, and tolerates the abuse whereby the moneyed classes are permitted to live as parasites on the workers, and where the latter can never hope to amass enough money to make possible an enjoyment of the cultural values of life,or be relieved of the incessant fear ofloss of income. With equal contempt for both classes Shaw lays his malediction upon them with equal severity: he describes them as "the sluggards who are content to be wealthy without working, and the dastards who are content to

work without being wealthy"[1]. He holds it as fundamental that the two main problems of organized society should be: how to produce subsistence enough for all its members, and how to prevent the theft of that subsistence by the idlers. This programme, he believes, can be realized, first, by distributing the national income equally, and then by seeing to it that nobody will eat who does not pay to society his personal debt in the form of productive labour.

He poses a problem:

"Already there is economic equality between captains, and economic equality between cabin boys. What is at issue still is whether these shall be economic equality between captains and cabin boys. What would Jesus have said?"[2]

Shaw believes he would insist that the cabin boy have as much money as the captain. For this reason: If the object is to produce a captain and a cabin boy for the purpose of transferring you from Liverpool to New York, or to manoeuvre a fleet and carry powder from the magazine to the gun, then the captain deserves a higher wage since his training is more expensive. If, on the other hand, you perceive that there are two human souls, which have the right and the obligation to develop all their possibilites, then you will find the cabin boy costing more than the captain,

1. Prefaces. P. 654

2. Ibid. p1557

"because the cabin boy's work does not do so much for the soul as the captain's work. Consequently you will have to give him at least as much as the captain unless you definitely wish him to be a lower creature in which case the sooner you are hanged as an abortionist the better. This is the fundamental argument".[1]

If the argumentum ad baculinum is the last word in logic, or if a piece of Irish persuasion can settle all disputes, then the above argument can be considered settled. Shaw proceeds to demand an equality of virtue, for the same reason that led him to demand an equality of income. The argument is fundamentally economic. Among the Maxims for Revolutionists we find:

"Vice is a waste of life. Poverty, obedience,and celibacy are the caononical vices . . . Economy is the art of making the most of life . . . The love of economy is the root of all virtue"[2]

Throughout his plays and prose works Shaw has kept up a bitter battle against every indecent manifestation of virtuous superiority, using every device of wit and dramatic situation to ridicule any improper show of personal righteousness. Harmonious living, he argues, demands a nice balance of good and evil. When you take all the evil out of a person you kill him: you have robbed him of a great deal of personal charm only to make him a nuisance to his fellowmen thereafter through his consciousness of

1. Prefaces. p.557

2. Ibid. p.191

moral superiority. Similarly, the child does not stand between a good and a bad angel: what it has to deal with is a middling angel, who, in normal healthy cases, wants to be a good angel as fast as it can without killing itself in the process. In The Quintessence of Ibsenism the folly of sacrificing happiness to the Ideal is explained, showing how one man, by his fanatical devotion and singlemindedness of purpose in the pursuit of "virtue" can upset the delicate balance of community and domestic relationships, and cause tragedy for all concerned. Shaw writes: "Brand dies a saint, having caused more intense suffering by his saintliness than the most talented sinner could possibly have done with twice his opportunities."[1]

The fundamental and irreconcilable difference between the Christian moral code and the Life-Force moral code is the difference between self-abnegation and self-expression. In the New Drama, Ibsen personified the first in Brand (with what degree of caricature let each one judge), while Shaw gave a lively example of the second in his provocative picture of an unwomanly woman, Vivie, the daughter of Mrs. Warren. Says Brand:

"Within,within! That is the word! Hither is the way. There is the track. One's own heart that is the world,re-create,ripe for

1. G.B.Shaw. op.cit. p.54

the life of God; there must thevulture of self-will be slain, there must the new Adam be born."[1]

And, in the other corner - Vivie, who hates holidays,studies for the mathematical tripos,relaxes with a cigar and a little whiskey, and fights the whole male world. This modern woman pours scorn on her mother for complaining about the straitened circumstances of her youth. Says Vivie:- "People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don't believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and if they can't find them, make them."[2]

Shaw nevertheless does set some bounds to this personal war on environment. He sent the Neo-Darwinists home with broken heads in the Preface to Back to Methuselah for saying that there was no such thing as self-control,this being a logical deduction from their belief that Natural Selection had no place for free will. Shaw the Vitalist,on the other hand, makes a strong case for self-control pointing out that this is the one quality of survival value which his opponents must inevitably adopt. Uncontrolled qualities, he informs them, may be selected for survival and development for certain periods and under certain circumstances: it cannot be denied that it is the ungovernable gluttons who strive the hardest to get food and drinks. There is no danger here as long as the supply of food is scarce. But a

1. The Works of Ibsen. p.615

2. "Mrs. Warren's Profession", Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant pp.200,201

change of circumstances involving a plentiful supply of food would destroy them. He takes as an example from our own time the case of the healthy and vigorous poor man who becomes a millionaire by one of the accidents of our competitive commerce, and immediately proceeds to dig his grave with his teeth. The self-controlled man, on the other hand, survives all such changes of circumstances, because he adapts himself to them and eats only as much as is good for him. Self-control, says Shaw "is nothing but a highly-developed vital sense dominating and regulating the mere 'appetites. . . it is the quality that distinguishes the fittest to survive. . . (it is) the highest moral claim of Evolutionary Selection."[1]

In the Shavian scheme,then, virtue is a common odity that should be regulated. The prudent man will allow himself only as much as he can comfortably cope with. If men allow themselves to succumb to the weakness of competing with each other in pursuit of the Ideal, the resulting moral inequality will be as unhappy in its effects upon society as the corresponding inequality in the economic field, which is the result of uncontrolled competition. Mrs. Warren sums up the case for the laodicean attitude to virtue with this remark: "Lord help the world if everybody took to doing the right thing."[2]

The third doctrine which Shaw attributes to Jesus says:-"Get rid of judges and punishment and revenge. Love your

1. Prefaces. p.505

2. "Mrs.Warren's Profession", op cit. p.244

neighbour as yourself, he being part of yourself. And love your enemies: they are your neighbours."[1]

There is no doubt that Shaw has done good service as humanitarian by his ceaseless efforts to bring to the attention of both public and officials the essentially vicious nature of much that passes as corrective punishment in our legal codes. Like Swift, he would reserve the hottest corner of his hell for judges. He holds that in dealing with crime modern thought and experience have thrown no fresh light on the views of Jesus. Basing his defense on the Gospel injunction, "Judge not that you may not be judged," he maintains that punishment as it is at present administered in the form of imprisonment and torture should be abolished altogether. An examination of the Gospels will reveal that Jesus always stressed the implications of transgression and punishment in relation to God, the offended One, to heaven as the reward for good, and hell as the punishment for evil, and that he gave indirect approval to courts of justice and their right to condemn when he submitted to the decisions of the Jewish and Roman courts that sentenced him to death. Shaw on the other hand takes the above text to show that Jesus would do away with all forms of earthly punishment; and in another place he argues against supernatural punishment as being incompatible with the Life-Force religion. He suggests that we

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should abolish judges, gallows, and prisons, and be content to label the criminal and leave him to his conscience, or where he lacks enough self-control to be considered safe, we should put him in the lethal-chamber. Shaw does not explain what he means by a label, neither does he suggest who will decide as to who shall be merely labelled and who shall be asphyxiated. Since there is no place for judges, then the court must be that of the people; the court must be - a People's Court.

That laws will be broken by certain incorrigibles he does not deny; he would like to think of these cases as exceptions to the rule, maladjusted people whom society has maltreated from their youth, who are completely incapable of reacting to humane corrective treatment, and who should be taken out of circulation and promptly despatched without cruelty, having been given to understand that the state is too thrifty to waste time and money on policemen and wardens. This class, we are led to understand, will be reduced to a minimum only when the state takes care to make laws that command the public assent, for, as we have seen, all men are anarchists with regard to laws that are against their consciences. Given sound, reasonable laws you can look for the reign of order and equity. Man will co-operate with the law, because man is by nature good, says Shaw. "It is quite useless to declare that all men are born free if you deny that they are born good. Guarantee a man's goodness and his liberty will take care of itself."[1]

1. Prefaces. p.130

Punishment and expiation are merely an invitation to further crime we are told. When a judge hands down a sentence he is expressing a collective vindictiveness by punishing one crime with another. You can never get a high morality from people who believe that their misdeeds are revocable and pardonable. The Christian dispensation, is incapable of leading mankind to a state of high moral consciousness, because it preaches redemption and atonement.

Shaw endorses the Gospel injunction to love your neighbour though he is your enemy. In theory this is completely in accord with the ethics of Creative Evolution; as a moral precept it has practical application in the Socialist State.

The Life-Force religion strives hard - and with some success - to adjust itself comfortably to the two worlds, the temporal and the spiritual, or as it is often styled, the personal and the superpersonal. When it comes to the test Shaw is prepared to serve the gods that are rather than the gods that may be; Ferrovius in Androcles and the Lion does not forgive his enemies or turn his cheek, but picks up a sword and wipes them out. After this show of manliness he accepts the Emperor's invitation to join the Pretorian Guard, with the following reflection:

"In my youth I worshipped Mars, the God of War. I turned from him to serve the Christian god; but to-day the Christian god

forsook me; and Mars overcame me and took back his own. The Christian god is not yet. He will come when Mars and I are dust; but meanwhile I must serve the gods that are, not the God that will be."[1]

The fourth doctrine of Jesus according to Bernard Shaw is as follows:-

"Get rid of family entanglements. Every mother you meet is as much your mother as the mother who bore you. Every man you meet is as much your brother as the man she bore before you. Don't waste your time at family funerals grieving for your relatives: attend to life, not to death: there are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it,and better. In the Kingdom of heaven, which, as aforesaid, is within you, there is no marriage nor giving in marriage, because you cannot devote your life to two divinities: God and the person you are married to."[2]

The fourth doctrine is thus interpreted by Shaw as an attack on monogamous marriages and family relationships. It is a brief summary of his none too brief commentary in several plays and Prefaces of the social and ethical aspects of marriage. He objects to marriage on the flimsy pretext that a married man will do anything for money; also on the ground that a man bound by family ties is too concerned with temporal affairs to follow the inner light. The philosopher, the artist,the explorer can

1. Androcles and the Lion. p.50.

2. Prefaces. p.552

follow the light of inspiration only when free from the necessity of bread winning on the one hand, and the servility of domestic attachments on the other. To strengthen his case against accepting family attachments Shaw cites the example of Jesus "who found family ties and domestic affections in his way at every turn, and had become persuaded at last that no man could follow his inner light until he was free from their compulsion."[1]

The greatest sacrifice in marriage, we are assured, is the sacrifice of the adventurous attitude towards life. In this question Shaw finds himself in agreement with St.Paul, a very unusual occurrence considering that in his summa theologica he has dramatically cast St.Paul in the role of villain as foil to his hero who is Jesus Christ. St.Paul was aware that the twin allegiances often have to battle for spuremacy in the heart of the married man: the allegiance he owes to God, and the allegiance due to his wife. Shaw has nothing but severe reproach for the man of action and aspiration who allows his wife to turn him from his best work, and entangle him in a social routine that is wearisome to him, while he sells his services at the best price so that the home-fires may be kept burning. This is all right, he says for "those who are born tired", and crave for settlement; but for fresher and stronger spirits "it is a form of suicide."

1. Prefaces. p.562

Marriage, he believes, is positively licentious, -"the most licentious of human institutions" he brands it, because "it combines the maximum of temptation with the maximum of opportunity."[1]

Basing his premises on certain plausable facts and figures drawn from the lives of his fellowmen, he concludes that marriage does not solve the problem of sex. Celibacy is for the few, and only the chosen few are worthy. It is admitted that there are cases where marriage turns vagabonds into steady citizens, and that men and women will, for love of their mates and children practice virtues that unattached individuals are incapalbe of. But too often these are not aloways virtues but self-denial; and for Bernard Shaw self-denial is a deadly sin. This belief is that marriage which is not permanent is a guarantee against the abrogation of the natural law that entitles man and woman to individual choice, untramelled effort, and the right to move with a certain privacy in one's chosen orbit; but the union of man and wife until death is indicted as intolerable to both parties, and a servitute to one or the other. Marriage as an institution within the State is also censured. Among the Maxims for Revolutionists we read:"Marriage or any other form of promiscuous amonistic monogamy, is fatal to large States because it puts its ban on the deliberate breeding of man as a political animal."[2]

1. Prefaces/ p.189

2. Ibid. p.190

Shaw's ethical views on the subject of marital life derive their immediate sanction from his acute and ever present sense of economy; while remotely the flow logically from his religious belief in the union of the ~~sires~~ sexes to increase and multiply, and thus carry on the work of self-perfection, which in reality is God's work, as He seeks to enlarge and perfect His own being. The woman must not be imprisoned within the domestic walls, condemned by her parents to wait in genteel idleness and uselessness for a husband, when all her healthy social instincts call her to acquire a profession and work: it is her economic dependence on them that makes this tyranny effective. The man must escape being hamstring while the world stands to benefit by the fruits of his inspiration: domesticity, breadwinning, and social ties will render it impossible to translate his ideas into practical achievement. From the point of view of the Life-Force religion the woman is the primal vital agency in the fulfilment of Nature's laws. Shaw regards her as

"much more formidable than man, because she is,as it were,archetypal, belonging to the original structure of things, and has behind her activity,sometimes benevolent and more often malevolent, the great authority of Nature herself."[1]

1. Henderson. op.cit. p.81

In his dramatic conception of the woman as heroine, he broke away from the long-established convention that reached back for centuries. By now Everyman had trodden the boards for a considerable time, and he was beginning to repeat himself; and the romantic heroine was not representative of the modern woman. The answer was clear. Shaw created Everywoman, and earned for himself the title of the most ungallant of dramatists. His unspanked heroines have swaggered their way through a goodly list of provocative plays, causing womanly women to wince at their antics, and making life an unpleasant play for Everyman.

Since the Life-Force has selected the woman as its medium of expression, the woman accepts her biological responsibility as the "superior sex" and pursues her prey recklessly, making use of her wiles,her charms, and even her ruthlessness to accomplish the primeval purpose of Nature. The quintessence of Shavian womanhood is Ann Whitefield, - "that most gorgeous of all my creatures" as he calls her - incarnation of fecundity in Nature,wilful, unscrupulous,immodest, agressive,dominant, compelling enough to make Jack Tanner obey her biological imperative. Anne Whitefield bears such a striking character resemblance to her female counterparts in the other plays: to Julia Craven in The Philanderer, to Vivie in Mrs. Warren's Profession, to Savvy (short for Savage) in The Gospel of the Brothers Barnabas, to mention only a few, that the Shavian woman has been described as an a *priori* conception rather

than a conscious effort at a realistic presentation. Commenting on this subject Henderson remarks: "He planks down for our inspection less a life-like portrait of the eternal feminine than a philosophic interpretation of the 'superior sex'".[1]

The Life-Force knows no moral restraint in the Christian sense when man and woman set out to accomplish its biological purpose. Once the biological requirements have been fulfilled there is no reason why the marriage should not be dissolved. The practical solution for present day marital problems, says Shaw, is to make the individual economically independent of marriage and the family, and then to make marriage as easily dissoluble as any other partnership. It will be the duty of the State to take care of the children, assuming of course that the State is organized according to the "Communism advocated by Jesus, which we have seen to be entirely practicable and indeed inevitable if our civilization is to be saved from collapse."[2]

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1. Henderson. op.cit. p.83
2. Prefaces. p.562

C H A P T E R III

- - - THE SHAVIAN ETHIC - - -

Practicability is a very popular term in this century. It is applied universally in the commercial world; it is invading the field of education and undermining many old and tested values; and in some places it is even considered as the touchstone of good literature,music,and art. This phenomenon is not peculiar to the twentieth century, for the nineteenth century Rationalists spole of practical religion and practical ethics. Bernard Shaw, who had his roots in the last century continued the tradition into our time with a display of rationalistic fire-works that madepeople wonder how the Bible story ever came to be accepted. Throughout his works there is a relentless struggle between the "Christian" ethic based on the Decalogue, and the Shavian ethic derived from Creative Evolution. In every case the "Christ-ian" ethic comes out the worst of the encounter; in most cases it turns heel in hasty flight to Mount Sinai.

In the first place Bernard Shaw finds himself in opposition to the Christian ethic, because he is the sworn enemy of what he calls ready-made moralities. His deep seated antipathy to every aspect of nineteenth century respectability accounts for a great deal of this oppostion. He came to identify Christian ethics with the conventional morality that he saw around about him. One of his first published works as a young man was a stinging attack on the practice of the religious Revival as it took place in his home-town church; and since that time scarcely a play, or a preface, or an essay has come from his pen in which he did not inveigh against the practice of churchgoing. In his eyes it represented middle-class complacency and respectability at their worst. The final effect of the Shavian religion is to substitute conscience for conformity. We are advised that the only really simple thing to do is to go straight for what we want and grab it. To regard the prompting of a personal conscience as a relic of an effete morality was the theme of a good deal of nineteenth century dramatic and philosophic writing. In the twentiieth century such an attitude merited the accliam of being ahead of the times - the highest reward that the century can offer. Bernard Shaw had convinced himself that he was ahead of his time, and he levelled against Christianity the most serious charge that the present age can offer; he said that it was not

marching with the times, and he called upon it to revise its Bible in such a way that every belief raised to the dignity of a dogma could stand the test of science.

In Shaw's opinion Christian morality is synonomous with respectability, and he has classed the sin of respectability as one of the seven deadly sins; the other six are: conventional virtue, filial affection,modesty, sentiment, devotion to women, and romance. With Ibsen, as we have seen, he maintains that as far as morals go there is no law; with Nietzsche he refects positibely all morality based on Christian principles. Morality, he claims, and his dramatic characters echo his dictum, is as shifting as table manners or the rules of the drill grounds. In his plays the characters whom he sets up as paragons of respectability invariably are bores or fools or furtive sinners,- fully conscious of their cant, perpetually on the defensive against the attacks of the Shavian types of the unconventional, who are usually speaking the wittiest epigrams, and are invariably permitted to strut their way through the scene receiving only the most craven opposition. Mr. and Mrs. Knox in Fanny's First Play, Colonel Craven and Doctor Paramore in The Philanderer will not draw the sympathy of the audience; whereas the characters who defy respectability like Dick Dudgeon in The Devil's Disciple, Lady Cicely in Captain Brassbound's Conversion, Lavinia in Androcles and the Lion, and Vivie in Mrs. Warren's Profession are as commendable

people as Shaw's ironic pen will ever allow.

With equal insistence Shaw points to money as the basis of all sound morality. Christianity, being a religion that stresses the importance of placing spiritual values first is of necessity, according to this view, fated to go down before the irresistible march of Socialism, with its stress on material values. Money is the most important thing in the world, Shaw assures us, because it represents health, strength, honor, generosity and beauty as undeniably as the want of it represents illness, weakness, meanness and ugliness. Sir Andrew Undershaft in Major Barbara is the perfect example of the man who has become intellectually and practically conscious of the truth that the worst of crimes is poverty, and that his first duty, to which every other consideration should be sacrificed, is not to be poor. This is the Gospel of St.Andrew Undershaft: Money is essential to salvation. To teach children to despise money is wicked. Thanks to our cowardice and political imbecility, both caused by poverty, all sensible people quite rightly strain every nerve and every canon of morality to get an independent income. But when attained, some of them find that the presence of poverty in others taints the very social atmosphere with the noxious odours of ignorance and vulgarity.

In the course of the play Undershaft delivers an

impassioned speech on the train of human misery that follows on the hideous crime of poverty. The following is an excerpt: -

"Cusins: Do you call poverty a crime?

Undershaft: The worst of crimes. All other crimes are virtues beside it: it blights whole cities; spreads horrible pestilences; strikes dead the very souls of all who come within sight, sound or smell of it. What you call a crime is nothing: a murder here and a theft there, a blow now and a curse then: what do they matter? they are only the accidents and illnesses of life: there are not fifty genuine professional criminals in London. But there are millions of poor people,abject people,dirty people, ill fed, ill clothed people."[1]

Undershaft, who is here the mouthpiece of Bernard Shaw, seems to think that every permicious disease of society has its certain origin in the degradation of lower class poverty. His dramatic creator makes Undershaft raise very troublesome doubts about the moral probity of certain forms of Christian proselytizing among the starving poor. He confronts his contemporaries with the question: is there any possible use for good in the missionary efforts of such a body as The Salvation Army?; Is it not unfair to attempt the conversion of a starving man with a Bible in one hand and a slice of bread in the other? Undershaft boasts: "I will undertake to convert West Ham to Mahometanism on the same

1. Major Barbara. p.281

terms . . . . bring (the hungry man) to me here and I will drag his sould back again to salvation for you. Not by words and dreams; but by thirty-eight shillings a week, a sound house in a handsome street, and a permanent job."[1]

Religion and the social order are inextricably bound up with each other in the Shavian world-view, hence a religion that does not look to the physical as well as the metaphysical needs of humanity cannot, he maintains, claim any adherence from a rational being. He finds that the Christian religion in its effort to contribute its share in the social and political fields has been too docile towards the powers that be at moments when "it becomes the duty of the Churches to evoke all the powers of destruction against the existing order." But if they do this, he argues, the existing order must forcibly suppress them. Hence Churches are suffered to exist only on condition that they preach submission to the State as at present capitalistically organized. These observations were made in the comparative peace and order of the year 1905, at a time when kings ascended their thrones with good and reasonable hopes of wearing their crowns until they died. The comfortable,assuring sense of unbroken dynastic rule was summed up in this historic announcement: The King is dead. Long live the King! And there was every good

1. Major Barbara. pp 281, 282

reason for hoping, at the close of the long Victorian peace, that the announcement would be repeated again and again. It will be understood that for dynamic spirits like Shaw the age appeared too monotonous, the working classes too obedient, too easily pleased. We know that those classes earned his contempt for their apparent docility. But his long life has spanned the two extremes of security and insecurity; and to-day he may well ponder over the vanishing vision of security, and the approaching spectre of Servile State. The more mature Shaw will bear in mind the chain of social and international upheavals that has made the past forty years memorable; and he will note the fact that those leaders who are swept into power on the crest of revolution take strict measures to ensure that the same procedure is not repeated while they themselves hold the reins of power.

The stand taken by Shaw on the question of Anarchism versus St.Paul's precept of obedience to the higher authorities seems to fluctuate between these two poles according to the necessities of the situation as presented in a particular play, and according to the mood of the author which varies from impish provocation to mature and sensible reflection. In 1888 he wrote two very clever articles entitled, My Friend Fritzthunder, the Unpractical Socialist, by Redbarn Wash, and Fritzthunder on Himself - A Defense by Robespierre Marat Fitzthunder . These papers constitue a reductio ad absurdum of the unpractical and

revolutionary Socialist. The history of Shaw's faith in Marxian Communism began with a fervent belief that dialectical materialism was the true faith, and that Karl Marx was its prophet. Through the influence of the Hampstead Historic Society, of Sydney Webb and Philip H. Wicksteed, and through his own study of Capital he came to see the fallacies inherent in the Marxian theory of value as a guide to economics, and in the principle of Class War as a means of regulating human society. He does not believe that the social struggle follows class lines, because the people who really hate the capitalist system are, like Ruskin,Morris, Tolstoy, Hyndman, Marx and Lasalle themselves capitalists, whereas the fiercest defenders of it are the masses of labourers, artisans, and employees whose trade is at its best when the rich have most money to spend. He had no patience with demagogues and theorists who spoke as if the limes of battle ran between the classes, and not through them; and he left no one in doubt that those mystic forces - historical development and Progress with a large P - in which the Marxists rest their firmest hope, were not part of his scheme for leading humanity towards the millennium. By the end of the eighties he had become convinced of these facts: that Anarchism is impossible, that the Class-War will never come, and that Marx's theory of value is an exploded fallacy.

Henderson holds that "In the technical sense of Socialist economics, Shaw occupies the opposite pole to Individualism and Anarchism ..(and he adds) yet in a very definite and general sense Shaw is a through-paced individualist and anarchist."[1] His biographer goes on to explain that if individualism means a belief in the Shakesperean injunction "To thine own self be true", in the Ibsenic doctrine "Live thine own life!" then Shaw is an individualist heart and soul; and if anarchism means an enemy of convention, of prevailing moral standards, of current modes of administering justice,then Shaw is the most revolutionary anarchist now at large. But if, on the other hand writes Henderson,

"Individualist means one who distrusts State action, and is jealous of the prerogative of the individual, proposing to restrict the one and to extend the other as far as is humanly possible, then Shaw is most certainly not an Individualist. If Anarchist means dynamitard, incendiary, assasin,thief; champion of the absolute liberty of the individual and the removal of all government restraint; or even a believer as Communist, in a profound and universal sense of high moral responsibility present in all humanity, then Shaw is a living contradiction of Anarchism."[2]

I might add that he is a living contradiction of himself when he comes to lay down the law for the Christian Chruches. After castigating the Churches for allegedly selling themselves to the

1. Henderson. op.cit. p.169

2. Ibid. pp. 169,170

rich to be a sort of auxiliary police by taking off the insurrectionary edge of poverty with coals and blankets, bread and treacle, and soothing and cheering the victims with promises of spiritual reward in the world to come, he launches into a passionate defense of a Madrid anarchist who tossed a bomb into a royal wedding procession, slaying twenty-three persons besides wounding ninety-nine. The "human wolves" who clamoured for the blood of the assasin are in turn hounded by Shaw, who defended the culprit on the ground that he was a victim of our vicious and unnatural concept of justice, which makes every culprit pay the price for his crime by inflicting on him a punishment still more vicious and unnatural in the form of "sentences of years of imprisonment so infernal in their unnatural stupidity and panic-stricken cruelty, that their advocates can disavow neither the dagger nor the bomb without stripping the mask of justice and humanity from themselves also."[1]

Later on we find Shaw in the other camp. It seems that any stick is good enough to beat the Churches with. Previous to the First World War he found to his moral repugnance that the clergy were mild instead of militant. After the war,when peace was restored and the "grim law of the jungle" temporarily suspended, he hit out strongly at the "war-consecrating cathedrals".

1. Prefaces. p.133

Having examined the iniquitous and cowardly role played by the Churches in the world as he saw it, and having goaded the Churches on to revolution as the only honest way to clear theri spotted shields, Shaw makes the following reflection:- "Such is the false position from which neither the Salvation Army nor the Church of England nor any other religious organization whatever can escape except through a reconstruction of society."[1] His argument leads him to this conclusion: Christianity has two faces. There is the popular Christianity which has for its central theme a vicarious atonement: this he regards as a pagan sacrifice to Shelley's Almighty Friend - a"trumpery expiation" as he calls it. But there is also a nobler and profounder Christianity which affirms the "sacred mystery of Equality", and takes a stand against the inhuman folly of punishing crime with crime. The student feels here the need of casting a critical glance at Bernard Shaw to see if he also has not two faces; and though the evidence may on the face of it warrant such a judgment, there is other evidence to the contrary, and it cannot be neglected. There are and were among his literary colleagues men of sound judgment many of whom have vanished for his intellectual honesty and moral courage. Not least among them was the late G.K.Chesterton, who though he often found himself in the opposing camp on questions of

1. Prefaces. P.132

fundamental issue, nevertheless pays this sincere tribute: "His intellectual honour is as solid as it is splendid. He would loathe chivalric allusions to the stainless sword or the unspotted shield; I therefore introduce them with all the malice of truth."[1]

Everything in the world is grist for the Shavian will, but in the process of milling a good deal of the old accepted truths come out with the chaff. Shaw will accept no dogma, whether in science or religion, until it has passed his own severe sceptical scrutiny. He is sceptical of everything under the sun, just as he is quite incredulous about the figures advanced by astronomers concerning the distance of the sun from the earth. He is not impressed with the pretensions of the learned. His definition of a learned man is "an idler who kills time with study"; he regards the knowledge thus acquired as false knowledge, and more dangerous than ignorance. He confesses that he found it impossible to believe anything until he could conceive it as a scientific hypothesis. "Beware of the man whose God is in the skies."[2] is his warning to all revolutionists who wish to succeed. And his advice to Christians is: beware of legends that are passed off as dogma, for the test of a dogma is its universality.

1. G.K.Chesterton. "George Bernard Shaw". Fortnightly Review. Vol.136 p.150

2. Prefaces. p.191

"As long as the Church of England preaches a single doctrine that the Brahman, the Buddhist, the Mussulman, the Parsee, and all the other sectarians who are British subjects cannot accept, it has no legitimate place in the counsels of the British Commonwealth, and will remain what it is at present, a corrupter of youth, a danger to the State, and an obstruction to the fellowship of the Holy Ghost."[1]

Elsewhere,however, Shaw does not place such a high premium on the popular vote as a guide to the truth. He has consistently emphasised his disbelief in the ability of the average man to discover religious and moral truths for himself. Under present circumstances, he maintains, the number of people who can think out a line of conduct for themselves is very small, and the number who can afford the time for it is still smaller. When he makes a distinction between religious dogma and religious legend it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that in his comparison of the two, the dogma is not much higher in his scale of values than the legend. He uses the typewriter as an example. The machine we are using now is the best we can get, but it is by no means a perfect instrument, and no doubt fifty years hence the authors of that day will wonder how men could have put up with so clumsy a contrivance.

1. Prefaces. p.517

When a better one is invented we shall buy it. In the same way, he argues, Protestants and Catholics must make the best use of their creeds, until better ones are evolved. He makes this practical suggestion: "This would be better recognized if people took consciously and deliberately to the use of the creeds as they do to the use of typewriters."[1] In the Preface to Back to Methuselah we are advised to pool our legends and make a delightful stock of religious folk-lore for all mankind. "With our minds free from pretense and falsehood we could enter into the heritage ofall the faiths. China would share her sages with Spain, and Spain her saints with China. The Ulster man who now gives his son an unmerciful thrashing if the boy is so tactless as to ask how the evening and the morning could be the first day before the sun was created, or to betray an innocent calf-love for the Virgin Mary, would buy him a bookful of legends of the creation and of mothers of God from all parts of the world,and be very glad to find his laddie as interested in such things as in marbles or Police and Robbers."[2]

It is here that Bernard Shaw's religion, which is essentially monistic, shows itself in sharpest conflict with the Christian religion. If we agree with Mrs. Besant that there is only one religion in the world, that all faiths are only versions

1. Henderson. oppcit. p.470

2. Prefaces. p.518

or perversions of this one faith, then there is no reason why the saints of Spain and the sages of China should not be venerated in one Pantheon by all mankind. According to the theosophical creed of Mrs. Besant the universal Church is simply the world-soul of the universal self. It is the doctrine that we are really all one person, that there are no real walls of individuality between man and man. Bernard Shaw deduced from the teachings of Jesus that God and man are one, and he fitted this as a dogma into his own system, which explains all life in terms of Samuel Butler's monistic conception of a universal spirit permeating all things animate, and perhaps,(since his later works contradict his early view) inanimate. G.K. Chesterton contrasted the Christian point of view with that of the theosophist when he wrote:

"If souls are separate, love is possible. If souls are united love is obviously impossible. . . Love desires personality; therefore love desires division. It is the instinct of Christianity to be glad that God has broken the universe into little pieces, because they are living pieces. . . All those vague theosophical minds for whom the universe is an immense melting pot are exactly the minds which shrink instinctively from that earthquake saying of our Gospels,which declare that the Son of God came not with peace but with a sundering sword...There is no real possibility of getting out of pantheism any special

impulse to moral action. For pantheism implies in its nature that one thing is as good as another; whereas action implies in its nature that one thing is greatly preferable to another."[1]

Shaw concludes his Preface to Major Barbara, and his record of what appeared to be the grim absurdities inherent in modern Christian civilization with three suggestions for the reformation of society and religion. The first condition of reform is that the wealth of the country should be divided among the inhabitants in such a way that no crumb shall, save as a criminal's ration, go to any able-bodied adult who are not contributingby their personal exertions to the common wealth not only a full equivalent of what they take, but a surplus sufficient to provide for their superannuation and pay back the debt due for their nurture. The second suggestion is that punishment as a form of moral correction, when it involves the imprisonment of the culprit until such time as he will be allowed to return and continue his course of lawbreaking, be abandoned in favour of the more humane and economical method of putting the recalcitrant in a lethal chamber, as any sane person would do to a dangerous dog. Shaw sees in the present dispensation of justice an extension of the Christian doctrine of atonement, redemption and salvation, citing as example the conscience - mone paid by the wealthy in the form of hospital subscriptions and charitable donations generally, as a sort of

1. G.K.Chesterton. Orthodoxy. pp.244-246

scapegoat sacrificial offering for their criminal negligence towards the workers in their employment.

He is continually emphasizing this personal belief: that we shall never have real moral responsibility until everyone know that his deeds are irrevocable and that his life depends on his usefulness. He proposes that the most effective way to deal with a criminal is to make him hate himself by refusing to hate him, as Major Barbara refused to hate Bill Walker. His doom then will be the doom of Cain, who, failing to find either a saviour or a policeman or an almoner to help him pretend that his brother's blood cried from the ground, had to live and die a murderer. I include the following excerpt, because it is significant as being a condemnation of Shaw's interpretation of the Christian doctrine of penance in general, and the theme of Major Barbara in particular:-

"Cain took care not to commit another murder; but had he been allowed to pay off his score he might possibly have killed Adam and Eve for the mere sake of a second luxurious reconciliation with God afterwards. Bodger (the whiskey manufacturer in the play, who gave money to the Salvation Army) will go on to the end of his life besotting people, because he can always depend on the Churches to negotiate his redemption for a trifling percentage of his profits."[1]

1. Prefaces. p.137

The third suggestion is that the world should take stock of its religious creeds to ascertain whether they are at variance with modern scientific knowledge and present day social ethics. Shaw has come to the conclusion that there is not a single credible established religion in the world; and he comments:"This is perhaps the most stupendous fact in the whole world situation."[1] Creeds, he asserts, must be intellectually honest if they do not wish to escape the derision of the great teachers of the world.

The eternal preoccupation with religions and creeds on Shaw's part is not merely an expression of his irresistible urge to meddle in every field of human interest, and to expose hypocricy and cant wherever he found it in human institutions, particularly in those institutions that had roots in the nineteenth century. The truth is that he is a deeply religious man. He is thoroughly convinced that civilization needs a religion as a matter of life or death. There are many elements in Christianity that prove a hindrance to his intellectual acceptance of it as a satisfactory religion, and chief among these are the fact of miracles recorded in the Gospels, and the Genesis account of the creation. He speaks with a hearty Victorian contempt about the idea of miracles, as if they were a supposed breach of faith on the part of nature: he seems strangely unconscious that miracles

1. Prefaces. p.137

are only one phenomenon of his favourite theme of the doctrine of the omnipotence of the will. The Bible story of the origin of man he regards as an unforgivable breach of faith with the science of biology, and also, following his own logic, with the science of religion, because it is his firm belief that the first condition of all religions, if they are to be intellectually acceptable to rational human beings, is that they have a faith which is first and fundamentally a science of metabiology.

Darwin converted the crowd, said Shaw, because he had such a faith. Darwinism attracted all classes and all beliefs because it was a creed that explained in biological terms the origin and purpose of man in the univers. Why, the question is raised, is there no revolt against the dogmas of mathematics though there is one against the dogmas of religion? Scientism, though it is by no means "free from legends, witchcraft, miracles, biographic boostings of quacks as heroes and saints, and of barren scoundrels as explorers and discoverers"[1] is still not questioned as to the truth of its teaching, even though the law ofinverse squares is as incomprehensible to the common man as the Athenasian creed. The reason for this, says Shaw, is that Scientism distinguishes between the legend and the dogma. No student of science he points out, has been taught that specific gravity consists in the belief that

1. Prefaces. p.519

achieve the salvation of his own soul. The Will to Socialism was thus grounded in a profound individualism; he felt their organic connection".[1]

To work for the realization of public and private welfare is in Shaw's estimation, the goal of all right living; a Life should be lived for its own sake and for the sake of the general well-being of humanity. In one of his public speeches he said:

"why should not a man say: 'When I die my country shall be in my debt! Any man who has any religious belief will have the dream that it is not only possible to die with his country in his debt but with God in his debt also."[2]

The right road to wisdom is one thing; to discover that road for oneself, or to lead others to it is another. Bernard Shaw has concluded that the ordinary methods of inculcating honourable conduct are not merely failures, but worse still, they actually drive generous and imaginative persons to a dare-devil defiance of them. The fault of this he lays to the teaching which tells men to be good without giving them any better reason for it than the opinion of men who are neither attractive to them, nor comprehensible to them. Elder Daniels will never convert Blanco Posnet; on the contrary he perverts him, because Blanco does not want to be like his brother. According to the Life-Force interpretation man is constantly striving to achieve a higher expression of himself, just as God is aiming at self-perfection through creation. According to

1. Henderson. op.cit. p.190

2. Ibid. p.512

Archimides jumped out of his bath and ran naked through the streets of Syracuse shouting Eurika,Eurika, or that the law of inverse squares must be discarded if it could be proved that Newton was never in an orchard in his life. True religion must be such, that it will inspire mankind to lift its eyes to the hills, to make what might otherwise be a humdrum and fruitless existence a journey that is both adventurous and self-satisfying. As he seés it, religion should walk hand in hand with the Res Publica: the sense of civic responsibility should develop at the same pace as the sense of spiritual reality. Shaw is a republican in the literal and Latin sense; he cares more for the Public Thing than for any private thing. This passion for order and equity had fallen to a lower ebb during his earlier period than at any other time during the nineteenth century. Individualism was the fashion; and commercial individualism was excelled only by the artistic individualism of the fin de siecle.

At the Cheshire Cheese, where the Rhymers' Club met, the literary revoltes talked over their cakes and ale about restoring the spirit of the Elizabethan age. But they were as far removed in spirit from their Mermaid Tavern models as Oscar Wilde and Ernest Dowson were from William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson. Wilde, by far the greatest wit and raconteur of the time, attempted to make the'Nineties draw up an esthetic declaration of independence;

the battle-cry of the group was the now outworn but then revolutionary "Art for Art's Sake"! The movement was more of a reaction against the monotony of Mid-Victorian sentimentality than any positive attempt to come to grips with reality, to face the whole of life, or to interpret the times to the people. The esthete's search for beauty became a search for sensations. It degenerated into a pose of mild heresy, and a half-hearted defense of artificialities. "Wilde himself " writes Louis Untermeyer "possessed the three things which he said the English would never forgive - youth,power, and enthusiasm. . . he urged that art should not, in any sense, be a part of life but an escape from it. "The proper school to learn art is not Life - but Art". And in the same essay ("The Decay of Lying") he wrote, "all bad Art comes from returning to Life and Nature, and elevating them into ideals." Elsewhere he declared his motto: "The first duty in life is to be as artificial as possible. What the second duty is no one has discovered" ."[1]

A terrific reversal of social valuation had been produced in Europe by the publication of Marx's Capital. Nietzsche had, as he claimed, effected a "transvaluation of values" in modern morals, and this shift of scale was becoming evident in London in the conversations of Oscar Wilde. Ibsen's attack on

1. Louis Untermeyer- Modern British Poetry. New York.Harcourt,Brace & Co.1942 p.7

conventional idolatry and domesticity had pilloried the Tennysonian heroes as howling cads. In literary London, which had not read further than Macaulay and Anthony Trollope, Shaw seemed a scandalous phenomenon, whereas he was simply in the forefront of a revolution in morals. He had assimilated Marx and Henry George, discovered his affinities with Ibsen and Nietzsche, and had taken his fellow-countryman Wilde seriously. The latter had visions of Socialism as the means of liberating the soul of man; but one cannot escape feeling that he was speaking for the man in the parlour rather than for the man in the street. He looked to Socialism as being the only politicalsystem compatible with man's primary purpose and duty: the development of his individuality. He agreed with Samuel Butler and with Bernard Shaw that judicial punishment should be abolished, and that crime should be treated as a disease. But a Fabian would never have written: "The fact is,that,civilization requires slaves. The Greeks were quite right there."[1]

Where Shaw regarded the State to be indispensable as a means for making possible one great consummation: the development of the strong,sound,creative personality, Wilde was dreaming of the day when the functions of the State would come to be fewer and fewer,until finally the State would be reduced to an agency for distributing goods

1. Oscar Wilde. "The Soul of Man Under Socialism", The Works of Oscar Wilde. p.498

in equal share. "Individualism, then,"he writes,
"is what through Socialism we are to attain to. As a natural result the State must give up all idea of government. All modes of government are failures. Despotism is unjust to everybody,including the despot, who was probably made for better things. Oligarchies are unjust to the many, and ochlocracies are unjust to the few. High hopes were once formed for democracy; but democracy means simply the bludgeoning of the people by the people for the people".[1]

The State as at present capatalistically organized Shaw views as simply a huge machine for robbing and slave-driving the poor by brute force. The State as he sees it in the Socialist Utopia is a reliable guarantee against the stifling of aesthetic and spiritual aspirations by the tyranny of economic necessity, whereby, as it obtains under the reign of commercial competition, the breadwinner is often forced to sell his soul on the black market of moral values in order to assure an income for the sustenance of his dependents. Shaw looked to the Socialist State as the highest expression of the Public Thing:
"At bottom, it was a deeply religious, a fundamentally humanitarian motive, which drew him into Socialism. The birth of the social passion in his sould finds its origin in the individual desire to compass the salvation of his fellow man . . . .He realized that only by personally seeking to effect the salvation of society could he

1. Oscar Wilde. "The Sould of Man Under Socialism",<u>The Works of Oscar Wilde.</u> p.498

Present-day morality, on the other hand, as the Creative Evolutionist sees it, asks man to strive by his deeds to base his conduct of that of his elders. The conflict between the old and the young generations when their respective moral standards are brought into dramatic focus is analysed with perspicacity and a good play of wit in The Philanderer. Colonel Craven, who pretends to be symbolic of the Old Order considers himself superior by that siliest and most snobbish of all superirorities, the mere aristocracy of time. Charteris, the philanderer, is the progressive Ibsenite, and representative of everything new in his generation. The Colonel tells Charteris that in his young days he would have no more behaved like Charteris than he would have cheated at cards. After a pause Charteris says: "You'rs getting old Craven; and you want to make a merit of it, as usual"[1]

To be like our fathers is not enough in the opinion of Bernard Shaw. In fact he marely misses a dramatic occasion to make fun of the father-morality. He arguesit this way: the root reason why we do not do as our fathers advise us to do is that we none of us want to be like our fathers. They are but human models, whereas the intention of the Universe is that we should be like God.

Shaw has ever been at pains to dissociate himself from all accepted ethical systems. In fact he has condemned these in the strongest terms. He is not concerned that according to certain

1. The Philanderer. p.160

moral conceptions all human beings fall into classes labelled a liar, a coward, and a thief is to let everyone know that he intends to continue to the end of his life deceiving people, avoiding dangers, making bargains with publishers and managers on principles of supply and demand instead of abstract justice, and indulging all his appetites,whenever circumstances commend such action. He threw in his lot with the fiery moral anarchs of the nineteenth century who like William Blake went bodily overto the side of the devil and started a devil's party. Up to this time the advocatus diaboli was a person unheard of outside of the Sacred Congregation of Rites in the Roman Catholic Church where a legal counsel was appointed for the devil to press the latter's claim to the soul of a pious person during the process of canonization. The possbilities of defending the devil openly "as a much misunderstood and fundamentally right-minded regenerator of the race"[1] appealed to the revolutionary soul of Bernard Shaw. Shaw discovered to his delight that the nineteenth century produced a few worthy witnesses for the Son of the Morning, and these are straightway nominated as good Shavians - a saving remnant with independent views and strong personal convictions; lone lights piercing the universal darkness of respectibility and conventional virtue. William Blake, he discovered, was a true Diabolonian, and a poet too; which was a fortunate thing, for it entitled him to pass as a paradoxical

1. "Pen Portraits & Reviews." Collected Works. Vol.29. p.230

madman instead of a blasphemer. Swinburne explained Blake "and even went so far as to exclaim :"Come down and redeem us from virtue"; but the pious influences of Putney reclaimed him, and he is now a respectable Shakespeare-fearing man."[1] Mark Twain looked promising for a while, but he surrendered finally to the overwhelming American atmosphere of chivalry,duty,and gentility. Then came Ibsen the second - greatest, and finally Shaw the greatest of the Diabolonians.

When he wrote The Devil's Disciple Shaw remarked: "there never was a play more certain to be written. . .at the end of the nineteenth century"[2]. Significantly it is one of a group of plays entitled Three Plays for Puritans. The author appoints himself as advocatus diaboli, and he really gives the devil his due. He was determined to solve the Problem of Evil through Creative Evolution, having noted Darwin's success in that field, though he was only a Natural Selectionist. Darwin pleased the Humanitarians by giving them a ready defense against the ateist, when the latter made God the final cause of all the evil and cruelty unmistakeably evident in the world. The atheist argued that the author of evil, if he exists, just be strong enough to overcome God, else God is morally responsible for everything He permits the devil to do. Circumstantial Selection solved the Problem by giving

1. "Pen Portraits & Reviews." Collected Works. Vol.29. p.455

2. Prefaces. p.714

Evil a natural explanation. It showed that horrors which had every appearance of being elaborately planned by some intelligent contriver are only accidents without any moral significance whatever.

Shaw was evidently as dissatisfied with this escape as he was unimpressed by the Gospel explanation with its picture of an incessant internal struggle between the claims of God and Mammon; of the distinction between the children of the world and the children of light; of the sharp line drawn between Good and Evil. He had his own idea of what constituted Godd and what constituted Evil. He held it to be indisputable that there is no authority by which you can classify people according to principles of abstract justice: these principles themselves are merely conventions imposed on the suffering, patient have-nots, who are blind enough to accept them unquestioningly, by the complacent hypocritical haves, who pride themselves in their virtue because they are obedient to a code that guarantees the perpetuation of their privileged position. Human acts are not by their nature evil he claimed; they are but the expression of the will,which is intrinsically good. This will, this Life-Force must not be regarded as naturally malign and devlish. Says Henderson "His life-work may be said to consist in an attack upon the conception that passions are necessarily base and unclean; his art works are glorifications of the man of conviction who can find a motive, and not an excuse for his passions; whose conduct flows from his own ideas of right and wrong; and who obeys the law of his own nature in defiance of appearance,of criticism,and of authority."[1]

1. Henderson. op.cit. pp465

The devil has a very special and very useful role to play in the Shavian scheme of things. Just as we have homeopathic medicine and homeopathic education (so called in the Preface to Back to Methuselah) there is no reason why we should not have homeopathic morality he argues. Doctors when they want to rid you of a disease, or a symptom, inoculate you with that disease,or give you a drug that produces that symptom, in order to provoke you to resist it. Why not administer a dose of evil to see if the reaction will not be good? John Bunyan, who was an excellent Diabolonian, would,Shaw believes,approve of this practice. He writes that "Bunyan ended one of his stories with the remark that there is a way to hell even from the gates of heaven, and so led us to the equally true proposition that there is a way to heaven even from the gates of hell."[1]

Following the tradition of Vergil and Dante he made an imaginary tour of the Underworld in the Third Act of Man and Superman. Putting the telescope to his blind eye (his mischievous eye), like the British admiral, he failed to see Dante's inscription over the gates. Instead he found that the devil was a thoroughly decent fellow, and that he and Don Juan and the other guests were all very interesting talkers - and good Shavians into the bargain.

When he speaks of Good and Evil in their mysterious and baffling manifestations, Bernard Shaw keeps his eye steadily fixed

1. Prefaces. p.714

on the material world that he can see. His ethical teaching has decided affinities with the Pragmatism of William James. It affirms in effect that every truth has practical consequences, and that these are the test of its truth; it stresses repeatedly that moral and religious beliefs that are unrelated to practice have no power to command observances or to inspire men to noble effort or lofty achievement. Chesterton sees the Shavian moral code as being fundamentally Calvinistic; he can reduce the whole bright display of aphonstic fireworks on the subject to this fundamental dogma: that the elect do not earn virtue but possess it. In support of this view, Chesterton cites the character of Julius Caesar, as seen in Caesar and Cleopatra. "Julius Caesar" he writes, "prevails over other people by possessing more virtus than they; not by having striven or suffered or bought his virtue; not because he has struggled heroically, but because he is a hero. So far Bernard Shaw is only what I have called him at the beginning; he is simply a seventeenth century Calvinist. Caesar is not saved by works,or even by faith; he is saved because he is one of the elect."[1]

Shaw, though he commenced to war on his environment at a very tender age,nevertheless retained as part of his character a good deal of his cultural and religious heritage. The evidence for this recurs throughout his works, and he makes no attempt to conceal it.

1. G.K.Chesterton. op.cit. p.155

In the Preface to John Bull's Other Island where he gives us for once a glimpse of the real Bernard Shaw he describes himself as "violently and arrogantly Protestant by family tradition";[1] and again in the Preface to Three Plays for Puritans he outlines the extent of his Puritan affinities. He writes:

"I have,I think, always been a Puritan in my attitude towards Art. I am as fond of fine music and handsome building as Milton was, or Cromwell, or Bunyan; but if I found that they were becoming the instruments of a systematic idolatry of sensuousness, I would hold it good statesmanship to blow every cathedral in the world to pices with dynamite, organd and all,without the least heed to the screams of the art critics and cultured voluptuaries."[2]

When he speaks of Calvinism,on the other hand, he has always been at pains to dissociate himself in the most certain fashion from the theological doctrine of predestination; which is essentially hostile to the defiant and primary proposition of Creative Evolution, viz. that the will has power to triumph over environment. Chesterton, however, might find a basis for his claim in the following quotation which Shaw regarded both as excellent doctrine,and as a clear and concise summation of his own views:

"He that is unjust,let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy,let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous,let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still."[3]

1. Prefaces. p.440
2. Ibid. p.711
3. Henderson. op.cit. p.465

From an acceptance of the primacy of the will, it was a logical step towards the glorification of the passions as the basis of moral judgment. Although he is wary about allowing any other heresiarchs, especially the Continental brand, to encroach on his idealogical stamping ground, he still would prefer to consider his ethical concepts as deriving from the social and moral anarchs of the nineteenth century rather than being part of the Christian heretages. The British Tommy in Kipling's poem would have to go east of Suez to escape the rule of the Ten Commandments -

"Ship me somewheres east of Suez where the best is like the worst,
Where there aren't no Ten Commandments . . . .[1]

but the heresiarchs, uncluding Shaw, would like to think that Suez was on the Rhine, or on the Thames. They were presuming a good deal for human nature when they laid the emphasis on human will and on human passion. The philosophy which glorifies the man whose standards are within himself, whose rule of conduct is the dictum found in the Arabian Nights, "Learn to know thyself! And do thou then only act in accordance with all thy desires," carries with it certain inevitable and shocking consequences. It is good proof of Shaw's consistency that he has not hedged the consequences, when the rule is applied to those who will not be acutely aware of the risks involved. His doctrine is epitomised in the words of George Brandes, as quoted by

1. Rudyard Kipling. "Mandalay", Modern British Poetry. edited by Louis Untemeyer. p.134

Henderson:"To obey one's senses is to have character. He who allows himself to be guided by his own passion has individuality."[1]

It can be seen that this precept has validity only when it is enjoined on the naturally good man. Shaw holds it as a fundamental tr th that man is naturally good. But he is keenly aware that there is another side to the picture; he knows by experience, as everybody knows, that the world, as we see it, is not a good advertisement for the naturally good man. He cannot escape the fact, and he does not attempt to escape it, that there are people who are deceitful,covetous,and cruel. The solution he offers is contained in the dictum of William Blake, "The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom." He has explained it in greater length in one of his philosophical essays,entitled The Sanity of Art from which we quote:

"If 'the heart of man is deceitful above all things,and desperately wicked', then,truly, the man who allows himself to be guided by his passions must needs be a scoundrel; and his teacher might well be slain by his parents. But how if the youth,thrown helpless on his passions, found that honesty,that self-respect,that hatred of cruelty and injustice. . . were master passions,:nay that heir excess is so dangerous to youth that it is part of the wisdom of age to say to the young: 'Be not righteous overmuch: why shouldst thou destroy thyself'?...The truth is that passion is the steam in

1. Henderson. op.cit. p.465

the engine of all religious and moral systems. In sofar as it is malevolent, the religious are malevolent too, and insist on human sacrifices, on hell, wrath, and vengeance. You cannot read Browning's Caliban upon Selbos, (Natural Theology in The Island) without admitting that all our religions have been made as Caliban mad his, and that the difference between Caliban and Prospero is not that Prospero has killed passion in himself whilst Caliban has yielded to it, but that Prospero is mastered by holier passions than Caliban's."[1]

Bernard Shaw believes in putting first hings first. The Gospel teaching is to pay attention to spiritual matters first, after which all the other needs of man will be fulfilled. The Shavian teaching is to seek first the things that are necessary and practical in order to make one's existence a comfortable and profitable experience in the physical sense, and then the needs of the spirit can be satisfied in due course. There is a strange and practical present worldiness about the mysticism of Shaw. He would canonize his saints, not for the superabundance of their virtues and good works, but rather for the paucity of their mistakes. His advocatus diaboli would press the charges that his client had condoned vaccination or vivisection; that he fell short of true Socialism in his political faith, or True Vitalism in his religious faith. The supreme heresy would be a deliberate and conscientious disregard for money. It should be established that the Life-Force had operated through the would be saint in

1. "The Sanity of Art," Collected Works of Bernard Shaw. Vol.19.p.315

an exceptionally high degree,allowing for a higher vital consciousness, a larger vision, and a more acute evaluation of the follies of people. And it should be made clear that in converting,say, a useful coal-miner into an inspired "talker", the talk was more than compensation in terms of the social welfare that resulted ~~for~~ the loss of coal suffered by the community.

Shaw is so convinced that the useful saint is ~~much~~ a rare phenomenon; therefore he makes it a point to keep his eye peeled for the quack reformer. He sees that every generation boasts of Progress, but he has strong reservations about the word as it is used by so many pygmy imitations of the true Progressive.

"In moments of progress (he writes) the noble succeed,because things are going their way: in moments of decadence the base succeed for the same reason: hence the world is never without the exhiliration of contemporary success."[1] The saint,he believes, is a true Progressive; but real saints are limited to a handful in any generation; the quack saints, the mob-gathering talkers are legion; and generally they are nothing more than a new incarnation of the old idol worshipping Idealists,who were ready to turn the world upside down to satisfy the lust of an overweening egotism. Better the ordinary,stolid, unimaginative citizen than these all-devouring Molochs. The Dauphin in Saint Joan is an example of the good king. Mediocre, unambitious of fame,willing to serve the gods that are,he is the Shavian type of the good citizen who has received his quota of Life-Force inspiration

1. Prefaces. p.194

and no more. In the Epilogue to the play - an imaginary scene set in 1920 A.D. in which the principals return to earth from the other world - Charles the Dauphin, who had later become Charles VII of France, speaks his mind.

"Yes: it is always you good men who do the big mischiefs. Look at me! I am not Charles the Good,nor Charles the Wise,nor Charles the Bold. Joan's worshippers may even call me Charles the Coward because I did not pull her out of the fire. But I have done less harm than any of you. You people with your heads in the sky spend all your time trying to turn the world upside down; but I take the world as it is,and say that top-side-up is right-side-up; and I keep my nose pretty close to the ground. And I ask you what king of France has done better,or been a better fellow in his little way?"[1]

Bernard Shaw's conception of the Brave New World is that of a place fit for ordinary people to live in. But there will be exceptions to the rule; and in this case he insists that the exceptions are a real necessity. The Life-Force goes about its business by a thousand devious and hidden paths. Once in a while a favoured mortal by grant of a superabundant appetite for evolution will be selected to be a child of light, that he may in the course of his earthly journey lead the people back to first principles. Shaw believes that there are forces at work which use individuals for purposes far far transcending the purpose of keeping these people alive,and prosperous, and happy. That such forces exist is established,he says,by the fact

1. St.Joan. p.179

that men will sacrifice life,and happiness,and prosperity in the pursuit of knowledge and social readjustments,even though they can expect no temporal reward,and rarely get it, for their unselfish efforts on behalf of others.

He believes that St.Joan was the medium of such a force; and his play pretends to explain the French national heroine in these terms. Presented as a "Chronicle Play in Six Scenes and an Epilogue", it traces the workings of the evolutionary appetite in Joan: how this superpersonal urge led her from the quiet fields near the Vosges to the court of the Dauphin of France; how she rode over a thousand obstacles with superhuman zeal, outbraving the braves knights,in order to accomplish her heaven-sent mission; how she trampled on her way the toes of distraught Churchmen and feudal lords, who, mistaking her simplicity for another sin, led her to the stake at Rouen,crushed by a conflict of the three powers: Regal,sacerdotal, and Prophetical.

It will be understood that Shaw's defense of The Maid would never have won a vote on the heroism of her virtues in the Sacred Congregation of Rites. But the play is an artistic and eloquent declaration of the Shavian postulate that saints are necessary,even for Creative Evolution. Joan's voices and visions are given a quasi-naturalistic explanation. The play reads:

"Joan: I hear voices telling me what to do. They come from God.

Robert: They come from your imagination.

Joan: Of course. That is how the messages of God come to us."[1]

The diverse manners in which the imagination dramatises the approach of superpersonal forces is, Shaw thinks, the problem of the psychologists; and he leaves it at that. The point he wishes to emphasize is that these forces are there, and will appear at certain times; that the saint who is the medium of these forces cannot resist them even though it means misunderstanding, suffering, and even premature death. The final summing up is an indictment of humanity: the world, says Shaw, is not safe for saints. He lets Joan - the newly canonized Saint Joan,- speak the final word: "O God that madest this beautiful earth, when will it be ready to receive Thy saints? How long, O Lord, how long?"[2]

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CHAPTER IV.

CREATIVE EVOLUTION

After advocating Socialism for over twenty years, Bernard Shaw began to have grave doubts whether, after all, political theories however excellent on paper could ever be properly applied. The stumbling-block was man. By the year 1903 he had decided that all evidence of progress was definitely an illusion. He saw that the mere transfiguration of institutions as from military and priestly dominance to commercial and scientific dominance, from commercial dominance to proletarian democracy are all but changes from Tweedledum to Tweedledee. Man as he is has shown himself incapable of solving the vast and complex problems forced upon him. It is no use trying to substitute Fabian methods for those of the barricader or the dynamitard: both are equally futile. "Man will return to his idols and his cupidities in spite of all "movements" and all revolutions, until his nature is changed."[1] Unless man is replaced by a more highly evolved animal - in short by the Superman - the world must remain a den of dangerous animals, concludes Shaw. How is the Superman to be produced? The answer is : where there is a will there is a way. The solution lies in "Evolution."

Shaw's argument runs as follows: Darwinian science holds out no hope whatever; it reduces life to a cruel conflict

1. Prefaces. p. 179

of blind forces, ruling out any possibility of progress because it rules out the power of will and the presence of a plan. But there are grounds for hope in Creative Evolution. The force which made life evolve from the simple cell to the more complex organisms of brain, nerve, and muscle does not stop with man. God achieves His purpose by trial and error. God is a Creative Purpose, and all living creatures are experiments in the realisation of this great design which is the attainment of power over matter and circumstance. The Purpose, alias the Life-Force, alias the Evolutionary Appetite, alias God may make frightful mistakes which Its creatures have to remedy. As Don Juan explains it in Man and Superman,

"Life is a force which has made innumerable experiments in organising itself...the mammoth and the man, the mouse and the megatherium, the flies and the fleas and the Fathers of the Church, are all more or less successful attempts to build up that raw force into higher and higher individuals, the ideal individual being omnipotent, omniscient, infallible, and withal, completely, unilludedly, self-conscious : in short, a god."[1]

That in brief outline is the essence of the Shavian religion. But before we can appreciate the superstructure he has raised on the foundation of Evolutionism, we must explain the precise meaning Shaw has in mind when he uses such terms as Mechanist, Vitalist, La Neo-Lamarckian; and we must compare the history of Evolutionary thought as it

1. Op. cit. p.p. 158-9

stands embellished in the exhaustive Preface to Back to Methuselah with the history as it emerges from the works of those who laid the foundations.

When Bernard Shaw has an axe to grind he goes to work with that admirable thoroughness which he brings to every task whether of construction or destruction; when the instrument has acquired the necessary keenness of edge he begins to chop right and left at the noxious growths that mar this onward march. One of the knottiest growths he met and one which continually tripped him was the Natural Selection theory of Charles Darwin. Bernard Shaw decided that Natural Selection was anti-Shavian, and accordingly he went to work on it. If the sustained battering of eloquent prose could demolish a theory, the broken pieces of Selectionism could be counted after the Preface to Back to Methuselah was written. Vitalism - one of the rival biological theories which proved acceptable to Shaw can scarcely be said to have been more fortunate. After he had finished explaining it, it had become merely a term for Shaw's point of view.

Dramatically Shaw casts Darwin in the role of villain as opposed to Lamarck the hero. This procedure is completely in accord with his avowed practice of refusing to see both sides of any question at the same time, but rather of arguing with reckless bias for or against. But though these are the names on the bills, in his own

consciousness Butler is the hero, and Weismann, the wicked decapitator of the tails of mice, is the villain.

There are roughly five views on the origin and development of man and the universe. At one extreme there is the belief portrayed in Genesis which depicts each species as having been separately created. Related to this is the view held by some Christians who, like, Professor Drummond hold that the evolution of life has been consciously directed by an omnipotent and benevolent God. At the other extreme there is the cruder sort of Materialism which, with Democretus, assumes the world was made out of dead atoms as a result of chance. Next is the mechanistic theory made popular by the strict Darwinians which assumes that all complex species, including man, have been evolved from a few simple forms chiefly by a process of selection of chance variations known as Natural Selection or the Survival of the Fittest. Striking a balance between the mechanistic view on the one hand and the strict theological view on the other, there is the school of Vitalism, or, as Shaw calls it, Creative Evolution, which conceives the main factors of development as consisting of a will, or vital impulse, striving for more complete expression. All these five positions have minor variants.

At an early age Shaw rejected the Book of Genesis as a guide to the origin of life, and it was not

long before he had rejected the whole Bible as a guide to man's relations with God. The religion inculcated in the earlier books he regarded as "a crudely atrocious ritual of human sacrifice to propitiate a murderous tribal deity who was, for example, induced to spare the human race from destruction in a second deluge by the pleasure given him by the smell of burning flesh when Noah took of every clean beast and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar." [1] Before the age of thirty, though describing himself as an Atheist, he had dissociated from the next three theories listed above, and had finally accepted the middle position of Vitalistic or Creative Evolution. From that time on Darwinism became the object of some of his most harrowing invective.

In the year 1906 when he was fifty years old, Shaw was asked by the Fabian Society, which was then organising a series of lectures on Prophets of the Nineteenth Century, to deliver a lecture on the prophet Darwin. Three years previously on the occasion of the presentation of Man and Superman, he had found that "most people were unable to understand how I could be an Evolutionist and not a Neo-Darwinian, or why I habitually derided Neo-Darwinism as a ghastly idiocy, and would fall on its professors

1. The Adventures of the Black Girl in Her Search for God. op. cit. P. 66.

slaughterously in public discussions."[1] The lecture on Darwin was delivered but not published. Eighteen years of further reflection confirmed for Shaw the violent antipathy he had always nourished towards Natural Selection. In 1921 he resurrected the lecture and expanded it into the Preface for his Bible of Creative Evolution which he called Back to Methuselah.

Shaw went to work to turn back the tidal wave of Darwin's popularity and to rehabilitate those thinkers who though antedating the publication of Origin of Species, and forgotten in the great acclamation that greeted the book, still he thought, possessed the right key to the secret of evolution. The Preface sets out to establish the thesis that Darwinism is a cruel and pessimistic creed which in effect banished mind from the universe and reduced all beauty and intelligence, all strength and purpose to mere chance. It proceeds to examine the history of Darwinian thought, trying to put the finger on the reasons why such a blighting and inhuman explanation of man's origin and purpose received such joyful acceptance. Darwin, it is admitted, pleased the Humanitarians; he pleased the Socialists; he pleased the Capitalists; he emulated Karl Marx and founded the second creed of the century; he made

1. Prefaces. p. 480.

the whole world Kin. Finally, it has to be admitted that Darwinism is not finally refutable. When a man tells you, says Shaw, that you are a product of Circumstantial Selection solely, you cannot disprove it. "You can only tell him out of the depths of your inner conviction that he is a fool and a liar."[1]

The question is asked, what was the secret of Natural Selection's phenomenal success? The secret was, we are told, that it never puzzled anybody. Shaw explains it thus:

"If very few of us have read The Origin of Species from end to end, it is not because it overtaxes our mind, but because we take in the whole case and are prepared to accept it long before we have come to the end of the innumerable instances and illustrations of which the book mainly consists."[2]

Darwin arrived just in time to lead the revolt for which the people were waiting, the revolt that is against anthropomorphic idolatry. The prevalence of a strong desire to re-examine accepted values and institutions was greatly responsible for the unusual reception which greeted textbooks that were undoubtedly on the face of them dull

1. <u>Prefaces</u>. p. 502

2. Ibid p. 500

scientific treatises. The Origin of Species was a fresh attempt to satisfy the hunger for a plausable explanation of the origin of life at a time when the Genesis account seemed to be taking a heavy pounding from the big guns of nineteenth century science. It came with a simple formula that seemed to cover all the cases.

Continuing his explanation Shaw shows that in another field Karl Marx touched the minds of his generation with a book that might have passed as a patchwork quilt of facts and figures about economic conditions, a book that would have been remembered chiefly for its unrelieved dullness except that it also contained a spirited attack upon the conventional respectability that covered the hypocrisy, inhumanity, and snobbery of the bourgeoisie, whose practice it had been to identify success in life with big profits.

"The moment Marx showed that the relation of the bourgeoisie to society was grossly immoral and disastrous, and that the white wall of starched shirt fronts concealed and defended the most infamous of all tyrannies and the basest of all robberies, he became an inspired prophet in the mind of every generous soul whom his book reached."[1]

What did it matter if the pages of Capital proved

1. Prefaces. p. 509

that Marx had never breathed industrial air, and had dug his case out of blue books in the British Museum? The great fact was that Marx had for the moment the World Will by the ear. The same was true of Darwin. One wonders if Bernard Shaw at the age of sixty-five was making a supreme effort to get the World Will by the ear.

Shortly after he had reached the age of forty his mind began to turn from the immediate and practical problems of social reform to a long-range comprehensive appraisal of all human effort to solve the problems raised by human aggregation, or, as it is called, civilization. Accordingly, in 1901, he took the legend of Don Juan in its Mozartian form and made it a dramatic parable of Creative Evolution. Unfortunately, since he could not resist indulging his talent for lavish and brilliant decoration, nor forget his comedic spirit, the result was that nobody noticed the new religion in the midst of the intellectual whirlpool. Though the critics took him seriously as philosopher and social reformer, the impression made on the public was not what had been expected. In the meantime the tradition of good theatrical fare was coming to be an accepted thing; the idea current at the turn of the century that a playwright is a person whose business it is to make unwholesome confectionary out of cheap emotions was giving way to a healthy broadmindedness that tolerated the intelligent discussion on the stage of social, ethical and religious topics, thanks in large

measure to Shaw's inspiring leadership and his incessant propoganda on behalf of the New Drama.

The second legend of Creative Evolution written in 1921 under the title Back to Methuselah is the author's final effort to give dramatic form to his religious ideas. It is a set of five plays. Though the epigrams, the sallies of wit, and the other contents of the Shavian bag of tricks make their wonted appearance, this set of plays has unmistakable evidence that he is in a very serious mood; I might even say, in a very sad and serious mood. There are moments when he becomes pensive as a man often does when his minds' eye looks out over a great expanse of time, and this pensiveness has a strong tinge of unspeakable sadness that evokes an outburst of something that is unmistakeably poetic. Before ringing up the curtain, he gives us a peep at the hidden mysteries he is about to unfold. "I exploit," says he, "the eternal interest of the philosophers' stone which enables men to live forever."[1]

He has hitched his wagon to the star of Vitalistic Evolution. He has discovered the true heir to the vacant throne; and this princeling whom he has set up and crowned will lead the wandering race to the high destiny which was marked out for it. But contenders must

1. Prefaces. p. 524.

be destroyed, else chaos will return again. The Preface to the "pentateuch" is a war of extermination on the supporters of the rival claimants; and the most dangerous of these is the tyrant Natural Selection.

In these pages Shaw has almost succeeded in taking hold of a scientific theory and breathing life into it until it stalks about like a modern despot who holds half a continent in the spell of his words, and has sinister designs to enslave the other half. His own analytical mind would never respond to such pedagogical methods: we have it on his testimony that he is unable to accept any belief unless he can conceive it as a scientific hypothesis. But in his capacity of teacher to the public he has a very different method. The popular mind, he maintains, responds only to illusions. As an example here is the method he outlines for ensuring the popular acceptance of Socialism. "Socialism" he writes in Forecasts of the Coming Century

"wins its disciples by presenting civilization to them as a popular melodrama, as a Pilgrim's Progress through trial and combat against the powers of evil to the bar of poetic justice with paradise beyond....It must be hidden under a veil of illusions embroidered with promises."[1]

1. Whitehead. op. cit. p. 101.

In like manner the struggle between the rival claimants to truth in biological dispute has all the dramatic and life like aspect of an old Morality Play, with angels and devils battling it out before the gasping audience, until finally the Darwinian devil, unable to withstand the righteousness of the Lamarckian angel, is hissed off the stage by the outraged audience and soundly trashed as he makes his ignominious way to the door.

It looks as if Shaw was convinced that the lay man's mind was in a complete muddle concerning the true facts of the history of Evolutionism. In this he was probably right. The clerk, the bus-driver and the policeman was tied to his job for one-third of the day, he slept during another third, and the remainder of the time was all too short considering the need of relaxation and the calls of domestic life. It was all right for the handful of free men who, like Bernard Shaw and Samuel Butler, were not shackled with responsibility and had plenty of time to spend in the British Museum. This situation exemplified the painful problem that confronted the educationalist at that time, and that still confronts us today. Shaw was more keenly aware of it than most writers. We see that the demand for a ready-made code of morals, for a ready-made political creed, and a ready-made answer to the unexpected thorny question has become as widespread as the demand for the

ready-made product of the factory. The popular mind, robbed of its pristine sanity, cannot without direction from a popular leader examine and weigh the merits and demerits of a case. The appeal must be directed to the emotions as well as to the intellect. Hence the success of the so called colourful character as political educator; hence Lord Salisbury's remark that what the people wanted was a circus; hence Bernard Shaw's "popular melodrama" and his history of Evolutionism as the man in the street would appreciate and understand it.

Beginning with the Greek philosopher Empedodes and his four elements Fire, Air, Earth, and Water the Preface traces the development of Evolutionism through Aristotle, Linnaeus, Iveviranus, down to Lamarck, Buffon, and the two Darwins - Erasmus and Charles. Theexample of the giraffe's neck is taken to illustrate the different points of view. One may believe that God originally created its long neck, or that an animal with a neck of normal length, by stretching it out to reach the tender leaves high up on the tree, would, in successive generations elongate the neck until it functions as we see it to-day. Or a prehistoric breeder might have selected the longest-necked animals and bred them deliberately to secure a natural curiosity. Darwin rejected all these explanations; he simply said that if the neck of the animal was too short it died by being unable to reach its food.

Animals with longer necks would have a better chance to survive, and would thus be selected by Nature to carry on the species. Lamarck, on the other hand saw a certain purpose at work. The animal with a short neck faced with starvation when all the lower leaves were used up, consciously strove to elongate its neck in order to reach the higher leaves, until after a period of time it adapted itself to this new necessity and actually succeeded in acquiring the giraffe-like neck we know today.

So far so good. But at this point Shaw begins to draw his own conclusions to the Darwinian hypothesis, and to ascribe unusual miracles to the Vitalist wonder-worker. Then to round out the romantic episode he ropes in some strange bedfellows for both protagonists - one group called Neo-Darwinians who were remarkable for a total disregard of imagination, metaphysics, poetry, conscience, and decency; and the other known as Neo-Lamarckians who, numbering himself among their enlightened company held thoroughly sane views on the nature of inherited acquirements, and advanced the hopeful proposition that if the weight lifter under the trivial stimulus of athletic competition could "put up a muscle" it was reasonable to believe that an equally earnest philosopher could "put up a brain."

The catalogue of infamies associated with Neo-Darwinians is spread over several pages of powerful prose. These include vivisection, fatalism, blind cruelty, and the

practice of using knives instead of eyes. The Preface reads: "Ever since he (Darwin) set up Circumstantial Selection as the creator and ruler of the universe, the scientific world has been the very citadel of stupidity and cruelty."[1] We further discover that Darwinism implied that "street arabs are produced by slums and not by original sin: that prostitutes are produced by starvation wages and not by feminine concupiscence."[2] The believers in Natural Selection, it appears are Fatalists banishing or ignoring will: they regard Nature "as nothing but a casual aggregation of inert and dead matter."[3] If this, says Shaw, be no blasphemy but a truth of science,

> "then the stars of heaven...the mountains and hills may no longer be called to exalt the Lord with us by praise: their work is to modify all things by blindly starving and murdering everything that is not lucky enough to survive in the universal struggle for hogwash."[4]

1. Prefaces. p. 504
2. Ibid. p. 508
3. Ibid. p. 498
4. Ibid. p. 498

The crucial question of Free Will, the same that had rent Europe asunder in the sixteenth century, that had worried Martin Luther, and John Calvin, and the Council of Trent, arose from the ashes and blazed up again during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The publication of The Origin of Species and more especially of The Descent of Man made it necessary to go back to the beginning and reconsider the position of the will in relation to the new antagonist called Environment. Some philosophers were still loathe to rake the coals. Professor Haeckel, following the lead given by Emil du Bois-Reymond, numbered freedom of the will among the seven "world-enigmas:" but he disposed of the problem without much ado by simply declaring that it did not exist. "The freedom of the will" he wrote in The Riddle of the Universe," is not an object for critical scientific inquiry at all, for it is a pure dogma, based on an illusion, and has no real existence."[1]

Bernard Shaw, on the other hand, though he was in sympathy with the monistic philosophy of Haeckel, regarded Free Will as a very real thing, and as far back as 1891 he had come to grips with it in "The Quintessence of Ibsenism. Here he attacked the mechanical utilitarian ethic for treating man as the sport of every circumstance. Thirty

1. Ernst Haeckel. The Riddle of the Universe. p. 16

years later we find him with added vehemence denouncing Natural Selection for laying the whole emphasis on the whims of environment. He speaks of its "blind coarseness," its "shallow logic," its "sickening inhumanity." He writes : "there is no place in Darwinism for free will, or any other sort of will."[1] Furthermore we are told that Neo-Darwinism produced the war, and led to political opportunism in excelsis, which brought parliaments into contempt and left the road free for Syndicalism; that it held self-control to be a defiance of the inexorable laws of Nature, so that "the true way to deal with drunkeness is to flood the country with cheap gin and let the fittest survive."[2] We are led to believe that it meant lendingthe authority of science to every political and economic theory that could be called in to support the suppression and elimination of the weak by the strong - the enslavement of the masses by the captains of industry; that it gave moral authority to Free Trade, Free Contract, Free Competition, Natural Liberty, Laissez-faire. "We all began going to the devil with the utmost cheerfulness" writes Shaw.

"Everyone who had a mind to change, changed it,..

1.
Prefaces. p. 504

we were gaily dancing to our damnation across the rainbow bridge which Darwinism had thrown over the gulf which separates life and hope from death and despair."[1]

When stating his position in reference to the various schools of Evolutionism, Shaw has not only over-simplified the different theories, but he has often mis-represented the history of them in order to square them with his own hypothesis.

Though he takes his stand on the Lamarckian principle that acquirements are heritable there are passages in his writings which might be taken as supporting the opposite Weismann view. For instance, when he first attempted to dramatise his religious faith he wrote : "The bubble of heredity has been pricked : the certainty that acquirements are negligible as elements in practical heredity has demolished the hopes of the educationists as well as the terrors of the degeneracy mongers."[2] This quotation has wrongly been taken by some commentators to mean that Shaw was at one time a supporter of Weismann. A study of the context will show that he is merely pursuing his favourite practice of arguing with reckless bias for or against a certain point of view. In this case the

1. Prefaces. p. 501
2. Ibid. p. 159

subject of discussion was Progress; and because he held very strong convictions regarding a hereditary "governing class" as an enemy of Progress, he made a clean sweep of this form of heredity. If Weismann could be of any help, so much the better. On the other hand, Shaw's plan for the successful breeding of the Superman postulates the belief that favourable variations are transmitted from generation to generation. He presented this thesis clearly in the final dramatic version of his religious faith. The Preface to Back to Methuselah reads : "To an Evolutionist there are no other habits (except acquired habits) a man being only an amoeba with acquirements."[1]

We will now consider the main charges brought against Darwinism, and try to resolve the confusion arising out of the Shavian picture of the different schools of thought.

That Darwinism leads to Fatalism and the banishing of mind from the universe is still a mooted question. Darwin, though he devotes a full chapter of The Descent of Man to a study of the intellectual and moral faculties during primeval and civilized times, nevertheless refrains from any discussion of the other philosophical implications of the Natural Selection hypothesis. There is no reference to Free-Will. But this subject has been

1. Prefaces. p. 503

much debated by Darwin's commentaters, beginning with Samuel Butler who first introduced the charge that Circumstantial Selection banished mind from the universe, and thereby caused a certain haughty displeasure among his opponents.

George Whitehead in his critical study of Bernard Shaw maintains that

"Darwinism does not imply Fatalism and the abolition of will and mind from the universe. It implies merely that the will and mind are conditioned by pressure of circumstances acting upon the potentialities contained within the individual."[1]

Since Mr. Whitehead has not defined the nature and force of this "pressure" of circumstances, the reader is not convinced that the charge has been confuted to satisfaction. Even Shaw rejects the notion that the will is stronger than destiny. In one of his earlier writings he rules out the so called man of indomitable will. He says of him :

"Only by plunging into illusions to which every fact gives the lie can he persuade himself that his will is a force that can overcome all other forces, or that it is less conditioned by circumstances than a wheelbarrow is."[2]

1. Whitehead. op. cit. p. 86
2. The Quintessence of Ibsenism. p. 55

The prevailing belief among those who accept the Natural Selection hypothesis appears to be that of an inscrutable and complex invironmental situation. The haphazard method employed in selecting variations is emphasised by modern exponents of Darwinism. In The Science of Life, product of the combined efforts of Julian Huxley, H.G. and G.P. Wells, we read : "Variation is at random... (evolution) is the result of purposeless and random variation sifted by purposeless and automatic selection."[1] The Epicureans regarded Fatalism as blind chance. If it is admitted that the variations which alone make evolution possible are random variations, and, furthermore, that Nature does not allow all its creatures sufficient opportunity to adapt themselves to their environment and master it before famine or superior animal force forestalls them, preferring not those who are stronger or cleverer, but those who are fittest, then it will be understood why Bernard Shaw linked Natural Selection with the fatalistic attitude.

Shaw speaks of the Life-Force as working by trial and error to produce the Superman. This Purpose governing the universe finds itself opposed by animal and material nature in its eternal war upon matter. Only when it has "mastered....matter to its uttermost confines"[2] will

1. H.G. Wells, J.S. Huxley, G.P. Wells. The Science of Life Vol. 1. p. 641.

2. Back to Methuselah. p. 300

it attain to the fulness of its being. The very fact that man is able to obstruct the working of the Life-Force by indulging his egoistic urges presupposes his freedom of choice. The evidence is that Shaw puts his faith in the freedom of the will, in the divine capacity for creation rising higher than environment and doom. He holds that Life which is the force behind the Man aims at developing the soul, because without it he blunders into death. Just as Life, after ages of struggle, evolved that wonderful bodily organ the eye, so that the living organism could see where it was going, so it is evolving to-day a mind's eye that shall see the purpose of life, and work for that purpose instead of baffling it by setting up shortsighted personal aims.

"I sing not arms and the hero," proclaims Don Juan, "but the philosophic man : he who seeks in contemplation to discover the inner will of the world..."[1]

In the long run the Shaw versus Darwin dispute on the subject Fatalism versus Free Will still leaves us with the age-old question, human will versus destiny. This time the protagonists used a new terminology, but they merely went back over the same ground that had been covered by their predecessors; and they left us none the wiser. We are still wondering how to reconcile individual choice with a final Purpose.

1. Man and Superman. p. 160

In 1921 Shaw wrote, "I was a Neo-Lamarckian."[1] He was referring to the views he held in 1903. This statement causes confusion in the mind of the reader, considering that the term Neo-Lamarckian applies to one who believes that acquirements are heritable, and seeing that Shaw then supported the Weismann theory which denied such a thesis. Charles Darwin, as a matter of fact, could be called a Neo-Lamarckian.[2] Shaw has confused his position still more by adopting the Vitalistic views of Samuel Butler. In the Preface to Back to Methuselah (1921) the terms Vitalism and Neo-Lamarckism are used to signify the same thing, whereas

1. Prefaces. p. 486

2. The Science of Life (Vol 1. p. 427). reads: "To this day the belief in the inheritance of acquired characters is called Lamarckism. With the inclusion of an involuntary response to environment.....and the inheritance of this response, it is called Neo-Lamarckism....

Professor Julian Huxley in his Living Thoughts of Darwin (p. 78) explains that Darwin was severely handicapped by the biological ignorance of his generation. "All he could do," he writes, "was to make it highly probable that a good deal of the visible variation seen in living beings domestic or wild, was inherited, without knowing the precise extent or method of the inheritance."

George Whitehead's review of the history of Evolutionism in Bernard Shaw Explained (p. 95)includes the statement, "Charles Darwin, then, was a Neo-Lamarckian."

there is a wide difference between the two. Whitehead points out that Lamarck was not a Vitalist, supporting the view with this quotation from his writings : "Life is a purely physical phenomenon. All its phenomena depend on mechanical, physical, and chemical causes which are inherent in the nature of matter itself."[1]

When he charges that Darwinism regards Nature as a casual aggregation of inert and dead matter, Shaw is confusing the mechanistic theory with the ancient doctrine Materialism, which found no favour with the Darwinians. Professor Haeckel may be said to speak for the whole school when he explains that "Pure monism is identical neither with the theoretical Materialism that denies the existence of spirit, and dissolves the world into a heap of dead atoms, nor with the theoretical spiritualism....which rejects the notion of matter"[2]

The Neo-Lamarckian view appeals most to those combatant spirits who would figure man in a Promethean and finally hopeful conflict with the universe as stubborn matter; again the mystic and the believer in a directive divinity incline very naturally towards the concept of a

1. Whitehead. op. cit. p. 96
2. Haeckel. op. cit. p. 20

hidden urge in nature which impels organisms to develop from species of simple forms to those of greater complexity. Bergson was attracted to Neo-Lamarckism, because, as he expressed it in Creative Evolution, it is "of all the later forms of evolutionism, the only one capable of admitting an internal and psychological principle of development."[1] Not satisfied with the mechanical explanation of the evolution process Bergson postulated a factor which is beyond the grasp of intelligence - an elan vital or impulse inherent in matter, and forcing its way upward in the scale of consciousness.

"This impetus, sustained right along the lines of evolution among which it gets divided, is the fundamental cause of variations, at least of those that are regularly passed on, that accumulate and create new species."[2] Bergson was the link between Shaw and the earlier evolutionists.

Taking the two sets of plays which give dramatic expression to his religious creed with their Prefaces and other accompaniments, and paying attention to references found scattered in other parts of Shaw's works, we get the following summary of his Creative Evolution.

1. Bergson. op. cit. p. 81
2. Ibid p. 92

Admitting that their origins are inexplicable he assumes two main entities in the universe - matter and the Life-Force. The Life-Force is conceived as the Will-to-Live more abundantly. It is aiming to become conscious of its own purpose, and through countless ages species after species has been scrapped in its effort to do so. The purpose is not size or strength, for the rocks are littered with the bones of extinct monsters; not beauty or speed, for these were achieved among the birds and insects before man appeared. More complex organism is aimed at, so that finally brains capable of helping the Life-Force can be developed. But man, in spite of his supremacy is a bungler, swayed hither and thither by his appetites, and, having no enduring will to higher consciousness, must in turn be displaced by the Superman. The Superman in turn will yield to a higher being, the progress of evolution being manifested by a gradual rejection of the cares and pleasures of the body, and a greater preoccupation with the development of the soul. The Ancients in Back to Methuselah are phantom-like creatures who lead lives of pure thought. They represent the victory of Life over matter. Lilith, the mythical being of ambivalent sex who in the beginning sundered itself in twain and launched Man and Woman on the earth, is made to return at the end of countless ages to review the record of its descendants. "I will not supersede them" it reflects,

"until they have forded this last stream that lies between flesh and spirit, and disentangle their life from the matter that has always mocked it."[1]

The Life-Force first functioning as a single cell, evolves male and female to achieve higher complexity. The male accepts the duties of nutrition, the female of reproduction. The evolution of life is made possible through imagination and will. The serpent, whispering the secret of life to Eve in the Garden of Eden tells her : "When you and Adam talk, I hear you say "Why?"....But I dream things that never were; and I say :"Why not?"...I am very wilful and must have what I want; and I have willed and willed and willed."[2]

The genius is a specialised servant of the Life-Force. He shares in the duty of helping Life on its upward struggle. What a piece of work is man! says the poet. Yes; but also what a blunderer! says Bernard Shaw. Is it not a fact, he insists, that man shows his greatest ingenuity in the inventions of instruments of death? "There is nothing Man's industrial machinery but his greed and sloth: his heart is in his weapons"[3] is the Devil's indictment of our civilization. So far, Shaw, claims, man as egoist or brute has excelled in

1. Back to Methuselah. p. 299
2. Ibid. pp. 6,7.
3. Man and Superman. p. 151

thwarting the efforts of the Life-Force by setting up short-sighted aims. But just as Life, after ages of struggle evolved that wonderful bodily organ the eye, so that the living organism could avoid a thousand dangers that formerly slew it, so it is now evolving a mind's eye that shall see not the physical world, but the purpose of life. Not arms and the hero will save the human race, but the philosophic man.

In his progress man has cast aside many illusions. Once he employed his reproductive powers to gain sensuous pleasure, to satisfy his amative passion as he would any other appetite, with little thought of creation; and later to duplicate himself. Then he invented art, which is "the magic mirror you make to reflect your invisible dreams in visible pictures."[1] But as he sought to penetrate deeper and deeper into the meaning of life, he came to perceive that art was all make-believe. He put aside his mirrors and statues, his toys and his dolls, and sought a direct sense of life. His appreciation of corporeal beauty lessened in proportion as his mental processes evolved; in time he came to regard the body as a crudely shaped frame that was held back from dissolution only by his use of it. Only one thing endured, and that was Life. The destiny of

1. Back to Methuselah. p. 286

the human being is to be immortal: the day will come when there will be no people, only thought. "The body was the slave of the vortex; but the slave has become the master; and we must free ourselves from that tyranny."[1]

The cardinal point in the New Theology as enunciated by Shaw is the identification of God with the Life-Force. This view is based on the assumption that God can create something capable of moving towards a clear manifestation of Himself - and finally redeeming matter, a belief which stands in sharp contradiction to the orthodox one which holds that God always creates beings inferior to Himself. But the attributes of the Life-Force God are not given clearly. Sometimes He is pictured as in process of evolution and keeping pace with man: God and man are one. Sometimes He is pictured as anthropomorphically impatient with man, threatening to supersede him as his predecessors have been superseded. Man is sometimes conceived as being essential to God, and sometimes as non-essential. One thing, however, is clear : the Life-Force existent in man is not omniscient; therefore, like mortal man, it must battle its way against obstacles unexpected and unprovided for.

The Life-Force is not discouraged by its mistakes. However, imperfect it may deem the work it has so far accomplished, it can nevertheless cast a look back to the

1. Back to Methuselah. p 293

beginning, to the tiny speck of protoplasm that first became charged with life, and measure that simple organism against the highly complex creature that has evolved. Its eyes are on the untold ages yet to come. It can wait; for waiting and patience mean nothing to the eternal. Lilith, the mythical being, looks to the future as far as thought can reach, and foretells the victory of Life-Force over matter:

"Of Life only is there no end; and though of its million starry mansions many are empty and many still unbuilt, and though its vast domain is as yet unbearably desert, my seed shall one day fill it and master its matter to its uttermost confines. And for what may be beyond, the eyesight of Lilith is too short. It is enough that there is a beyond."[1]

1. Back to Methuselah. p. 300

THE SUMMING-UP

In one of his plays[1] Bernard Shaw makes a dramatic persona exclaim in exasperation, "I do not understand a single word of what you have just said." The second speaker answers in surprise, "I am speaking the plainest English." For the past sixty years Shaw has been talking to his contemporaries, not only in the plainest of English, but also in the stateliest style of English, and yet in the year 1949 we find an authoritative and highly respected New York review announcing the publication of the latest addition to the bulky stock of Shavian literature with the headline, "G.B. Shaw : At 92, a Puzzle Still Unsolved"[2]. Granting that he is the most famous man of letters alive to-day, the reviewer, Mr. Joseph Wood Krutch, at the same time admits that there is no other statement which can be made about this nonagenarian not almost sure to be contradicted.

That an author should be hailed as the greatest writer, and in the same breath as a continuing sphinx among his contemporaries is surely a phenomenon; and it is a phenomenon that the twentieth century, with its highest laurels reserved for the brow of the thinker "ahead of his time," was

1. Back to Methuselah. p. 162
2. Weekly Book Review in New York Herald Tribune, March 27, 1949.

fated, somehow, to produce. The verdict was perhaps the most pleasing that Bernard Shaw could have wished for. "It is a dangerous thing to be hailed at once...as alone all things original"[1] he wrote at the turn of the century. Repeatedly, he remonstrated with the fate that made his name a byword on the five continents; but he knew that it was G.B.S. the journalist who first invented a reputation for Bernard Shaw - that the author of the Prefaces and the plays was as much a character as any of the confessedly fictional personages who appear in those plays themselves.

To say that this or that conviction - his belief in Socialism or his faith in the Life-Force - is the key to Bernard Shaw, or that such and such a character trait, or such and such an accepted system of epistemology explains the man would inevitably lead to hasty conclusions. A satisfactory estimate of this elusive personality compels a careful recognition of his many-sidedness leading up towards an equation of balanced forces. It would be unwise to accept everything he says even in his serious moods as representing his personal belief. He finds his mind teeming with a host of stimulating ideas, but some of them he only half accepts as really valid. They are what Spencer called pseudo-ideas. Some of these ideas were once held vigorously, but are later

1. Prefaces. p. 721

partly outgrown, with their roots, however, still left embedded in the mental soil. They represent, maybe, a previous phase of development, being comparable to one's younger brother. Shaw has several of these younger brothers. They can be seen gaily dancing through his plays - even his religious plays - cutting cerebral capers with hilarious abandon; they are enfants terribles who love nothing more than to shock old-fashioned people, while their big brother sits smiling in the background hugely enjoying the antics of these incorrigibles.

G.K. Chesterton came very close to the truth when he stated that Shaw talks to find out what he thinks. The latter claims for himself the dintinction of being the only man in England who thinks objectively. In his distrust of the too subjective mind, and his great ambition to get outside of this fictional character he has to live with and look at him straight in the face, he dramatises his own different phases of thought and mood. If, as Sch penhauer remarked, no man ever got outside himself to identify himself, we have here an example of one who did the next best thing when he personified the stages of his mental development, presented these actors with their appropriate "characters," and watched them conduct a dramatic seminar to explain him to himself.

But the attempt to be over objective has its dangers too, and it is possible that, as Rodin observed, "the

first victim of Bernard Shaw's charlatanism is Bernard Shaw himself"[1]. Speaking to Mrs. van Varst on this subject, Rodin concluded:

"He is perhaps a "fraud" as you Americans "put it....Susceptible to impressions as are all artists, and a philosopher at the same time, he cannot do otherwise than deceive himself. . . It is, in fact, to his Irish blood that Bernard Shaw as we know him is due. With the cold Anglo-Saxon current only in his veins, he would have proved the "bore" par excellence who tries to divert us while reforming society, to win our applause by mere idol-breaking."[2]

The reader or the playgoer setting out to solve the riddle of such a complex personality will plunge himself into hopeless confusion if he approaches the subject armed only with the weapon of cold logic. Without the deep insight of the humourist he will see mere flippancy where he should look for the most ferocious earnestness; he will expect to see truth portrayed in black and white, whereas it has a disconcerting habit of appearing in various shades of grey; he will turn away from the precious paradox when he should reach out to grasp the key to wisdom hidden there.

1. Henderson. op. cit. p. 501.
2. Ibid op. cit. p. 501.

It is only a deeply serious person who could produce such effective flippancies on subjects like war, economic slavery, and God, just as only a strong man could juggle with cannon balls. It is mostly in his jesting moments that Bernard Shaw may truly be said to be inspired, that is, breathing from a bigger self and telling more truth than he knew. When he ceases to be jocose he is apt to appear a mere reformer - a militant Socialist aiming missiles at the Capitalist ogre; a moral anarch railling at conventional virtue; a professed Neo-Lamarckian eloquently asserting that Charles Darwin is anathema. That is why the person lacking a sense of humour will completely mistake the message of the plays. That is the reason he will never know that Bernard Shaw is the most serious man alive.

It must be remembered that in the dramatic parables of Creative Evolution there is no question of a new religion, but rather of "distilling the eternal spirit of religion."[1]

This eternal spirit has always been there, the author argues, but is has become obscured for ordinary good people by the temporalities and legends that have accumulated with the ages. What he emphasises is that the so-called new religions are new in fact only in so far as they are old.

1. Prefaces. p. 516.

The religion of Metaphysical Vitalism is able to meet the challenge, he believes, because "it has always been with us"[1]: it corresponds with a fundamental and urgent necessity which demands a religion that is essentially biological.

Concerning the necessity of religion for the modern man Shaw is quite positive. Convinced that this need so far has not been satisfied since none of the established religions are credible, he offers his contemporaries a creed which embodies what he considers the best elements of the century's two main currents of thought : Socialism and Evolutionism. "Civilization" he once wrote, "needs a religion as a matter of life or death."[2] Bernard Shaw, who is very anxious that civilization should be preserved, comes forward with a religion that is designed to satisfy man's need for contact with the metaphysical, without neglecting his rational mind, nor his incurable habit of putting theories into practical application. The bible of Creative Evolution covers more ground than any of the world's other bibles. It creates a myth which serves as vehicle for a religion, a politics, an ethics, a philosophy of history, a system of biology, and an eschatology. But chiefly this religion must

1. Prefaces. p. 515.
2. Ibid. p. 523.

be considered in its relation to Socialism. "Every phase in, Shaw's career it cannot be too strongly insisted upon, is "the legitimate and logical outcome of his Socialism"[1] writes Henderson. It is within the structure of the Socialist State that his pragmatic code of ethics finds its most satisfactory application. This is the one political environment which the will of man can work upon with success. Here is the practical application of Metaphysical Vitalism to the field of social and economic adjustment.

This above all : Bernard Shaw is first and foremost a dramatist; and he is concerned more with ideas than with human passions. Perhaps no other writer has succeeded so well in making people aware of ideas and of their endless interactions. There are scores of self-contradictions in his writings. Many of these are the result of his inability to resist the temptation to say a good thing; others are the reflection of a dramatic and highly imaginative mind. To try and "reconcile" the philosophy of Don Juan with that of the Devil would be to ignore the impotent fact that these are characters in a play. Who cares whether or not Falstaff and Hamlet can be "reconciled"? What counts is the dramatic truth of each. Just as Shakespeare excelled in making his audience aware of the endless pageant of human passion and personality, so Shaw will be remembered as the man who revealed more forcibly than any

1. Henderson. op. cit. p. 481.

other of his time how many ideas it was possible to have and how intricate were the relations between them. Even while Don Juan is declaiming on the necessity of the Superman, as the only saviour of the human race, the Devil is rewarded with the pungent line, "Beware of the pursuit of the Superhuman, : it leads to an indiscriminate contempt of the Human."[1]

Taken in its entirety the religion of Bernard Shaw is scarcely one that appeals to a wide section of humanity. So far as we know, he is the only person who accepts it without reservation. Its effect is mainly homeopathic : it is mostly successful in small doses, just as in medicine the attenuated dose of virus results in a recovery of health. There is no doubt that because of Shaw a great many people have been prodded out of religious complacency into a livelier and more questioning attitude towards the religious truths they are expected to affirm, when formerly they were either ignorant of the dogmas held by their Church or merely accepted them, at their face value. If the twenty-first century finds this prophet dated, still it may well cast an envious glance at the first half of the twentieth because it knew him. The accumulation of false values, of conventional piety, of muddy thinking, of political opportunism cloaked as righteousness which was the unwholesome side of the legacy of

1. Man and Superman. p. 181.

the nineteenth century called for a ruthless housecleaning. Shaw suddenly appeared bearing the broom of his wit; and the world was a cleaner place to live in when he had finished sweeping. It was only when he undertook to weed the Garden of Eden that he overreached himself : this time he pulled up a lot of wheat with the tares. If there are some who think him cynical, they should remember that he was dealing with cynical facts. But this is just the place where he himself would turn dramatist and give the cynic his due. As Don Juan said to the Devil, "there is much to be learnt from a cynical devil, but I really cannot stand a sentimental one."[1]

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1. Man and Superman. p. 181

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