

ABSTRACT

This thesis is dealing with George Bernard Shaw's idea in opposing some concepts of Christianity and capitalism as revealed in the theme of his satirical comedy play Major Barbara.

Poverty becomes the central object in this play. Shaw regards it as the worst of crimes. It must be eliminated if we want to make the world a better place to live in. One way to abolish poverty is through the salvation. According to Shaw, in doing the salvation, one cannot jump into saving the soul, but at first he must save the basic needs of human beings and then, after free from poverty, he has to contribute something to human progress - that is what Shaw meant by *Salvation*. Therefore Shaw opposes the way which is done by Barbara and her Army in saving the people since they jump into the soul salvation. On the contrary, his idea is clear in what Undershaft, his hero in the play, has done. Being a multimillionaire of a gun factory, Undershaft has succeeded in feeding, clothing, and housing his employees.

In order to be able to live wealthy - to get rid from poverty - one needs money. Therefore Shaw insists upon the importance of money on and on in this play. By having

enough money, one can lift himself to a higher stage of life. Furthermore, he suggested that in order to make a welfare in the society, there must be an equality in all aspects of the community. It is his criticism toward capitalism that is sounded in this play.

SYNOPSIS

In Major Barbara, Shaw raises the problem of poverty. Two major characters of the play - Barbara and Undershaft - are having different opinions in dealing such problem and it becomes a paradoxical situation in the play.

The first act opens in a well-appointed library in fashionable Wilton Crescent. An assertive mother, Lady Britomart, has called her husband, Andrew Undershaft, a millionaire munitions maker, for a family dinner. They have been separated for many years because he has refused to leave his business to Stephen, their son. It has been the tradition of his industry that the heir of the business is a bright and capable foundling who is believed can be stronger since he lives with his own power. Lady Britomart invites him since she still expects to get inheritance for their two daughters. Barbara, the eldest, has engaged to Adolphus Cusins, a brainy but moneyless professor of Greek, while Sarah, her sister, will marry Charles Lomax, a foolish youth but having good inheritance prospects. When Undershaft arrives to the dinner, he is most impressed with Barbara who wears the uniform of a major in the Salvation Army. Then there is a talk about religion which results a decision that Barbara and Undershaft will visit each other. Undershaft agrees to let her try to convert him

at her shelter in the slums, if she will let him show her his munitions works the next day.

Act II, taking place at the bleak West Ham center of the Army, introduces Rummy Mitchens and Snobby Price, ill-fed, and poorly clothed Cockneys who have been converted by the Army. Also arriving is Peter Shirley, a starving unemployed workman. Then Bill Walker, a rough aggressive young Cockney comes in a hurry demanding that the Army returns his lover who has been converted. He strikes Jenny Hill, a young Salvationist lass, since he does not get what he wants. Barbara comes and stirs his conscience. Bill gives some money as a 'fine' of striking Jenny, but Barbara says that salvation cannot be bought. She is shocked when her father who has come to visit her shelter, demonstrates that he can 'buy' the Army by giving the Army a huge check. At that time the Army really needs money if it wants to keep open. Mrs. Baines, one of the Salvationist Commissioners tells Barbara that they have got the money from Lord Saxmundham, the owner of whisky factory, a drink which destroys people, and then they also get a check from Undershaft. The idealistic Barbara becomes disappointed knowing the reality that it is person like her father (also Lord Saxmundham) - the owner of factory which can destroy people - who saves her people. Since then she leaves off her Army uniform.

In the last Act, we see that Undershaft takes his family to Perivale St. Andrew, his factory. All are astonished to find how wealthy the place is. Undershaft then declares that the worst of crimes is poverty. By providing high wages, he saves more souls than Barbara ever could. Then it is found that Cusins, Barbara's fiance, is also a foundling and Undershaft offers him to be his successor. The story is ended when Barbara realizes that she cannot save the people only by bribing them with a slice of bread, so she agrees to work in her father's factory, to save the people there.