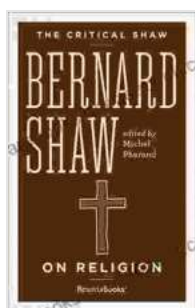


Bernard Shaw on Religion: The Critical Shaw

George Bernard Shaw was an Irish playwright, critic, polemicist, and political activist. His writings often satirized religion, and he was an outspoken critic of Christianity. This article examines Shaw's views on religion, his criticisms of Christianity, and his own religious beliefs.



Bernard Shaw on Religion (The Critical Shaw)

by Ken Davenport

★★★★☆ 4 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 3521 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 279 pages
Lending	: Enabled
X-Ray for textbooks	: Enabled
Paperback	: 216 pages
Item Weight	: 13.6 ounces
Dimensions	: 6 x 0.54 x 9 inches

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Shaw's Views on Religion

Shaw was a lifelong atheist. He believed that there was no evidence to support the existence of God, and he rejected the idea of a supernatural being who created and controls the universe. Shaw also believed that religion was a harmful force in society, as it promoted superstition, intolerance, and violence.

In his play *Man and Superman*, Shaw wrote:



“Religion is the refuge of the weak, the opium of the people. It is a crutch for those who cannot stand upright, a shield for those who cannot face reality.”

Shaw's views on religion were influenced by his own experiences. He was raised in a Protestant household, but he rejected Christianity at a young age. He was also influenced by the writings of Charles Darwin and other scientists who challenged the traditional view of the world.

Shaw's Criticisms of Christianity

Shaw's criticisms of Christianity were wide-ranging. He criticized the church for its hypocrisy, its intolerance, and its support for war. He also criticized the Christian doctrine of hell, which he called a "barbaric and immoral" idea.

In his play *The Devil's Disciple*, Shaw wrote:



“The devil is not outside us, but within us. It is our own selfishness, our own greed, our own cruelty.”

Shaw believed that Christianity had failed to live up to its ideals. He argued that the church was more interested in power and wealth than in serving the needs of the poor and the oppressed.

Shaw's Own Religious Beliefs

Despite his atheism, Shaw did have a sense of spirituality. He believed in the power of love, compassion, and social justice. He also believed in the importance of education and reason.

In his play *Back to Methuselah*, Shaw wrote:



“The true religion is not the religion of the churches, but the religion of the heart. It is the religion of love, compassion, and service to others.”

Shaw's religious beliefs were not always consistent. He sometimes expressed a belief in a higher power, but he also rejected the idea of a personal God. However, he always maintained that religion was a personal matter, and that each individual should find their own way to spirituality.

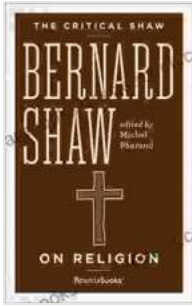
Bernard Shaw was a complex and contradictory figure. He was a lifelong atheist who criticized religion, but he also had a sense of spirituality. He believed in the power of love, compassion, and social justice, and he argued that religion should be based on these principles.

Shaw's writings on religion are still relevant today. They challenge us to question our own beliefs and to think critically about the role of religion in society.

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