

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. BERNARD SHAW

This is an imperfect world. The greatest of human minds has its limitation.

The intelligent reader will already have guessed from the foregoing that the subject of this paper is George Bernard Shaw. It cannot be doubted that England today would be hard put to it to show a bare dozen men capable in their highest flights of the kind of thought which is the breath of life to Mr. Shaw. In destructive criticism he stands practically unchallenged.

But there seems to be one flaw in the emerald of his mind; one piece of bad steel in his bag of tools. He shares the almost universal infirmity of being unable to detach himself completely from the phenomena which he is observing. He loves to twist a text to suit his rope.

We had an excellent example of this falling in his book on "Wagner". Wagner was a socialist like Mr. Shaw himself; and Mr. Shaw felt himself bound to read the socialism into the operas. The monarchist might just as easily have claimed that Wagner was a king's favourite, and the operas mere praise of kingship. The position would be quite as easy to defend. The result of this was that Mr. Shaw found himself in a very awkward position, for the fourth drama of the Ring would not fit in. He was obliged to ask us to believe that Wagner suddenly and without reason abandoned his great and serious purpose, abandoned the whole course of his thought, and reverted to mere opera with an entire