Write a critical commentary on the following extract, relating it to Shaw's presentation of authority here and elsewhere in the play.

In this extract, military, monarchical and religious authority quarrel over whether Joan should be admitted to Charles' court. Staged in the privacy of an antechamber, this moment illuminates the true nature of France's leaders without the polished veneers they assume in public. Shaw presents Charles and La Tremouille as incompetent, puerile and undeserving of their positions of authority, before revealing Charles' self-serving nature through his appropriation of Joan's iconography to obtain much-needed legitimacy. Ultimately, the Archbishop is depicted as the most mature, level-headed figure of authority, yet it is precisely the Church's commitment to preserve order and tradition that renders it narrow-minded: it cannot accept Joan's authority if she cannot conform to the Church's.

Firstly, Charles and La Tremouille are shown to be inept and juvenile, unable to command the respect and authority that their posts confer. Charles' unbecoming lack of self-restraint is immediately evinced by a scathing insult from the Archbishop ("If you cannot rule your kingdom, at least try to rule yourself"), with the repetition of "rule" highlighting his dual inability to govern at both the grand scale of his country and the modest scale of his own behaviour. Charles' retort of "Another lecture! Thank you." ironically reinforces the Archbishop's point: while it was humorous at first, the fact that Charles is using this same riposte for the third time in the same scene highlights his recalcitrance and petulance. The childishness and ineptitude of authority is on full display when Charles and La Tremouille exchange a series of taunts: the military commander is not only shockingly illiterate ("I can't distinguish the letters") but also prone to emotional volatility, overcome with overwhelming anger as conveyed by the hyperbolic "blood boiling". Charles is no better: he takes immature jabs at La Tremouille ("I can read, you know") — seemingly proud of meeting the most basic expectation of literacy — and timidly hides behind him to "peer round [his] left shoulder". This posture is reminiscent of a similarly ineffectual Robert in Scene 1: not only does he seek his Steward as a human shield to "back [him] up" against Joan, his attempt at "standing to inflate himself" also immediately gives way to a seated, "deflated" posture after Joan says one sentence. Just as Robert seeks to assert his authority in vain, Charles' efforts are similarly feeble: he only declares his intention to assert his authority without actually asserting it ("I tell you I will", "I am going to put my foot down"). These attempts — resembling a child's tantrum — elicit blatant mockery from Bluebeard, who not only laughs and interrupts him, but also tauntingly calls him "Naughty!" as if addressing a toddler. In the context of feudal 15th-century France, the fact that a low-ranked

courtier dares to openly insult the king he ought to revere reveals Charles' complete lack of credibility. The portrayal of Charles as infantile resurfaces at the close of Scene 2 in his conversation with Joan: she repeatedly uses the diminutive "Charlie" and addresses him as "Thou poor child", assuming a parent-child dynamic with Charles ("I must teach you from the beginning"). Once again, Charles' tantrum-like attempts to regain authority ("I am not a child", "I will not be taught any more") ironically betrays his childish nature. Hence, in typical Shavian fashion, individuals with authority — especially Charles — are presented as grossly incapable and immature, unbefitting of their positions of power.

With Charles possessing authority only in name and not in fact, he seeks to derive greater authority by exploiting Joan's iconographic influence, underscoring his egocentric, selfish nature. Charles proudly declares that Joan the "saint" and "angel" is "coming to [him]", attempting to elevate himself and his authority by tying it to Joan's mystical reputation. Charles' boastful proclamations are accompanied by his conceited gait of "strut[ting]", evincing his preoccupation with the personal prestige that Joan could bring him. His self-serving nature is made apparent when he discusses his ancestors' saints: not only does Charles objectifyingly refer to Joan as "my saint" as if she were a piece of property under his ownership, he also seeks to "have" Joan to live up to his familial legacy ("It is in our family") and appear on par with his forefathers. In this light, Charles selfishly uses Joan for personal ends, trying to acquire second-hand authority from Joan's holy reputation. Subsequently, when La Hire alleges that Joan "struck Foul-Mouthed Frank dead for swearing", Charles accepts the story sans hesitation and "triumphantly" proclaims it "a miracle" — the egotistical Charles is eager to bolster his reputation using any means, even exaggerations and untruths. While Charles is alone in manipulating Joan's iconography for private benefit, many other authority figures do so elsewhere for *societal* benefit: the Archbishop, despite his dismissal of this "miracle" as "rubbish!", later affirms its veracity to "fortify the faith of his flock". Charles' mercenary conception of others is further highlighted by his declaration that he will have "nothing" to do with Joan if she fails to find him, with the firm use of the absolute revealing Charles' complete reduction of Joan to her instrumental value for his personal agenda. However, this critical depiction of Charles' selfish nature is tempered at the end of the scene: Charles repeatedly attempts to shore up his authority because it is constantly under attack from others, elucidated by his resigned rhetorical question ("How can I prevent him [from killing my friends]?") and pitiful self-presentation as "bullie[d]". Further, he powerfully declares in an emphatically short sentence that he "never asked to be a king", seemingly forced to live up to a position of authority he never wanted. Hence, while Charles is ultimately self-seeking and manipulates Joan's iconographic authority for private benefit, it appears that he was, at least in part, compelled to be this way.

Against a backdrop of incompetent, egocentric authority, the Archbishop stands out as a bastion of rationality and order, yet it is precisely these qualities that render the Church unable to accept Joan. The Archbishop pleads for “order” in the rowdy court from the beginning of the extract, his level-headed commitment to stability emphasised by his “resolute” tone, firm absolutes (“This will not do”, “We must keep some sort of order”), and imploring use of epizeuxis (“Come, come!”, “Please, please!”). Additionally, he possesses a keenly logical mind, identifying Frank’s death as “a mere coincidence” and dismissing the unsubstantiated rumour that Joan “struck [him] dead”. In fact, the Church appears to command the highest authority in the land: the Archbishop challenges the Dauphin in the blunt question “Do you dare say she shall?”. Not only does the Archbishop’s ability to directly challenge Charles reveal his superior authority, the question’s rhetorical nature also highlights that he knows Charles dare not go against the Church: in medieval France, it owned feudal lands, provided social services, and crowned the King himself. Hence, the Church’s rationality and stability can ostensibly check the dysfunctional French court. However, this favourable presentation of the Archbishop is eroded by his prejudiced conception of Joan: he calls her a “cracked country lass”, spurning her on the basis of her madness (“cracked”), class (“country”), and gender (“lass”). He subsequently gives her the dehumanising label of “creature” and assumes her promiscuity since she “rides round the country with soldiers” like a camp prostitute, revealing his extreme contempt. This is strikingly similar to Robert’s conception of Joan in Scene 1: he calls her “mad”, fixates on her father’s social class (“farmer”, “of no account socially”), and presumes she is licentious (“slut of a girl”). Shaw next reveals that the Archbishop’s rejection of Joan is built on his afore-established commitment to order and stability: he takes offence at her transgression of existing norms by “dress[ing] like a soldier”, above her female, peasant-born status. In Joan’s time, the appropriacy of clothing was of paramount importance, constituting a key part of not only Church-dictated modesty but also medieval sumptuary laws. Ultimately, the Church’s well-intentioned dedication to preserving the feudal, patriarchal, and religious order of its age would seal Joan’s fate: the Inquisitor fears the destablising influence of Joan’s “quarrel[ling] with her clothes” and calls for her purging, emphasising (through an incremental, asyndetic list) “its righteousness, its necessity, its essential mercy” as it saves “Church and Empire” from destruction (“wreck”) by heresy. Hence, while order-loving religious authority reassuringly calms a disruptive court, it also tragically expunges the “disruptive” maverick Joan.

Ultimately, Shaw presents authority on a nuanced spectrum, from the inept and selfish to the rational and orderly. It is the interaction between these institutions of authority that decides Joan’s evolving authority — she rises to prominence when her iconography is of use to those in power, and she falls from grace when her influence rocks the foundations of their power.