Greene’s novels have already received much critical attention, the bulk of which has been directed mainly towards certain Catholic themes which critics think form the core of his artistic and literary expression. Critics and theologians like Alastair Flower, Walter Allen, Anthony Burgess and Frederic Karl have probed deeply into Greene’s insight into the meaning of Sin, Salvation, Suicide, Crime and Damnation and the treatment of some of his obsessional themes like the eternal conflict between Evil and Good, God, the relentless pursuer of the fleeing sinner, Man pitted against an evil world of violence, fear, despair and death and God’s inordinate mercy and compassion even for the worst sinners. Critics like David Pryce-Jones, on the other hand, highlight the social burden of Greene’s art paying scant regard to his religious and theological preoccupations. Pryce-Jones’ observation that “his [Greene’s] Catholicism offers little hope or joy but only fear and danger” (Graham Greene 1) assumes relevance in this context. Commenting on Greene’s social consciousness, he says that in Greene there is an element of social sympathy and an “undergraduate communism” (10). James L. McDonald is of the view that Greene’s abiding concerns “have always been social and political” (“Graham Greene” 201). The Soviet critic V. Ivasheva asserts that Greene in his novel The Quiet American promotes Communism “as a distinct alternative to fascist reaction, as the ideology of the future” (20th Century English Literature 234). In short, Greene has been looked at from a number of angles and perspectives – as a Catholic novelist, a social realist, a romantic anarchist, a Marxist, a heretic and even as a burnt-out Catholic.

In the eyes of many readers Greene remains only as a Catholic novelist and a religious writer. Such readers are never tired of pointing out his commitment to Catholicism, seeing him in the popular image of a loyal Catholic who is out “to justify the ways of God to Man” (A.M.J. Smith 17). It is true that Greene has written novels like Brighton Rock (1938), The Power and the Glory (1940), The Heart of the Matter (1948) and The End of the Affair (1951) in which the dominant characters are Catholics. But the paradox is that their “religion” with its so-called rigid systems, principles, values, beliefs and dogmas do not offer them any satisfactory solutions to their existential problems. What happens in these novels, when viewed without any bias to religion is: “Orthodoxy is submitted to the test of experience and its inadequacies exposed Seen in an enlightened perspective, Greene is, first and foremost, a creative artist exercising a wide appeal over a vast range of readers including the non- Catholics, because in reality, he does not deliberately and openly propagate any religious doctrine. Even in the above-mentioned novels which deal with certain clearly pronounced Catholic themes and consciously present a number of “religious” characters, one may find Greene going out of his way to defend even the worst sinners including those who commit adultery and suicide. Scobie in The Heart of the Matter and the Whisky Priest in The Power and the Glory impress themselves on many readers not by virtue of their religiociity but by virtue of their innate humanness and compassion for those who suffer in life. Greene’s confessions to Marie-Francoise Allain, throw ample light on his objective as a writer of fiction: “I don’t as a rule write to defend an idea. I’m content to tell a story and to create characters . . . I don’t want to use literature . . . My so-called ‘Catholic’ novels are [not] written to convert anyone