CHAPTER XII

CONCLUSION..............
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Greene, in his works, deals with the themes of good and evil, and of immortality and God. He deals with the profound problems of human life and destiny. He points out that the growing feeling of mental anguish experienced in modern times is, to a great extent, due to the decay of religious faith. While our control over the forces of Nature approaches the miraculous, anarchy reigns in the moral sphere. The increase in our knowledge seems to have brought about the decay of religious faith in our times.

The belief that the human species is a special creation of God laid the foundation for the great cathedral of religious thought. But the publication of Darwin's books, THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES in 1859, and THE DESCENT OF MAN twelve years later, shook man's religious faith to its foundations. Darwin's theory was a God-send to the disbelievers. To many men, however, modern knowledge has brought nothing but disillusion. It has taught them that there is no escape from the conclusion that they are simply animals, one species among thousands, and with no claim to any divine prerogative.

Greene seems to be of the opinion that science is not likely to give an answer to our fundamental problems. Reason is not, as the rationalists so firmly believe, the most fundamental thing about us. "The most fundamental thing is that we are living beings, and purposeful beings, and
very complicated beings, of whom reason is an attribute, an instrument, but most obviously not the whole of us."

Many philosophers have been definitely of the opinion that human reason is utterly incompetent to deal with the mystery of existence. Reason itself has to acknowledge that there are regions beyond its powers of exploration, and that knowledge may reach us by channels other than its own.

Greene feels that all the things in this external world and the whole of nature and of human life would appear to be unintelligible, senseless, and void unless it could be interpreted in some transcendental sense, and unless it were informed by some deeper meaning than the bodily senses revealed. In other words, only faith in religion can answer the riddle of life.

In his works, Greene repeatedly points out that man cannot get along without faith. If faith in religion is abandoned, some other faith has to be adopted. All our humanitarianism, all our philanthropy and welfare work are efforts to fill the great spiritual void left by the decay of faith. These are, after all, drab substitutes for the older creed.

Greene holds to the Christian belief that the

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miseries of man arose from the eating of the fruit of knowledge. He is of the opinion that the happiness of mankind would be increased by a return to the earlier and more primitive conditions. He believes that the human race should endeavour to forget its gains, and retrace its steps in time. Greene is, however, singularly free from all dogmatism and all doctrinaire types of thought in advocating faith in the Catholic religion for the solution of human problems.

Greene is not blind to the fact that Christianity has not always been able to solve the intellectual and moral perplexities of modern man amidst the infinite complexities of our times. It is characteristic of our times that many have chosen to think of sex in purely functional terms. They have begun to think that the sexual appetite is no more than a physical need and that it must be satisfied. This attitude owes much to Freud and other modern psychologists. The Church, on the other hand, has sometimes dealt with sexual problems as though they could be settled and resolved by rules in black and white. The Church has appeared "more censorious than compassionate. And, in so doing, it has been infected by that kind of pharisaic hypocrisy which is the ultimate betrayal of Christian or any moral life."  

Greene takes into account in his treatment of sex, the changes in

perspective which have been brought about by the theories of Freud and other modern psychologists. He seems to point out that serious readjustments have to be made in the conventional Christian attitude to sex which all but equates it with sin. He is of the view that Christianity should show a spirit of charity and understanding while dealing with the sexual problems of modern man. Greene points out that the Christian view on sexual morality often creates untold misery in the lives of many individuals.

Throughout his works, and particularly in his Catholic novels, Greene emphasizes the fact that man is fundamentally a mystery that refuses to be degraded into a problem. Man is capable of selfishness and great sin, but he is also capable of great love and unstinting sacrifice. Greene shows that the political architects of liberalism and progress have made a mess of our world and that only a return to belief in God and religion can save us.

Man is an animal of animals. He who would write truly of him cannot be unaware of his animality. But it should never be forgotten that man is something more. He is also a spirit. To many writers of the twentieth century like H.G.Wells or George Bernard Shaw, who believe in
materialism and progress, poverty is simply a terror, a disease, and a curse. They forget that the Saviour Himself wanted to be called the God of the poor. These writers who hold to the modern materialistic belief in progress cannot conceive that suffering has a purgative value. They cannot realise that social revolutions cannot eradicate the problem of suffering and evil in this world. Greene, in his works, has attempted to explain the misery, poverty, and evil of man in the light of Christian doctrines and to suggest how they are inevitable in this world. For a Christian writer, man is inescapably involved in the moral order. In it he must work out his fate to the end.

As in the case of Evelyn Waugh, Francois Mauriac, and other Catholic writers, we hear the literary voice of the Church in Graham Greene's works also. Greene shows that the Church has its answer, its store of wisdom, ready for the sceptical, the despairing, and the disillusioned people of our times.

While Greene has thus reintroduced religion as a relevant theme into English fiction, he has not failed to take into consideration the findings of modern psychology while interpreting his characters and their actions. In a masterly manner, Greene throws light on the hidden motives for the actions of his characters and points out the moral consequences of these acts.
We see in Greene's works a deep conviction that original sin has caused an irreparable damage to man and a resultant corruption in human nature. Many of Greene's central characters in his major works — Pinkie, Rose, Scobie, the whisky priest, Sarah Miles etc., — are Catholics. But they are irresistibly attracted by the devil of flesh. What distinguishes these Catholic characters from the others is their acute consciousness of sin. The consciousness of sin is one of the most striking features of these characters and this consciousness never abandons them even in their most violent passions. The Catholic characters like Pinkie and Rose in BRIGHTON ROCK can never get rid of the obsession that the sexual act is an act of sin. Scobie, the in THE HEART OF THE MATTER is always aware of the fact that he is damned by his acts of adultery and sacrilege. The non-Catholic characters like Ida Arnold in BRIGHTON ROCK or Helen Rolt in THE HEART OF THE MATTER are free from this awareness of sin.

Greene's utilization of the influence of childhood experiences, memory, psycho-analysis, association of ideas, heredity, dreams etc., in the interpretation of his characters and their actions testifies to his very deep knowledge of modern psychology.
To many a modern man, the theology and ethics of the Christian tradition which were written down in an era that was pre-scientific and pre-technological, seem difficult to implement in an age of giant industry, instant communication, and atomic energy. At the same time they find that science alone produces none of the integrity, the direction, or the zeal that is needed in order to assure the benefits of its own achievements. In his work, *The Individual and His Religion*, G.W. Allport states that it is up to the modern man to take up the strands of science and bind them with the values and traditions taught by religion. "No threads may be rejected, perhaps least of all those that come from modern psychology, psychiatry, and psycho-analysis. For to apply the prophetic teachings of past ages to a technical age requires special assistance from the sciences that deal with personality and with human relations." 3. Graham Greene seems to have accomplished in his works exactly what Allport had in mind when he wrote these lines.

While Greene is pre-occupied with religion and belief in many of his serious novels, we notice his psychological insight into human nature and his familiarity with Freudian concepts of psychology and modern methods of

psycho-analysis almost everywhere in his works. He also repeatedly suggests that many of the traditions of the Catholic faith are in consonance with the concepts of modern psychology. For instance, he has pointed out more than once that the Roman Catholic practice of Confession corresponds in many ways to the practice of psycho-analysis and that the modern psycho-analyst performs a function similar to that of the Roman Catholic priest. In the same way, Greene has also expressed the idea that the narration of the personal experiences of a novelist through the mouthpiece of his characters has the effect of a confession to the public.

Greene’s works as a whole seem to suggest that a life without belief is meaningless. He points out that man is a unique and special creation of God and that separation from God leads him to misery. He stresses the fact that even a sordid life under the shadow of religion is infinitely better than an atheistic and purely materialistic life in a "chromium" world. In this respect, Greene holds a view diametrically opposite to that of writers like George Bernard Shaw and H.G. Wells.

In a world which is rapidly drifting away from God and moral values, Greene's works are of special
significance. His interpretation of many of the concepts of Catholic Religion in terms of modern psychology accounts for his appeal to the modern readers. It is this harmonious integration of religion with psychology in his works which has secured a special and distinguished position for Graham Greene among modern novelists.