CHAPTER V.

SUFFERING AND EVIL............

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SUFFERING AND EVIL

In a famous passage in his "Apologia", Cardinal Newman describes the dismay which overcame him when he looked upon the human scene and saw it "full of lamentation and mourning and woe". Newman wrote: "To consider the world in its length and breadth, its various history, the many races of man........ the defeat of good, the success of evil, physical pain, mental anguish, the prevalence and intensity of sin......... all this is in a vision to dizzy and appeal........ What shall be said to this heart-piercing, reason-bewildering fact? I can only answer, that either there is no Creator, or this living society of men is in a true sense discarded from His presence." 1

Greene shares the mental anxiety and spiritual perplexity of Cardinal Newman. Like Newman, Greene also believes that evil is an essential element of life. Greene points out that "what elicits human horror and indignation is not so much the suffering that the strong may with courage endure, as the suffering at random inflicted upon the weak and innocent and defenceless". 2 Greene raises in his works the problems of sin, suffering, and the pain and misery of man, and tries to reconcile these problems

1. Cardinal Newman, APOLOGIA PRO VITA SUA, quoted in the beginning of THE LAWLESS ROADS.

with the love of God. The problem of reconciling the existence of suffering with an omnipotent and merciful providence is raised explicitly in *The Heart of the Matter*. Scobie feels deeply the incomprehensibility and the heartlessness of the scheme of things. At Pende, for instance, he is moved with an overwhelming pity on seeing the suffering of the child rescued from the torpedoed ship.

The girl was hardly six years old. She was deeply and unhealthily asleep; her fair hair was tangled and wet with sweat; her open mouth was dry and cracked, and she shuddered regularly and spasmodically. 'It's terrible,' Scobie said. When Scobie was informed that the child had lost both parents, he thought: "It would need all Father Brule's ingenuity to explain that. Not that the child would die -- that needed no explanation. Even the pagans realized that the love of God might mean an early death, though the reason they ascribed was different; but that the child should have been allowed to survive the forty days and nights in the open boat -- that was the mystery, to reconcile that with the love of God." 4

Greene suggests that the problem of evil and

suffering is one which our finite intelligence cannot
grasp. It is one of the profound mysteries which we
face in our lives. Like Pascal, Newman, and Kierkegaard,
Greene believes in the universality and inevitability
of suffering and sin. Greene shares the terror and anxiety
of Camus and Kafka and other modern writers when they face
the condition of man. The terror of life is expressed with grim
force in BRIGHTON ROCK. When the little waitress Rose
tells Pinkie, "Life is not so bad", Pinkie turns on her
vehemently: "I will tell you what life is. It is jail.
It's not knowing where to get some money. Worms and cataract, cancer. You hear them shrieking from the upper
window — children being born. It's dying slowly." 5.

Greene believes that the Fall of Adam and Eve
was a catastrophe and man suffers permanently as a result.
The suffering is different in the case of different
individuals. In ENGLAND MADE ME, many of the characters
give expression to a sense of loneliness, cynicism and
frustration. The millionaire, Krogh, often feels a terrible
loneliness, in spite of a very successful business career.
Sitting in his office, he thinks: "And yet the evenings
had somehow to be passed until he was tired enough to sleep.
He opened a drawer in his desk and took out an envelope.

5. BRIGHTON ROCK, p. 304.
He knew what it contained, the tickets for the opera that night, the next night, all the week. He was Krogh; his taste in music had to be displayed in Stockholm. But he sat always in a small wilderness of his own contriving, an empty seat on either hand.  

Minty, the journalist is full of cynical thoughts. Even the human body appears to be ugly to him. On meeting Captain Gullie, the military attache, who is interested in art and who paints ships and the human figure, Minty thinks: "Yes, it was ugly, the human figure. The body's shape, the running nose, excrement, the stupid postures of passion, these beat like a bird's heart in Minty's brain. Nothing could have more stirred his malice than the sight of Gullie poring over the photographs of naked breasts and thighs." 

Minty feels nauseated whenever he sees the Minister, Sir Ronald, who took such care with his clothes, and kept them so carefully brushed: "To use powder, to take such care with one's clothes, to be so carefully brushed, the hypocrisy of itickened Minty. The body still remained, its functions were not hidden by Savile Row." 

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The sufferings and misery of some individuals seem to have an infectious quality. For instance, when Anthony and Loo were left alone in Minty's room for a few minutes, Loo picked her way gingerly round the room. From everything she touched and saw she seemed to catch a little of Minty's misery. "It was contagious. It lay like a germ in the brown dressing-gown, it was a dusty scum on the water in the ewer; when she opened the cupboard....it was concealed in the litter there." 9.

Suspicion, distrust, fear and treachery are the universal signs of the great "aboriginal calamity". Greene is pre-occupied with the theme of betrayal in many of his early works. For instance, in THE MAN WITHIN, Andy betrays to the authorities a gang of smugglers, previously led by his father. Raven in A GUN FOR SALE is betrayed by Anne in whom he puts all his trust and he gets confirmed in his belief that "there was no one outside your own brain whom you could trust; not a doctor, not a priest, not a woman." 10.

Greene gives a vivid picture of this world where

a child like Raven is born with a harelip that conditions his misery and a girl like Else meets corruption too early in life and is finally killed by a man woman. "What an absurd thing it was to expect happiness in a world so full of misery", says Scobie when he sees the sufferings of the victims of the torpedoed boat at Pende. It seemed to Scobie that life was immeasurably long. "Couldn't the test of man have been carried out in far fewer years? Couldn't we have committed our first major sin at seven, have clutched at redemption on a fifteen-year-old-death-bed?" Scobie felt that "life always repeated the same pattern: there was always sooner or later, bad news that had to be broken, comforting lies to be uttered, pink gins to keep misery away."  

Greene raises in his works the problems of sin, suffering, and the pain and misery of man. Greene, however, does not stop with describing the suffering and evil. He points out that God strips us of our false, superficial self, in order to lead us to our true selves. He stresses the fact that God teaches us while He punishes us. While many of the modern English novelists are content with describing the squalor and miseries around us, Greene takes pain to

explain the inevitability of suffering and evil in this world from the point of view of Christian religion. This is certainly a significant contribution of Greene to the English novel.

"Spirituality is intimately connected with the experience of suffering. A sensitive awareness of evil and a capacity for suffering are attributes of the spiritual man. Our miseries and all the obstacles we meet in our path help to develop our spiritual personality. They should be regarded as a trial of the capacity of our inner strength to assert itself, and as a way of self-liberation." 14. Greene points out the purgative value of suffering in his works.

A spiritual attitude to suffering implies illumination. The crucifixion gives a new value to suffering, and Sarah, in THE END OF THE AFFAIR, refers to this fact when she says: "Dear God,......................Let my pain go on and on, but stop theirs. Dear God, if only you could come down from your Cross for a while and let me get up there instead. If I could suffer like you, I could heal like you." 15.

When Richard Smythe, the atheist, complains against a God who had given him an ugly strawberry-mark at his birth, Sarah kisses the scarlet mark on his cheek. She describes this incident in her diary: "I shut my eyes and put my mouth against the mark. I felt sick for a moment because I fear deformity, and he sat quiet and let me kiss him, and I thought I am kissing pain and pain belongs to you as happiness never does. I love you in your pain. I could almost taste metal and salt in the skin, and I thought, How good you are. You might have killed us with happiness, but you let us be with you in pain." 16.

The case of the whisky priest is a striking example of the spiritual enrichment that may follow a life of sin and suffering. The great sufferings of the priest teach him humility and love. In the prison, he experiences a strange communion with those who are suffering like him. He is moved by the enormous and irrational affection for the inhabitants of the prison. He feels that he is just one criminal among a herd of animals. He now experiences "a sense of companionship which he had never experienced in the old days when pious people came kissing his black cotton glove." 17.

17. THE POWER AND THE GLORY, pp. 165-166.
The priest is full of humility. He prays silently: "Oh, God, send them someone more worthwhile to suffer for." It seems to him a damnable mockery that they should sacrifice themselves for a whisky priest with a bastard child. He realises that he must have been a terribly unbearable creature in those days. Yet in those days he had been comparatively innocent. That was another mystery. In those days of his innocence, he had felt no love for anyone; now in his corruption he has learnt to love even the criminals.

Earlier in the novel, when the half-caste who wants to betray him to the police is exhausted and unable to keep pace with him, the priest puts him on the mule. Holding him firmly in the saddle, the priest walks by him bare-footed. The sufferings of the priest have filled him with a great compassion for mankind and an unshakable faith in God. He is firm in his belief that we were made in God's image. "God was the parent, but He was also the policeman, the criminal, the priest, the maniac, and the judge." Walking by the side of the half-caste, he feels that it is God's image shaking now, up and down on

18. THE POWER AND THE GLORY, pp. 175.
the mule's back, with the yellow teeth sticking out over the lower lip. The priest is thus a striking example of the spiritual enrichment that follows a life of suffering.

Dr. Colin, in *A Burnt-Out Case*, also makes some significant remarks on the value of suffering in human life. He tells Querry: "Wouldn't you rather suffer than feel discomfort? Discomfort irritates our ego like a mosquito-bite. We become aware of ourselves, the more uncomfortable we are, but suffering is quite a different matter. Sometimes I think that the search for suffering and the remembrance of suffering are the only means we have to put ourselves in touch with the whole human condition. With suffering we become part of the Christian myth." 21. As David Pryce-Jones points out, "So long as human life is maintained, people will involve themselves in others. The involvement is necessarily a process of suffering, for all of us, priests or Ryckers or Querry's, are stupid, selfish and arbitrary." 22. God made us and so this suffering is part of God's handiwork.

Greene points out that Querry also becomes "part of the Christian myth" through God's agents, Father Thomas,

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Rycker and Marie, and Parkinson. Even Querry's boredom and aridity of spirit are only the means of his salvation. If suffering is just a condition of a life apart from God, something self-contained, then everything is absurd: "Absurd", Querry said at the moment of his death "this is absurd or else................." David Pryce-Jones remarks that the alternative must be, "Or else God worked it all out." 23.

Greene points out in these works that we are born to suffer in this world. Only suffering can save us and only death can end our suffering. The novels of Greene are novels of love and suffering. Greene shows that he who avoids this glorious suffering shuts himself out from salvation and wallows in selfishness. Greene approaches the problem of evil from the point of view of Christian theology and stresses the fact that suffering, evil and even sin work together towards good. They are part of the scheme of Christian providence.

Evil is rooted in man himself and poses a constant temptation to his worst inclinations, as well as a constant

threat to his spiritual security. For the man who falls, there await the punishments of physical affliction and spiritual despair. He can be saved from these only by grace and trust in God. There seem to be two causes for man's suffering: God's will and man's sin. The bad man suffers as a punishment for his sin while the good man suffers as a test from God. Greene records the suspicion, fear, bad dreams, and agonies of conscience that follow sinful acts. He describes the suffering of mental anguish, brought about by intense feelings of guilt, with great psychological insight.

The subject of suffering has a great importance in the history of religion. Psychologists have demonstrated that "some form of stimulation to produce unease and restlessness is necessary for any kind of growth and learning." 24. Two of the best-known chapters of *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, written by William James are those entitled, "The Religion of Healthy-Mindedness" and "The Sick Soul". In these two chapters, William James describes two different expressions of the religious sentiment. Doubt and conflict, for example, are much more likely to be associated with the "sick soul",

the individual for whom religion and life itself will mean suffering. Of course it will be difficult to find the completely sick soul or the completely healthy-minded. Each individual is generally a blend of the two. 25. The ancient Biblical writers also divined that suffering was connected with growth, for in many places and in many ways, the praises of suffering are sung. "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." 26.

While no religious thinker has adequately solved the problem of suffering and evil in the world, it is the sick soul rather than the healthy-minded who has come closest to the heart of the matter. As William James remarks, the method of averting one's attention from evil, and living simply in the light of good is splendid as long as it will work. But this method, however, breaks down completely as soon as melancholy comes. Even though one may be quite free from melancholy one-self, there is no doubt that healthy-mindedness is inadequate as a philosophical doctrine, because "the evil facts which it refuses positively to account for

are a genuine portion of reality; and they may after all be the best keys to life's significance, and possibly the only openers of our eyes to the deepest levels of truth."27.

Religion has the capacity to transform suffering into insights of profound significance. One important source of suffering is the contemplation of evil. The "sick soul" is sensitive to evil in the form of the suffering of other people. He becomes as distressed with others' suffering as he is with his own. The religious person develops an insight into the inter-relatedness of all human beings and a realization that everyone in some way participates in the sorrows of everyone else.

The whisky priest has many of these characteristics of the "sick soul". He feels an extraordinary affection for the inmates of the prison. The night before he was shot to death, when he remembers his illegitimate daughter, Brigitta, and prays to God for her salvation, he realizes that this is the love he should have felt for every soul in the world. He tries to "turn his brain away towards the half-caste, the lieutenant, even a dentist he had once sat with for a few minutes, the child at the banana station,

calling up a long succession of facts, pushing at his attention as if it were a heavy door which wouldn't budge. For those were all in danger too. He prayed, "God help them." 28.

The most significant of all the sources of suffering is that which comes from the realization of the great distance between the actuality of man's condition and the purity and splendour of the nature of God. The religious man repeats in many ways the idea that he is a miserable sinner. We see this fact very clearly depicted in the characterisation of the whisky priest. The priest prays: "O God, forgive me -- I am a proud, lustful, greedy man. I have loved authority too much. These people are martyrs -- protecting me with their own lives. They deserve a martyr to care for them -- not a fool like me, who loves all the wrong things." 29.

Through sin Scobie develops a sense of loss and extreme desolation. He feels that there is nobody now to whom he could speak the truth. As for God, he could speak to Him only as one speaks to an enemy.

29. THE POWER AND THE GLORY, p.121.
there was bitterness between them. He cannot indulge in self-pity, because he knows so exactly the extent of his guilt. He feels as though "he had exiled himself so deeply in the desert that his skin had taken on the colour of the sand." Quite clearly, this sort of suffering is dependent on religious sensitivity and will vary in different individuals partly as this factor varies. One's sensitivity grows with thinking about it.

It is only when a man becomes conscious of sin, or the distance between his own state and that of God, that he has any possibility of spiritual growth. The shock of this realization involves suffering. This suffering arising from a sense of unworthiness is very essential to spiritual growth. It is out of the spontaneous awareness of the distance between God and man that the profoundest insights into spiritual reality come. We see this suffering depicted with great intensity in the characterisation of the whisky priest and Scobie.

"The capacity to make use of suffering to strengthen rather than to weaken depends largely on the

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individual's ability to fix his aims on something beyond the suffering or, in other words, to make sense out of it. It is this function that religion performs par excellence among all the sources of human motivation."  

Religion has the capacity to transform suffering in such a way as to lead to spiritual growth and creative human service. Greene shows a great understanding of these ideas of modern psychology as well as of Christian theology in his interpretation of human suffering. He points out that it is the capacity of religion to transform suffering into spiritual growth and creative human service that explains the hold it has on the human spirit. Greene's understanding of these ideas is clearly seen in his portrayal of characters like the whisky priest and Scobie.

We see a blending of religion and psychology in Greene's depiction of Scobie's sufferings. We see here Greene employing the Catholic idea of sin and damnation and at the same time presenting Scobie's state of mind with great insight. Scobie's sufferings lead to his spiritual purgation and his dying speech represents a completely Christian attitude towards suffering. He

offers his life to God so that Louise and Helen may be happy, and he risks the damnation of his soul so that the others may live in peace. The suffering Scobie undergoes reflects his deepest motivations and the nature of his character.

Scobie's is the suffering of the soul rather than of the body. The suffering is the result of the evil lust which is an off-shoot of his pity. His suffering is the ironic result of his own character and will. As a result of his acts of sin, he feels the irreparable sense of loss which represents the deepest level of suffering. Greene, in Scobie, points out the human tendency to demand that God should act according to man's idea of right and wrong or else that he should cease to be God. Scobie's sufferings and pain are, in fact, the results of his attempts to play the part of Providence. Greene shows how Scobie's actions based on pity paradoxically lead to his own sufferings.

In the same way, Pinkie is a big boy who, of his own conscious willfulness, brings tragedy and torment crashing down upon his head. He is the pitiful victim of his own ambitions and desires. Greene explains Pinkie's downfall in terms of the Christian concepts of sin and damnation, and points out with great irony the contrast between Pinkie's grand ambitions and the
and the tragic end he brings on himself as a result of his criminal career. We see a fusion of religious and psychological concepts in Greene's portrayal of these characters.

Greene shows that God's justice operates in a number of ways for the punishment of sin, and the sense of guilt is one of these ways. Pinkie and Scobie, for instance, do not foresee the turmoil of guilt, fear, and anguish from which they later suffer. Christian theology considers spiritual pain as the worst punishment of the damned. The sinner, confronted with the moral choice between God's will and what is not God's will, chooses to cut himself away from God. In doing so, he brings about by his own act the condition of separation from God, which if not altered by the times of death, becomes the basis of damnation and the cause of eternal agony. The punishment of the damned soul is to remain eternally in hell.

Christian religion teaches us that pride is the fountain of all sins. Pride takes us away from God and brings about our ruin. In his aspiration to be as God and play the part of Providence, Scobie breaks God's commandments. This is the essential irony of sin. In
the Christian view of the world, it is inevitable that failure to obey God's commandments will lead not only to disappointment but also to the deepest suffering, which is alienation from God.

We see how the conflict between good and evil, in Scobie's mind, becomes a source of great suffering for him. Scobie tries to stifle his spiritual conflict in sensual pleasure. He does not bring himself to complete trust in God's mercy. His repentance does not move beyond the conviction of sin. Scobie acknowledges his offence and appeals for mercy and pardon; but he is not able to promise God that he will not offend Him again. For Scobie, it is not death, but the loss beyond death, that is tormenting. He deserts of forgiveness; he believes that God will not forgive his sins. It is this thought which constitutes the greatest anguish for him.

After he decides to commit suicide, Scobie enters a church on his way to see the Commissioner. He kneels down and tries to pray. He finds that no prayer is effective in a state of mortal sin. He says: "O God, I am the only guilty one because I've known the answers all the time......................I know what I'm doing. I'm going to damn myself......................I've longed for peace and I'm never going to know peace again. But you'll
be at peace when I am out of your reach.........You'll be able to forget me, God, for eternity." 32. It is the conviction that he will be banished from God's presence for ever that constitutes the greatest suffering in the case of Scobie.

The pain of loss, the irony of human aspiration, the root of evil in the will of man ---- are conceptions which are central to Christian theology. Greene has clearly drawn from its doctrines the ideological bases for his portrayal of the dark side of human existence and he makes use of modern psychological concepts to throw light on the inner life of his characters. The structure of Greene's novels, stories, and plays, is supported by the doctrines of the Christian Church, and is at the same time illumined by the concepts of modern psychology.