The actions of the Holy Roman Catholic Church against Martin Luther and Galileo and all the inaction of the same Church against Hitler tempted me to have a new look at Greene’s novels. R. W. B. Lewis’s critical essay on ‘The Trilogy’ made me wonder why a casual convert like Greene was continuously locked in engagement with Catholicism in his writings. This wonder came to its climax with Monsignor Quixote and the idea of a Tetralogy dawning in me.

Then came the news of Greene’s passing away. Greene’s engagement with Catholicism reached its finality and totality.

The four novels register Greene’s progressive evaluation of Catholicism. The violent, blood-stained revolutionary ‘protest’ of 1982 is not a sudden eruption; it had its mild rumblings of ‘discontent’ in the earlier trio. The “hint of discontent” in the first three is faint enough to be missed but not after it erupts into a ‘protest’. Monsignor Quixote switches on the rear-lights on the trilogy.

In all the four novels, one can see that the Church stands by, commenting, promising and interpreting; but never getting involved. In all, the individuals wade through life, the Church only keeping the ideas afloat. The feared epilepsy of Greene before marriage, in actual life received the same ‘care’ from the Church’s harsh anti-contraceptive dogma, offering no other help.
His Catholic preoccupations are wide-spread in all his writings, even beyond this tetralogy. This is brought out with examples in the Introductory Chapter.

Chapter 2 deals with the faint traces of discontent—the Church failing exactly at the moment its help is needed—always walking in as a funeral orator with its inert theology and lifeless dogma: Praying for and saving the souls of the dead. It never deals with the not-dead. This happens to both the laity and the clergy in his first three Catholic novels: Pinkie, Scobie and the whisky priest—Communism confronting Catholicism in the third.

Chapter 3 focuses on his climactic Catholic fiction inspired by the satiric creation of Cervantes—‘Don Quixote’. Unamuno, Saint Ignatius of Loyola, Descartes, Marx and Heribert Jone—all come and go affecting the development of Monsignor Quixote: Marxism and Catholicism both ride side by side in Rocinante and end up as ‘compañeros’ in the Trappist Monastery at Osera. But not before the blood-y revolution in Our Lady’s Procession: The Monsignor going into battle, in full ‘armour’ and tilting at Our Lady’s statue decked in dollars!

The first three novels leave us with the hope of heaven; the fourth concludes on the earth reconciling two disparate faiths.

The Conclusion, Chapter 4 is a consolidated account of the trend noticed in the tetralogy,—but it traces it in the reverse. The last novel Monsignor Quixote it is that structures the sequence and the other three are covered in hindsight. Bringing out the significance of the sequence, it focuses on the unmistakable ‘note of protest’ in Monsignor Quixote and traces its faint origins and mild ‘hints of discontent’ that are nurtured in the earlier three.

The thesis doesn’t make any guesses as to how Greene would have evolved had he lived longer!