Graham Greene’s tetralogy awaits our attention now. *Brighton Rock* stands at the threshold of this great tetralogy. It started as a novella or an entertainment with a detective story and eventually ended up as a spiritual reconnaissance novel and earned for Greene the ‘detestable’ name of a “Catholic writer”; no one had noticed Greene’s religion before its publication. Like M. Morin, Greene became “their Catholic author”. This is mostly like our not noticing the religion of Chaucer since he lived before Martin Luther; the necessity arose only for the Christian authors who came after him.

This forced Greene to declare himself not a Catholic writer but a writer who happened to be a Catholic, but this also gave him an opportunity to quote the words of Cardinal Newman from *The Idea of University* on “Catholic literature” as “a contradiction in terms” “to attempt a sinless lit-
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erature of sinful man”.

But Greene does not notice the difference between a “Catholic writer” and a “Christian Literature”. “If literature is to be made a study of human nature” many parts of The Holy Bible qualify to be labelled Christian literature: Jesus is as much a part of the Gospels as Judas is. “Christian writer” and “Christian Literature” do not mean the same. Christian literature need not always mean “sinless literature”. Much of the Old Testament and almost the whole of the Apocrypha uphold Christian values but deal with many that are sinful.

Graham Greene is a ‘Catholic writer’ not only because he was a Roman convert but also because of his Catholic themes with clergymen, churches, chapels, sins, confessions, redemption, heaven and hell and absolution.

He became a Catholic in 1926 and was “in the habit of formally practising my religion, going to Mass every Sunday and to confession perhaps once a month and in my spare time I read a good deal of theology—sometimes with fascination sometimes with repulsion nearly always with interest.” The words “perhaps” and “repulsion” are good indicators to Greene’s brand of Catholicism. Father Quixote, like Graham Greene says that no one “is ever fully converted” “not even the Pope”. Greene even jokes in Monsignor Quixote about the Polish vodka as “from a Catholic country” like Mexico. The Roman prelates do not tolerate such statements and jokes from ordinary Catholics though sometimes they do, from the U.S. and other well to do Catholics. Like Morin, Greene “was useful to them, a sign that even an intelligent man could believe”.

But the freedom of speculation “detected in his work” “put his fellow Catholics on their guard”. Like Morin’s novels Greene’s novels also pro-
voked controversies: Gorillas don't pray. "The scholastic arguments for the existence of God" are definitely "inadequate". These thoughts bother both Greene and Morin.

But like ignoring the medical prescriptions of a doctor if one excommunicated oneself from the Church, "the lack of belief" becomes the final proof that the Church is right and the faith is true". Remaining without the sacraments produces a positive "effect". "The wafer must be more than a wafer". Paradoxically it is a strange faith, which holds even now after one ceased to believe. This signifies a reversal of the sacraments.

It was this kind of liberated speculation, which the Church tried hard to smother, that gave birth to *Brighton Rock*. For Greene's heroes the world was a complex one. "It was a very simple world" says Hemmingway in his last novel *The Garden of Eden* in which he discounts "thinking" and encourages "feeling": "making love" and "eating" and not much more. But Greene's world is a world of 'responsibility': life is never so simple. What started as "a simple detective story" became a complex "discussion" on "the distinctions between good-and-evil and right-and-wrong and the mystery of "the appalling 'strangeness of the mercy of God'", ungraspable even for the Church.

"A real slum called Nelson Place and a man kidnapped on Brighton in the thirties as Hale", though in different circumstances were facts from local news. Graham Greene saw the religio-spiritual potential of these skeletal facts and *Brighton Rock* grew in depth and the earlier 'entertainment' became a mature novel and perhaps "the best (he) ever wrote"!

It is a detective story and a tragedy and moves on the two tracks simul-
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taneously: one, the moral world of Ida, of right and wrong and the other the theological world of good and evil inhabited by Pinkie and Rose. Brighton Rock gains its importance from the fact that Greene contrasts the Brighton world of sin and the modern “sinless empty chromium world”. Ida marshalling her scenes of the universal drama while Rose renews the medieval Christian tradition. Pinkie has a saintly indifference to the things of this world, like money, sex or even Brighton. Brighton and Rock are not mere place names but qualities enshrined in Pinkie’s character; it is Rose who is scented with religious values. Her sanctity is so certain — she felt responsibility move in her breasts—that she wants “to be like him—damned”. She avoided killing herself only because she was afraid that “they might miss each other—mercy operating somehow for one and not for the other.”

The ill-made, street petering out towards the cliff; “The old Morris, “the old car”—a grim prognostication of the Monsignor’s Rocinante towards the cliff—was parked near the pier; glass broke; vitriol splashed on his eyes; blind he turned and ran “doubled up in appalling agony” as if the flames had literally got him.” He was at the Greenean edge; he was over; withdrawn suddenly out of existence. It was a literal Kierkegaardian leap. His child in Rose will have to pray for him. Salvation not denied to him.

Like most of the heroes of Greene’s novels, Pinkie too reaches the end of his life so that a complete assessment of his spiritual history, becomes possible for the novelist. Scobie, the whisky priest and the Monsignor, all reach the Greenean end.

“Death did not give rest, for rest could not exist without the consciousness
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of rest”. Consciousness of death can exist only if something survives death to be conscious of it. Death destroys everything including the consciousness of death; but death is not death for the ‘not-dead’.

In The Human Factor Graham Greene puts, in a humorous vein, that “a funeral’s always better … than a wedding … A funeral is final. A wedding—well, it’s only an unfortunate stage to something else”. Not only a wedding, anything other than a funeral, is only one stage and not the final stage. That’s why Graham Greene-heroes always conclude their lives in his novels. They attain not only maturity but finality and totality. There is no futurity to wait for.

Pinkie’s literal leap is not only a leap of faith; it is also leap of life—he is no more, he dies.

Greene’s religion is so unorthodox and anti-traditional and so personal that he doesn’t hesitate to invert the symbolism of the seven sacraments into seven deadly sacraments. Pinkie is forced to kill (“Thou shalt not kill”), behaves as though he had been ordained as a priest of his satanic church (“When I was a kid, I swore I’d be a priest …”), goes into a sacrilegious matrimony and receives only the vitriolic unction at the moment of his death. These inversions, however slender may be their significance, gives an inverted weightage by the nameless old priest at the end in his theological clarification: ‘Corruption optimi est pessima’.

A clear contrast is brought out by Graham Greene between Pinkie Brown’s sinful Brighton and the spiritually sterile world of Ida Arnold. With her big breasts and her warm, magnetic body she remains childless. Rose (with Pinkie) after a single sexual venture becomes productive. Even the sexless
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Pinkie feels a secret love throbbing within him as he uses Rose. Ida scores a success in her relentless hunt for Pinkie but it is Pinkie who gets a new life inside Rose.

R. W. B. Lewis draws our attention to what he calls the “technique of befuddlement”: the detective story intertwining with a tragedy dramatising the alliance between seeming opposites—good and evil—and the contradiction between seeming likenesses—the good and the right. Pinkie becomes a replica of Judas with more resemblance than the first letter in the name of Jesus. Greene points out later in Monsignor Quixote that Judas is “a saint in the Ethiopian Church”. Nikos Kazantzakis’s portrait of a faithful and brave Judas was shared by many a scholar. We are reminded of the words that affected deeply the boyhood mind of Graham Greene: “perfect evil walking the world where perfect good can never walk again.”

This elaborate insight into what happens in Brighton Rock leads us into the thesis developed in Chapter 1 that salvation can be achieved even outside the dogmatic position taken by the Church. Even love “like Pinkie Brown’s has a touch of good” in it, according to the priest at the confessional whose name is not any name she remembered. Earlier when “he saw the skin of her thigh for a moment” and felt “a prick of sexual desire” reminding of the “dirty act” which people called by the fine words like “love” and “beauty”. This love has produced a baby who can pray for his father. “A child ............ and that child would have a child ............” it was like raising an army of friends for Pinkie. If they damned him and her, they’d have to deal with them, too. There was no end to what the two of them had done last night upon the bed: it was an eternal act.
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Greene's deviation from the line taken by the Church is clearly hinted at in this sentence: "The Church does not demand that we believe any soul is cut off from mercy" while the truth is that the Church, down the history, has categorically asserted the sure damnation of quite a few well known personalities though in most cases it had to withdraw its pronouncements later, sometimes after a few hundred years. Earlier satanic children have later been agreed to be children of God! Even graves have been opened and bodies exhumed to be damned!!

Pinkie Brown doesn't have the shortsightedness of Dallow: he is not shallow like Dallow who "doesn't believe in what (his) eyes don't see. "Hell and heaven are not visible realities." Robert Michael Hanlon, in his thesis on Graham Greene's Religious Sense, says that Greene was convinced early that hell existed. Only later he came to an acceptance of heaven. Even about Pinkie Greene says: "Hell was something he could trust," but "heaven was a word." "Our belief in heaven is not qualified by our disbelief in the old medieval hell", says the clergyman in black cassock. In the Gospel of Saint Matthew there are fifteen references to Hell. In St. Luke's 3; in St. Marks' only 2. "There's not one reference to Hell in St. John's. Father Quixote believed in Hell from obedience, but not with heart." For Pinkie "hell lay about him in his infancy."

Greene's religious sense is not "applied" Catholicism, but "absorbed" Catholicism: using the symbols of Catholicism, he expresses his intuitive religious sense. Sin makes the whole world kin: Rose feels "a companionship in mortal sin." She felt responsibility move in her breasts; she wouldn't let him go into that darkness alone." Though her's was a "registry office
marriage" it was as irrevocable as a sacrament. Only death could set him free. “No Churchman can accept this position or possibility. Greene strikes at the very root of the sacrament of Christian marriage. Others had their salvation; Rose but had her “Pinkie and damnation” He considers her “his enemy” because she had “altered” his room; swept the whole place clean and tidy. He felt that “any change must be for the worse.” But still like a Roman Catholic he fears physical “pain” and is “more afraid of damnation—of the sudden and unshriven death.” “A limitless freedom” had gripped him and “felt the effect of a good confession, the words of absolution:’ “he couldn’t experience contrition” she prays “Give us peace”, and both go towards Peacehaven. Pinkie doesn’t “take stock in religion. Hell—it’s just there. One need not think of it—not before one dies. But Rose warns him he “might die sudden”. This is just in the beginning of the novel. But he has what French-born novelist André Malraux’s novel conveys, ‘Man’s Hope’

“Between the stirrup and the ground, he something sought and something found”

“Mercy”

“That’s right: Mercy!”

But Ida “doesn’t know what a mortal sin is. “She empties the world of all its spiritual and metaphysical qualities”. “She won’t burn. She couldn’t burn if she tried.”

Right and wrong .............. As if she knew ..............

Oh, she won’t burn. She couldn’t burn if she tried.
Rose was far from her. "Good and evil lived in the same country, spoke the same language, came together like old friends, feeling the same completion touching hands beside the iron bedstead." It all seemed to Pinkie that he was doing everything: he killed; he married; a civil marriage. Whose 'will' was done?

But really things were happening to him. He discovered that he didn't have even the energy to repent.

The seven parts of Brighton Rock resemble the seven scenes in Red Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing of Thomson Highway of Canada, or the 33 chapters of Nikos Kazantzakis's The Last Temptation of Christ or the four chapters with date-titles of The Sound and the Fury by Faulkner, which make a mythic use of the Holy Saturday, Octave of the Corpus Christi, Good Friday and Easter Sunday, inverting their significance. The seven sacraments inverted with the Greenean lyrical intentions in order to break the rigid structures of the Church that he found to be unacceptably prescriptive, in a way demystifying the mystical functioning of God by putting Him into slotted performances of dogmatic rituals. The priest, James—no, names don't matter in Greene as usual—haunts the Boy and Rose. He begins the novel and ends it but he is not a Vaticanite but a Greenean. He talks like Greene and not like the Pope. It is this lyrical, personal subjective, individualistic, mystical attitude towards God and his ways that bear the stamp of Graham Greene. He aims at justifying the ways of man to God and not vice versa and this explains the universal appeal of Greene's novels. His stories, characters, themes, their progress and conclusions especially appeal not only to Roman Catholic readers but also to men and women of all faiths. Church,
though not happy with them, could do very little against them.

*Brighton Rock* is a detective story, a non-serious entertainment type mini-fiction, developing more like an inverted Christian myth and fable; it starts with the murder of Hale and closes with the pregnancy of Rose—moving from death to life—symbolizing the spiritual message of Christianity of all demonimations: In this it has relationship to Moravis’s *Women of Rome* which depicts the victory of life over death. The movement of the theme is “deliberately pitiless” to realise the incomprehensible divine mercy which the Roman Church claims always to comprehend.

A detective story like *Brighton Rock* stuns its readers with the strange appearance of the word ‘SOUL’ within the very first ten pages of the novel, depicting not an individual’s temperament or a social failure but depicting the inescapable power of evil, all the more frightening because it is inexplicable. The “sinless, empty, graceless chromium world” of “right and wrong” is painted as inferior to the world with a “religious sense”. The “religious feelings do you credit” says Prewitt; but they do credit not only to Rose as an individual but to the novel as a piece of literature and the century to which it belongs. The “religious sense” has not deserted our century or this novel. Pinkie is not only sinless, he is also sexless; he shows a lack of involvement with worldly things. His Brighton is not a place or a backdrop but a psychic space charged with evil. Pinkie is not doomed to damnation because he doesn’t “take any stock in religion”; he is the spiritual opposite of Rose who is doomed to salvation. He is doomed only because he is the spiritual “responsibility” of Rose. She completes him and she thinks he needs her. Ida’s lively world is “sterile” and Rose’s sexless world conceives even
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after a single sexual encounter. Ida’s worldly victory over Pinkie is more than balanced by the spiritual victory of Rose which is endless. Oxymorons are noticeable in the descriptions of Ida and her behaviour.

Brighton Rock (1938) is a novel that explores the inadequacies of the Roman Church which works on the adolescent criminal Pinkie Brown through a lay Catholic Woman. She smells ‘evil’ in Pinkie while Ida Arnold smells the wrongdoing by him. Vengeance was Ida’s while Rose tries to save Pinkie. Responsibility bubbles in her soul and cannot allow Pinkie to be damned—to be damned alone—she would like to sacrifice her own salvation for his sake. She chooses damnation for his sake. This is ‘responsibility’ of the highest order. Like Unamuno she distinguishes between “doing evil” and “being evil”. Pinkie does evil; he is not evil. Pinkie feels like Sartre, a fatherless-motherless child—godless too; nobody’s, as though he was his own cause, an acme of pride and wretchedness; like an untamed Alsatian.

Though he was not properly married to Rose the sexual act awakens in him a sort of love. He is a murderer; a gangster; marries Rose as legal escape; also plans to kill Rose by driving towards the lonely cliff edge. But pursued by Ida and her policeman, the bottle of vitriol breaks splashing it on his face burning and blinding him, the fires (of hell) catch him. In unbearable agony, he leaps over the cliff reminding us of the Kierkegaardian ‘leap’. Did he fall or did he throw himself? Did he find God’s mercy between the stirrup and the ground”, his sin pardoned? A murderer, a criminal, planning even to murder his own wife, dying unconfessed, no one knows the “appalling strangeness of the mercy of God”. Though a Roman Catholic priest makes this commentary, it is not the usual, declared position of the Church. The Church
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is accustomed to distribute salvation and damnation, right and left as catego-
ical imperatives. 'Certainty' has marked its dealings while 'uncertainty'
marks Greene's thoughts. The seven parts of the novel invert salvation and
damnation. Rose is surely saved but sacrifices her salvation for saving Pinkie.
Her Catholicism is so large that she strives to grasp the nettle of damnation
for the sake of her 'love' and 'responsibility' for Pinkie. No one can know
the fate of Pinkie; but Greene paints the posthumous state of salvation as a
strong case of possibility.

The novel begins with the murder of and the physical death of Hale and
ends with the pregnancy of Rose and with the hope for Pinkie's child, a phys-
ic reality, theologically interpreted by the Catholic priest to be brought up
as a saint to pray for the salvation of its father: a whole army of future gen-
eration to pray for him. Ida is sterile not only in her apparently blossoming
and promiscuous body but in her ideology.

It is Rose who blossoms and through her, Pinkie. Rose is a compulsive
Catholic while Pinkie is an undeclared Catholic. The novel is bracketed
between death and life. It moves from death to life: the essence of Greene's
philosophy as well as theology. The Church stands by, commenting and
interpreting. The laity achieve salvation.

The murder by Pinkie causing the physical death of Hale results in the
spiritual death of Pinkie. Ending with the pregnancy of Rose by Pinkie
raising our hope in a whole army of future generations of births to pray for
the salvation of Pinkie. It starts in death and ends in life: certain death and
hope in life after death.

For Greene a civil marriage is not different from a Christian marriage.
Albert Camus, Graham Greene too was a communist for a short time and saw the dangers of a godless, political universe. Unlike Milan Kundera he doesn’t feel that the Church has plundered God from communism. He doesn’t ask the question that Kundera asks whether a believer in Jesus Christ and Christianity can advocate nationalisation of any profitable commercial enterprise in our society.

The Churches in Mexico are in ruin; some of them have been converted into government offices. Pieces of their stained glass windows decorate Mr. Tench’s dental care centre. The priests have disappeared; one has even married. The whisky priest is on the run, without his cassock, without his parish: no more daily masses for his parishioners. Sabbath has no special significance any more. Miss Coral Fellows has lost her faith in religion, probably because of the geo-political impact. She is contrasted with “a true young Mexican boy” Juan who receives the new nameless priest. Greene was commissioned to visit the Communist state, and report on the religious persecution there. *The Lawless Roads* was the report that shaped *The Power and the Glory*. San Luis Potosí, a little capitalist pocket in Socialist Mexico, controlled by the Indian General, Cedillo, who was “born a Catholic, but didn’t practise it; he was rumoured to have a pious sister.” He didn’t believe in religion but “the poor people want(ed) it” and he was “going to see that they get what they want”. Naturally a conflict between Catholicism and Communism started brewing.

Though *The Power and the Glory* dramatises the confrontation between Catholicism and Communism, Greene’s decisions against a godless universe are already made. The gun and the cross appear again and again and the
cross has to win, a kind of victory though the gun appears to do so. It is only rarely that a Lech Walesa appears whose communism as he claimed, was inspired by Virgin Mary through attendance at daily mass. The absurdity of the world is not a recent creation of the absurdist; it is at least as old as *The Ecclesiastes*, which has earned a place within *The Holy Bible*.

This absurdism, like other ideologies, also does not remain inherent in life; it is also our reaction to life around us. Graham Greene tries to pit Catholicism against Communism in both *The Power and the Glory* and *Monsignor Quixote*. The godless Mexican State becomes the stage on which this battle takes place. The battle becomes all the more poignant because the Church is represented by a ‘bad’ priest while the state is represented by a ‘good’ lieutenant. But Greene manages this duel so skilfully that the priest gains our sympathy without the lieutenant losing it. The conflict gains intellectual interest because Greene does justice to both their claims. This impartiality is not difficult to practice as their areas of interest are quite different: the soul and the state.

The Roman Catholic Church’s theological distinction between the minister and the ministry is something that is unofficially extended to other professionals also. The whisky priest is the spoilt minister; yet his ministry is none the less valid. This is the declared position of the Church; one can easily understand this position of the Church because without this the Church cannot survive even for a single day. It is doubtful whether a power-wielding, moneyled priest in a Catholic country could have caught our respect.

But what makes the priest admirable is that he has been severed completely from the hierarchic structure of the Church and he enjoys none of the
conveniences, luxuries or advantages of being a part of the Church. Greene is very seriously making this aspect of the priesthood of the whisky priest very clear. Greene very succinctly states that his bishop does not even know of his existence in the totalitarian state and any reader can easily visualise the difference in the levels of the lives of the priest and his bishop. The priest is dirty, tired, unwashed and even without his uniform. He seems to be enriched by the poverty of the circumstances in which Christ was born in his poor Holy Family which is rarely the condition of the Catholic priests all over the world. He recalls his comfortable days of the past in his parish and in his seminary. What makes him priestly is that he is totally unlike any other priest. This difference is accentuated by Greene from the very first line to the moment of his being shot. Greene paints him with absolutely nothing to resemble the other priests. In this the whisky priest differs from the Bishop of San Fernando, in the novel of that name by David McLaurin (published by Flemingo, 1995) and to some extent from Arthur Dimmesdale of *The Scarlet Letter* of Hawthorne. We can contrast him with the German novelist Thomas Mann’s incestuous Pope. The degradation and deprivation of the Church cannot be more subtly brought about by a novelist who happens to be not only a Catholic but also a compulsive friend of priests!

Church’s theology which demystifies the doings of God and pigeon-holes them in its dogmas is broken. From the opening chapter to the last chapter of the novel we see the mysterious unfolding of the Will of God in which the Church plays absolutely no part. It is from the liberation from the clutches of the church that priesthood of the nameless, unnamed priest attains its fulfilment.
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This is the salient feature of Greenean Catholicism delineated inside the novel: even outside the novel we have the unshakable evidence of the Church’s irrelevance to the author’s subjective religiosity which is really its catholicity: the banning of the novel at one moment; though better sense prevailed in the Church later, as usual. The unexpected approval for The Power and the Glory came from the Pope himself when it was no longer needed.

The words of the Pope are as mysterious as the other proclaimed mysteries of the Holy Roman Catholic Church. A ban is a more concrete action than the oral encouragement given to Greene by the Pope. The Pope didn’t take any action against the ban by the Cardinal; the Cardinal did not seem to have cared for the words of the Pope; he didn’t cancel or lift the ban. This is a clear evidence of the bureaucratic rationality of the institutionalized behaviour of the Church.

Greene speaks of God openly; and salvation leading to heaven. He needs no choice of a metaphor as Franz Kafka who chooses the metaphor of The Castle and the ruler, Count Westwest who represents God, the Father. Greene, though, does not contradict a psychological interpretation of The Power and the Glory the theological interpretation is self-contained and is open and continuously consistent. Like in the Pilgrim’s Progress the geographical landscape in Mexico gains a metaphorical, spiritual and theological significance but the story has all the facilities to force it on our imagination.

The whisky priest stands in contrast to Pietro Spina in Silone’s Bread and Wine. Silone puts his layman hero into disguise as a priest in contrast to Greene who puts his priestly hero into lay disguise to face the earthly powers that physically control them.
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The Power and the Glory,—the title coming from the Anglican prayer shows the "godless-state" of Mexico which Greene calls "a state of mind". God is negated by the communist state though a young German farmer believes like Shaw in "A Force", "A Principle". Greene asserts in The Lawless Roads that "Nobody can endure existence without a philosophy". Catholicism is one such philosophy upheld by so many saints produced by the Church "causing a religious revival". The people "lived under the shadow of religion—of God or the Devil" as against "the sinless graceless chromium world". In this world of Father Las Casas, Christianity was going on its own way along with "the rejection of God", creating "God-banished villages". Even in this land of religious persecution the Lutherans "burned the saints and statues". "There has always been hate, I suppose, in Mexico, but now it is the official teaching; it has superseded love in the school curriculum". "There was no excuse for the persecution in this state"; "Nothing in this tropical region can fill the place of a Church for the most mundane use; a Church is the one spot of coolness out of the vertical sun, a place to sit, a place where the senses can rest a little while from ugliness; it offers to the poor man what a rich man may get in a theatre". But the state became puritanical and godless:

At times in these Mexican Churches the separation of God and Man seems too complete; God, you may say, is on the altar—but in these Churches the sanctuary light is out. He is not there, for fear of desecration. What had, I suppose, been the presbytery was now the offices of the Third Military Sector; they hemmed
the little Church in like something dangerous.

The feeling was as in Galilee between the Crucifixion and the Resurrection.

The feeling of the Holy Saturday after the Good Friday and before the Easter Sunday.

Mr. Tench "used to pain" in his profession as a dentist and the sharks and the buzzards begin this four-part novel. The hero is "the whisky priest" with a concubine (Maria) and "a bastard child" (Brigida). The location is a "prohibition state". Greene juxtaposes the "small man" with the German Lutheran family of Mr. Lehr and the religious group at Oxford. The conflict is between the spirituality of the nameless priest and the materiality of the nameless lieutenant.

The sacked Church and the Red Shirts become symbols of this land. Miss Coral Fellows who "had passed third with honours into the second grade" raises doubts about "the Virgin Birth—and everything". "A true young Mexican boy" Juan, Padre José "the only married priest", and the mestizo who is a Judas figure, people this land. The Credo the Canon of the Mass, the Consecration of the Host, and the Consecration of the Wine—all these form the remnants of the demolished Church. "The whisky priest sat there like a black question mark" and "the lieutenant stood there like a little dark menacing question mark in the sun". They symbolized two differing ideas. Conception is the parish: This fact is of very great significance. The bishop is absent; he doesn't even know that the priest existed.

The Church is invisible in Mexico. So the virtue of obedience disappears:
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this is the most significant point about Graham Greene's Catholicism. “God” and “responsibility” are omnipresent in the novel. “Responsibility” is an existential virtue not tolerated by the Church. Freedom of the individual, and individualism are at a discount in the monopolistic Church. Donald Greene asks “In what sense can he (Graham Greene) be a Catholic?” The Church becomes not a mediator between God and man. He is a Catholic with a difference. Graham Greene resembles the sixteenth century Fenchmen “guilty” of ‘libertinage’ in the obsolete sense of the French word, meaning “freethinking in religious matters”.

The climax is the shooting down of the priest by the squad. But Greene as usual adds an anti-climax to his novel: the Church goes on for ever, even if priests come and go. When Lawrence Oliver’s version was released in Europe in 1967 as a commercial film this anti-climax—the arrival of the new priest—was omitted. But John Ford’s 1947 version of the same novel called The Fugitive showed at least the shadow of the new priest falling across the doorway which didn’t please Greene as he considered the dialogue between the new priest and the child as “important” to show the change of mind in the child toward the dead priest, whom he did not respect until his death and also to indicate that the Church goes on.

But the greatness of Greene is that he does not negate the continuity of the Communist ideology either. In some form the non-spiritual, socio-economic Communist ideology also survives like the Church that survives. Survivalism is not the monopoly alone of the Church. If Prometheus is immortal, Jupiter too is immortal! Even in the Bible and in Paradise Lost Satan and his hellish companions are all immortal.
In the Mexican land ruled by the Red Shirts, even the lieutenant walked like a "priest" infuriated by the Christians/Catholics who still believed in a "loving God".

The Power and the Glory of God are established only in the absence of the Church and its princes. It is also to be noted that Greene never presents the Church as achieving much in its normal, structured functioning.

What is important to note in this novel in that for all practical purposes there is no bishop or archbishop or even a parish-house/Church. The whisky priest is autonomous, immoral, intemperate but Godly. He tries to follow the Roman rites for he is accustomed to them from his seminary days. But every rite in this godless state is improvised by him: he impresses us as a 'saint' but he is not 'sainted' by the official 'saint-maker', saint-manufacturer, the Roman Church. Even the priest's auto-confession in the end is more 'psychological' than theological, reminding us of the earlier non-Catholic's confession in The Human Factor trying "the secrets of the confessional" just "to talk" but the priest rightly sends him to a doctor. The Church under persecution is more divine than otherwise. Even John Locke (1632-1704), the English philosopher, had advised the English Government to abstain from interfering in matters of religion and to extend toleration to all forms of opinion, save Roman Catholicism and Atheism, both of which he considered inimical to civil society. One feels like repeating the query in A Burnt-out Case: "why did he give (them) genitals then if he wanted (them) to think clearly? A doctor doesn't prescribe marijuana for clear thought".

Like Father Leon Rivaz, the whisky priest also has made a "long journey ... since he left the seminary which indoctrinated him with the rigid dog-
mas of the institutionalised Church. But the journey of each of these priests is in a different direction; one’s towards revolution and the other’s towards submission. But both have given up reading the breviary.

The priest, in his own small way, is going through the Dark Night of the Soul. He is, unlike Querry in *A Burnt-out Case*, not a ‘saint with a Past’ but a saint with a future. The whisky priest has not come to an end. His place also is not “the end”. There is a way out for him; actually he reaches safety, he crosses the communist state; but returns because of his vocation. He thinks he is “farther off from heaven”. This shows his sense of ‘responsibility’ and commitment. His life is not more important than his vocation. His vocation is to minister to the souls that need his ministry. What happens to him is not important.

Like Dr. Czenner in *Stamboul Train*, the lieutenant is not merely an officer, not to mention his family, he is “a Socialist” and the priest is not merely a man with an illegal family but he is “a Churchman” “A movement could not be judged by the dishonesty of its officers”. Unlike Mr. Opie who is a priest “not of the Roman persuasion”. Like Mr. Opie’s, Greene’s fiction is “a spiritual anthology for the lay mind, something to take the place in the English Church of the Roman books of contemplation ………because “the Roman books are ………too exclusively religious”. Greene used the words “responsibility”, “crisis” and “man’s need” metaphorically and not theologically. Greene records unusually that even Shakespeare “was born, of course, a Roman Catholic.”

What they both are “fighting for is not new territory but a new world.” The Priest wants a spiritual paradise while the Lieutenant wants an earthly
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paradise. The priest and the Church can leave salvation to the mercy of God but like Doctor Plarr whose life is a busy life trying to cure the sick and could “not leave that to God” the lieutenant also cannot leave his job of economic reforms and removal of suffering to God.

One of the things they both don’t agree about is “suffering”:

“We'll see they don’t suffer”.

“But if they want to suffer . . . .

“A man may want to rape a woman. Are we to allow it because he wants to?”

“Suffering is wrong.”

“And you suffer all the time” the priest commented.

. . . .

. . . .

“We agree about a lot of things”, the priest said, . . . .

“the world’s unhappy whether you are rich or poor—unless you are a saint, and there aren’t many of those”.

More of ‘suffering’ is from Greene in A Burnt-out Case in which we have one saying:

‘I suffer from nothing. I no longer know what suffering is. I have come to the end of all that too!’

‘Too!’

‘Like all the rest. To the end of everything.’

The Superior turned away from him without curiosity. He said, ‘Oh, well, you know suffering is something which will always be provided when it is
required.” “With suffering we become part of the Christian myth”. Once baptized one is always a Christian forever. He is “an Architect of Souls. The Hermit of Mexico.”

His too solid flesh is surely melting. Like the dare devil Parkinson he is “damned afraid of death.”

Only “mutilation was the alternative to pain. It was the palsied with their stiffened fingers and strangled nerves who suffered—suffered almost beyond bearing. (You heard them sometimes crying in the night), but the suffering was in some sort a protection against mutilation. Querry did not suffer in A Burnt-out Case but the priest suffers. Therefore he is not mutilated but martyred. Like Congo, Mexico is also a “a region of the mind”, which is a battlefield where materialism and religion battle forever.

Because “in our way of life, it is better for us not to have heroes—not live heroes, that is. The saints should be enough for us”. This is to suggest that there cannot be “live saints.” But the Church has to recognise them first. But the whisky priest is not recognised by the Church. The Church is not even aware of his existence, leave alone his martyrdom. He is far different from Father Callifer in The Potting Shed, who does his job:

“I say mass, I hear confessions, if anyone has a stomach ache in the night,” he goes to him. But unlike the whisky priest who doesn’t believe a word he is saying at the altar, he finds his priesthood too heavy on him. The people, expecting too much from him— they want him to be “priest” and not a “man”. They want a play-actor:

They want snow-white hair, high collars, clean vestments (who
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pays the cleaner? not their six pences), and they want a voice that’s never husky with the boredom of saying the same words day after day.

He hates being called ‘Father’.

A father belongs to his children until they grow up and he’s free of them. But these people will never grow up. They die children and leave children behind them. I’m condemned to being a father for life.

I abide by the rules. It’s the least I can do.

He is like Unamuno’s ‘Martir’, an unbelieving priest, and blames God for having taken away his faith while he served him well. He wonders how he could have a “dark night” of the soul “for thirty years”. Like Scobie praying to God to take away his “peace” but offers it to others Callifer prays:

Let him live, God. I love him. Let him live. I will give you anything, if you will let him live ....... Take away what I love most. Take away my faith, but let him live.

God answered his prayer: “He took my offer” as he took Scobic’s offer! There are people who “don’t want eternity”.

Greene supplies documentary evidence: In July, 1926, Father Miguel Pro landed at Veracruz. He was twenty-five years old and a Jesuit. He came back to his own country from a foreign seminary much as Campion returned to England from Douai. Within two months of Pro’s landing, President Calles had begun the fiercest persecution of religion anywhere since the reign of
Elizabeth. Pro was hunted but he escaped the plain-clothes police again and again, but like the whisky priest he was caught and executed: cards with Father Pro’s photograph were sold and then these cards were banned! Because “he is beatified already by popular election” which the Church will never approve without a Devil’s Advocate. But Greene ends his novel without waiting for the verdict of the Church! In this country “faith came to one-shapelessly, without dogma” but “associated with violence, cruelty, evil across the way. One began to believe in heaven because one believed in hell.” “The Anglican Church could not supply the same intimate symbols for heaven, only a big brass eagle, an organ voluntary”. “The Mother of God took the place of the brass eagle”. Faith triumphed over guns. “Mexico remained Catholic; it was only the governing class—politicians and pistoleros—which was anti-Catholic. It was a war—they admitted it—for the soul of the Indian ...... the pressure from the Catholic population was beginning to make itself felt. Churches—now Government property—were allowed to open”. “God was there” and intervened before the novel ended: there was the new priest—again nameless—establishing the Church, perpetual.

The climactic scene in *The Power and the Glory* is the ideological confrontation between the Lieutenant and the whisky priest; in essence it is the Catholic manifesto clashing with the Communist manifesto. All the earlier events in the novel are leading only towards this confrontation. The scene is highly dramatic in that Greene’s personality does not interfere in the clash; he is a passionate but objective observer of the two involved in the arguments. The Lieutenant is honest in confessing that he doesn’t hate the priest but it is his *idea* that he is against. Since he could not kill the *idea* he kills the
person. "We agree about a lot of things", says the priest to the lieutenant. The attitude is reciprocal: the priest also doesn't hate the lieutenant though he is all the time working against him and escaping from him.

Like James, the crippled priest in *The Living Room*, the whisky priest has to justify the underlying religious premises of the novel. Though James fails Rose as a priest in her moment of crisis and feels the guilt and remorse psychologically; similarly it is "the working of the man's mind" in the whisky priest that holds our attention, not so much the theology or the dogma of his Church. Like the plays of Graham Greene his novels are all written within the framework and premise of Catholic belief but not within the dogmatics of the Church. Michael Dennis, like Scobie, is a different character to explain: with sexual relationship with girls much younger than themselves, they are both sincere and pitiable and are not at all lacking in integrity. Both, have "reached the careful age". The whisky priest had "but one virginity to lose" and he lost it but once but it was destroyed forever! As one can take the dogma from the Church, it is possible to take one's "psychology out of library books. It's a battlefield" and "His is a victory, but there's no such thing as a decisive victory." Greene plays a passionate, just, impartial but interested writer of the clash between the priest and the lieutenant: Anti-Catholicism often goes with a curious uncritical superstition. Even Trotsky is not neglected by him: "The two waxwork hands in a glass were compared, the worn worker's and the sleek priest's, but which could Trotsky's have resembled most?" he asks in *The Lawless Roads*. "The only body in the world today which consistently—and sometimes successfully—opposes the totalitarian state is the Catholic Church." "The God-banished village in Mexico"
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is characterised by “complete irresponsibility”, “lawless roads, the reversed signpost, and the desert pressing in.” “The screw was turning”. “Motion is life, and life is motion”. Revolution does not come only through blood-shed; “revolution” can come also in the form of the “Sermon on the Mount”. “Catholicism, one felt, had to rediscover the technique of revolution”. Even if there was no God, surely life was happier with the enormous supernatural promise than with the petty social fulfilment, the tiny pension and the machine-made furniture”. “Life itself” is mortification enough”. Therefore one need not “complain of the wealth and beauty of a Church in a poor land. For the sake of another peso a week, it is hardly worth depriving the poor of such rest and quiet as they can find in the Cathedral here. I have never heard people complain of the super-cinemas—that the money should be spent in relief—and yet there’s no democracy in a cinema: you pay more and you get more, but in a Church the democracy is absolute. The rich man and the poor man kneel side by side for communion; the rich man must wait his turn at the confessional”. This is Greene’s defence that does maximum damages to the Church in its claim of revealed status! Church defended socially, politically and psychologically and not theologically! A defence more dangerous than an open attack.

Religion, for the modern thinkers, is only a ‘superstructure’: Though religions preach democratic ideals, they practice only priestocracy. The result, religions split like political parties, each group making monopolistic claims to eternal truths.

Even as early as The Comedians Martha talks of her father as “A pious Lutheran” believing in “the God of the Reformation”. Most of the tricky
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points of the Church's theology: celibacy and chastity come under attack in *The Power and the Glory*: till Luther's arrival on the scene the Church harping on the celibacy of Jesus Christ and after the arrival of Luther calling them non-essentials. But this claim is only a rationalisation of the worn out basis of the Western Christianity that there is but a single way of ideal living to achieve harmony. But Graham Greene enthrones his personal concept through visualizing the values of pluralism which is unacceptable to the Church for its survival.

But he continues to be a priest: "One never retires from a vocation" and priesthood is a vocation for him. We have seen his actions, and like Querry's actions they speak for themselves. But one has to "look for motives" like Father Thomas. Though sometimes a "layman has more capacity for understanding than a priest. Sometimes, more faith, "Querry's absurd" "laughter" followed by "or else" as an "alternative, philosophical or psychological" first before his death takes us a little away from theology. And at the same time a little closer to Hemingway's "psychological" definition of sin in his last novel *Garden of Eden* where he says that "sin is what you feel bad afterwards" and "virtue" is "what you feel good afterwards" which the Church theologians will never concede.

Sin is what the Church calls 'sin': sins are catalogued as venial sins and cardinal sins: the Church has no doubts; doesn't recognize the dangerous edges.

The new priest arrives at the end of *The Power and the Glory*: Though the whisky priest is shot dead like Father Torres referred to in *The Honorary Consul* who was shot with the guerrillas in Columbia. But unlike Sodom the
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Church did sometimes produce one just man, so perhaps she would not be destroyed like Sodom.

The Church's capitalistic sympathies are not hidden. Milan Kundera says that the Church doesn't care for the physical welfare. The communist hero is worried about the distribution of wealth while the Church distributes only communion. The Landlord is repeatedly excused by the Church at the confessional to repeat the exploitation of his serfs with added vigour and a clear conscience. The Church has always been very critical about sexual immorality but never so about social, economic injustices. Even Marcel holds the same view: the Church and its adherents have never been disturbed by exploitation and injustice. It is only because the criers for justice are always godless; the Church never cries for justice and god is robbed from the cries for justice that communism and Catholicism have been segregated by impenetrable walls. The priest never has a word for justice among his flock; the lieutenant has not a single word for god or religion. The sickle and the cross are both symbols of PROTEST and this insight is gained with full clarity in the fourth novel of Greene's tetralogy.

But before that the trilogy has to be exhausted. The third in the tetralogy opens up the heart of the matter. Scobie is a mature hero who is a Catholic and Greene uses him once again to puncture the waterproof Catholic filter.

The priest is shot dead; every faith demands its sacrifice; his life has reached the finality and is ready for our ideological post-mortem. Like Dante he "did not die, yet nothing of life remained." He died for a cause and therefore he has not died. He died for a deathless cause and therefore he is deathless. In the words of the Church he has attained immortality, a metaphysical
immortality following his physical mortality. Christianity's central message is that of resurrection, life after death and eternity. Christian Church and theologians have all been presenting this immortality as a Christian value, like Shelley assuming immortality for his Christ-figure, Prometheus while also affirming the immortality of his Satanic-god, Jupiter who can only be chained but not killed. Even in Christian theology immortality could not be withdrawn from Lucifer or Satan.

The secondary climax in *The Power and the Glory* is the conciliatory dialogue between the whisky priest and the German household of Mr. and Ms. Lehr. This dialogue is conciliatory because it does not bring about any conciliation between the two Churches—the Roman and the Lutheran. The breaking of the monolithic Roman Church in the 15th century was visibly on theological, dogmatic and ritualistic grounds; but if seen clearly it was on materialistic grounds that the split was founded. Tetzel's money making was the immediate cause that vertically split the universal Christian Church into two. The fourth novel in our tetralogy gives us a re-enactment of the Tetzel-scene when the economically poor, dollar-less Virgin Mary is decorated with currencies on which more is to be written about a little later. The Mexicans "even think they can buy our Lady".

Most of the prickly points in the Church's theology: like celibacy and chastity come into attack in *The Power and the Glory*: till Luther's arrival on the scene the Church was harping on the celibacy of Jesus Christ and after the arrival of Luther, the Church evaded the issue and by-passed it calling them non-essentials. But this claim is only a rationalization of the worn out basis of the Western Christianity that there is but a single way of ideal
living to achieve harmony. But Greene enrones the lyrical concept though visualizing the values of pluralism which is unacceptable to the Church for its survival.

What Mr. Lehr calls “non-essentials” were really considered very essential by both the Churches during and following the Reformation. Greene honestly leaves the issues unsolved without taking sides with his own Church thus establishing his independence from the dogmatic stance of his Church. But a humanistic condition of friendly co-existence of a Catholic and a pair of Lutherans is achieved. This is Greene’s way of demolishing the monopolistic claims of the Roman Church.

This attitude of Greene to his Church gets reinforced by the circumstances in which the priest functions to bring out the power and the glory of God which are so different from those amidst which the other priests perform their religious duties. The poverty and slovenliness characterising the whisky priest are not voluntary but are imposed by the brutal Mexican communist government. These conditions are no doubt primarily responsible for making the priest a loveable character, which are totally different from the normal conditions in which the Roman prelates usually perform. The whisky priest has lost all the non-spiritual aristocratic way of life of the Roman priests, under communist persecution.

Another aspect that needs attention is that like Pinkie, the whisky priest has fallen into sex with Maria but once and like the African spider has never had a second experience, which cannot be said of many, a Churchman.

Neither Communism or Catholicism is presented by Greene as inevitable but as a contingency and nowhere does he claim that they are mutually exclu-
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sive: he doesn't claim that the aims of the communist state are condemnable or that the Church has taken care of the needs which communism tries its best to achieve. They can be mutually complementary. He has more to say on this in Monsignor Quixote.

On these two counts Greene leaves his Church undefended: the controlling of the exploitative landlord and the salvation of the Lutherans and Luther.

Now is the time for us to bring to our mind the catchword of Sartrean existentialism, namely, “responsibility”. Leopoldo Duran, the Jesuit priest hounding Greene through his last years mourns the death of Greene saying

the hand that wrote the name of God thousands of times finally lay still and lifeless.

But it is worth noting and remembering that the only other word that Greene wrote with equal frequency is responsibility. As far as our tetralogy is concerned it is omnipresent in all the four novels with equal intention and significance.

In Greene the positives always come to light only though their negatives: “the wafer” that the evil baker so eagerly wants to possess must be more than a “wafer”; otherwise why should he crave it so much. That craving gives us The Hint of an Explanation that trans-substantiation is a reality. In the same way Greene capitalises on SIN in all his writings. Its opposite is not sinlessness or virtue but responsibility. The first novel to make a profuse use of this term is Brighton Rock. This has not been noticed by many of Greene’s critics. The word reappears in The Power and the Glory with equal frequency. The frequency increases, even its significance increases
This brings to our mind Greene’s “unquestionable faith”. He had told Leopold Duran that each day he found he had less belief but more faith. By belief he meant the kind of faith that is based on reason, or better still, on the reasons that support one’s faith—in other words, to use the language of theology, faith assisted by “motivation for creditability”. His short story, A Visit to Morin deals directly with this matter of faith and belief. Charles Moeller, the Belgian scholar, has called Graham Greene “the martyr of hope”. Leopoldo Duran thinks it better to call him a “martyr of faith”. Graham Greene had great affection for the Virgin Mother Mary. He could not understand why the Protestants had attacked her. He had always wanted to see an image of her dressed in actual period clothing. Pinkie hears very often at crucial moments and in street corners “Hail Mary, full of grace...”. The broken rosary plays its detective role in The Heart of the Matter. But all this not as mere repetitions: but as a result of responsible meditation and not also because the church proposes it. “We need a mother”, he would say. The scientific studies of the Turin shroud without a navel was a passionate proof of his virgin birth, for Greene.

Scobie is a sinner; but unlike The Honorary Consul he is not “an uxorious man”; but he is highly responsible, if anything. This sense of responsibility makes him a Christian existentialist. He assumes responsibility for the young widow and suffers for it. The number of times Greene uses this word in his novels makes us think: but the number of times he uses the word in The Heart of the Matter makes us think more. It is his responsibility for the young widow that forces him into all the troubles because he is not able to shirk his
responsibility towards his Catholic wife. His walking into the debt-trap and his receiving the holy communion in a state of mortal sin both are caused by this same sense of responsibility. When once Father Martindale wanted him to go to confession. Graham Greene gave his reasons for not going but Leopoldo Duran says that Graham Greene was more regularly receiving the sacraments during the last ten years of his life. Only his ultimate sense of responsibility finds its expression in his tactful suicide to hoodwink the insurance company. (?)

R. W. B. Lewis notices the total inability of Pinkie and Scobie to smile, much less to laugh. Though the priest also never laughs “the comic consciousness” of The Power and the Glory cannot be lost sight of: the lieutenant hears “laughter all the time” in his dream after the execution of the priest and R. W. B. Lewis links this laughter with that recorded by Dante on the upper slopes of purgatory, the chorus celebrating the release of a captive human soul from punishment and its entrance into paradise.

The whisky priest like the priests in Brighton Rock and The Heart of the Matter declares

I don’t know a thing about the mercy of God to the lieutenant. The Yankee Killer James Calver’s name “echoes two syllables of the mount on which Christ was crucified” and his earlier mule-ride all make him participate in the resurrection of Christ which is physically re-enacted in the short epilogue where the new priest arrives to the welcome of the boy Juan in whose consciousness his mother has montaged the parallel of a saint’s life. Our priest’s picture is also inked around with a halo-like circle
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for identification. This story fits in with Greene’s popular thinking that the progress of a sinner is a journey of sinning towards sainthood.

The next novel *The Heart of the Matter* is a story in three parts.

“It’s a wonderful excuse being a Catholic” which doesn’t stop the English police officer Scobie from sleeping with Helen but which only stops him from marrying her. Like Aristides the Just, Major Scobie, an honest police officer in a war-torn West African state, is a neophyte like his creator who “became a Catholic to marry” his wife. He is accused of not having “much faith” and that it didn’t “mean a thing” to him. Life for him was an immeasurably long “test of man” “The Cockroach Championship” and the “rules” of the cockroach game invented by him and in which he wins *D. D.* (which stands for “down the drain”) that ridicules the “Doctor of Divinity” offered by the Vatican to its theologians, bishops and archbishops and cardinals! Even his priestly friend Leopoldo Duran who was a Vincentian turned secular priest records that “Graham thought he rather tended to flirt with religion.” The Roman Church never tolerates such a tendency.

Pemberton’s ‘suicide’ intervenes. Father Clay is approached. Pemberton was not a Catholic. If a Catholic did it “it would be despair” but he didn’t know a thing about the Church’s teaching. “It puts a man outside mercy”. For Scobie “this was an act he could never do”. Suicide was for ever outside his power—he couldn’t condemn himself for eternity—no cause was important enough.”

The priests told us that it was the unforgivable sin. The Everlasting had fixed his canon against it. Even “Christ had killed himself”. Even “missing mass on Sundays is a mortal sin, just as much as adultery”. “Catholics are
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dammed by their knowledge”.

Father Rank tells Scobie,—Graham Greene tells his readers—that there is nothing automatic in the confessional or in the absolution. If depends on one’s state of mind whether one is forgiven. One must know the wrong one has done and must have a real purpose of amendment. The uncontrite cannot be forgiven. It is better to sin seventy times and repent each time than sin once and never repent.

He is taken to mass by his wife. He thought of the Black Mass of consecrating the Host over the naked body of a woman with a perverse devotion to God’s enemy. He received the communion in a state of mortal sin and was aware of the papery taste of eternal sentence on his tongue.

Father Brûle’s ingenuity was needed to explain how a child was allowed by God to survive for forty days and nights in the open boat. It was difficult to reconcile that with the love of God. “It was like the hint of an explanation”.

Mrs. Helen Rolt was carried into his life on a stretcher. A “particular turn of the screw” (155) sworn to preserve Louise’s happiness, he was now accepting “another and contradictory responsibility”. No one can love God at the expense of one of his creatures.

He prays to God to “punish” him but to “let the others get some happiness”. Greene explores “the territory of despair” being “the responsible man”. But he has “a mistress hidden away in a Nissen hut”; and that mistress hates his Catholicism because he cannot “bear to see suffering”, “It’s so bogus” but he “causes it all the time”. ‘It’ is “suffering”. He has “lost the trick of trust”.

Wilson spies on him but Scobie is sure ‘the things he finds out are so
unimportant’ because his secrets are internal. Yusef wants Scobie’s boy to come to the wharf at night. A broken rosary is used as the token. Ali was found murdered.

Part Three with three chapters is the shortest of the three parts of the novel. It is a post-mortem of Scobie’s Catholicism: love was his “favorite lie”, “going to communion the way he did” in a state of mortal sin “but” in spite of everything; he was a Catholic”. Membership of the Church is like citizenship: bad citizen belongs, good stranger doesn’t belong.

Father Rank concludes this spiritual post-mortem: “A priest only knows the unimportant things” “the inessentials”, Graham Greene knows the ‘important things’. These important things make up the novel. “God’s mercy” is understandable. “The Church knows all the rules. But it doesn’t know what goes on in a single human heart”. Father Rank certifies “that he really loved God” Scobie starts planning: he, like Pinkie, seems to be doing everything; but who is doing what he appears to do? He records his sleeplessness in his diary: he takes Evipan: what is the “fatal dose” leading to suicide while of sound mind. His action is suffering and suffering, action. His is a case of suicide: ‘suicide’ after the Second Vatican Council. In his Age of Reason chapter XIV, Camus, after Novalis, calls ‘suicide’ “the only truly philosophical gesture,” “though he rejects it as unbecoming of a manly man”. The heart of the matter is that the readers are convinced that Scobie’s was not “The Death of the Heart’ by Elizabeth Bowen’s.

And this concludes the trilogy of Graham Greene.

But Scobie is not the first Greenean suicide. He is not even the only one to commit suicide in the novel. In the Comedians “Marcel was hanging from
his own belt” and Doctor Philipot Tchekov quotes: “Suicide is an undesirable phenomenon”, to convey the idea that “However great a man’s fear of life, suicide remains the courageous act, the clear-headed act of a mathematician. The suicide as judged by the laws of chance—so many odds against one that to live will be more miserable than to die. His sense of mathematics is greater than his sense of survival. “Brown is a Catholic” says Greene but he also says that he “though his name is Brown, is not Greene”. Brown himself says that he is “not a practising Catholic”. But The Comedians was written before the Second Vatican Council documents influenced Greene’s thinking. Like Doctor Philipot, Scobie also “thought that suicide was safer” for his family. Suicide “isn’t abnormal. It belongs to human life. Suicide results from fear of Cruelty” which is like a search-light. It sweeps from one spot to another. We only escape it for a time”.

Bendrix in The End of the Affair found it impossible to understand how people could swallow “The enormous improbability of personal god”. Sarah was not a Catholic but she goes to Churches and enjoys the benefits of a confession. Even christening can be a mere “social convention”. Greene recognises even “the baptism of desire” which Sarah gets. Father Cromptons, one of the Redemptorists, probably who served up hall on Sundays in the dark Church where Sarah was seen last. Like Sarah one could be a “Catholic” though “she didn’t know it herself.” The cross performs the “magic”, “the resurrection of the body,” the “Holy Catholic Church”, and “the communion of Saints”. The Roman “Church offers privileges” as well as “responsibilities” and special Masses for the dead.

Vincent Van Gogh says he felt “a terrible need of” ‘religion’; then he used
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to go out at night to paint the stars. S. T. Coleridge says “man may perhaps
determine what is a heresy; but God only can know who is a heretic” in
his *Biographia Literaria*. In his *Age of Reason* Chapter XIV Camus, after
Novalis, says that the only truly philosophical gesture, is ‘suicide’. “It’s
a wonderful excuse being a Catholic”; “the gravest form of despair” said
Kierkegaard, “is not to be desperate,” but “to be aware of one’s despair”.
Sackville-West Edward in *The Problem of Despair* is critical of the final
chapter of *The Heart of the Matter*. Camus though calls ‘suicide’ a “truly
philosophical gesture” rejects it as unbecoming of man. The Church has not
only rejected it but also condemned it as a Sin against the Creator. Some
are “greedy for death”; they have the death-wish: and commit suicide. It
was only the Second Vatican Council that lifted the age-long condemnation
of ‘suicide’ by the Church: as not totally a ‘human act’ but at least as a
partial expression of the all embracing Will of God.

*The Heart of Matter* is a post-Second Vatican Council novel. Scobie, the
Just is the total embodiment of the existential man trapped in the Roman
Church. Like Graham Greene “just became a Catholic to marry” Louise and
that it did not “mean a thing to him”.

Father Rank appears in Part One. He concludes the novel in Part Three
with the cryptic remark that “The Church knows all the rules. But it doesn’t
know what goes on in a single human heart.”

Well, the Church does not know what goes on in the human heart. But
God and Greene both as creators, know what exactly passes in the human
heart.

Dying unconfessed in a state of mortal sin, is Scobie saved or damned?
In Graham Greene the opposite of sin is not virtue, but responsibility: the value word in all the novels forming the Greenean tetralogy.

Scobie cannot leave Louise because he is a Catholic; but that doesn't prevent him from sleeping with Helen Rolt. Tempted by Yusuf, Scobie is exercised in his Catholic mind. ‘Suicide’ is projected before him by Pemberton and his heart is subdued by this idea. “It is better to sin seventy times and repent each time than sin once and never repent.” He is “the responsible man.” He cannot bear to see suffering, but causes it all the time. He prays for damnation which he thinks is deserved by him. Scobie is ‘a just man’; he cannot desire salvation unjustly. He is “not pleading for mercy”. He wants not only Helen and Louise to be “safe” from him; he wants even God to be “safe” from him.

Can one love two women? What was his feeling towards Helen and Louise? What was his feeling towards God?

“Dear God, I love ……” the verb stands intransitively. The great ‘love’ that Christ preached—all embracing ‘love’. Scobie is or is not a Catholic: but definitely he is a Christian. Scobie’s was not the death of the heart as in Elizabeth Bowen’s novel of that name. “He certainly loved no one else.” Like Father Rank in the last line of the novel Scobie leaps over the Church towards his salvation.

Like Father Rank, in the last line of the novel, Scobie also leaps over the Church towards his salvation. For Father Rank, a Roman Catholic priest, bound by his oaths, this is very unusual and revolutionary. But for Greene and his characters, this to very usual and ordinary. For Greene, often chooses to speak through his characters.
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Mr. Scobie is an inspector, working for the Government. His problems, all spiritual were all originating from his job: proving that Christ’s Gospel can be applied only to completely spiritual and abstract problems: they are irrelevant, if only, but even harmful where, earthly problems are concerned. Father Rank, a Churchman can only comment; but what can a government employee do with the message of Christ and non-killing!!

Loving and forgiving are absolutely impossible in human institutions.

The reverse of Sarah’s prayer in The End of the Affair: “When I ask you for pain, you give me peace. Give it him too. Give him my peace—he needs it more.”

“We don’t know what love is . . . . There are men who talk about love to prostitutes.” The “stories about the king who lived in a city a hundred miles away—about the distance of the furthest star” in A Burnt-Out Case reminds us that even Pinkie could have felt love for Rose! When one loved one’s work, he loves the king, when one makes love to a woman, he was at least imitating in a faulty way the king’s love for his people. The king after all had so loved the world that he had sent a bull and a shower of gold and a son . . . .”

What is “Klistian love”? Can we have “Klistian anger”? In A Burnt-out Case Greene asks

Do you think you are the only Klistians—you who come to Church?

There is a doctor . . . . he prays to Nzambe and he makes bad medicine. He worships a false God, but once when a piccin was ill
and his father and mother were in the hospital he took no money; he gave bad medicine but he took no money: he made a big God palaver with Nzambe for the piccin but took no money. I tell you then he was a Klistian, a better klistian than . . . . He did not believe in Yesu, but he a Klistian."

Doctor Colin’s words can be the words of Greene.

“People do get caught up by love . . . . Sooner or later.” ‘Love’ for Greene in *The Honorary Counsul* is a “stupid banal word”. It’s never meant anything (to him) . . . . like the word ‘God’. He even descends to the level of making Doctor Plarr say “I know how to fuck—I don’t know how to love,” This to a large extent applies to Scobie’s love for Helen and Louise.

Graham Greene’s distaste for the word goes to the extent of declaring that “one merit of a brothel is that the word love is seldom if ever employed; Sénora Sanchez, Greene says “runs the only good brothel.” In *The Honorary Consul* Greene says that “the word love has such a slick sound.” “Love was a total risk. Literature had always so proclaimed it. Tristan, Anna Karenina, even the lust of Lovelace.” He even suggests even “to rewrite the Bible”: “Pity your neighbour as you pity yourself.” He attacks “love” saying “A big bank balance helps real love to last longer.”

Earlier in *A Burnt-Out Case* Greene says that the “love” one feels and the “mercy” one shows must be repeated and “mercy” must be shown “a second time and a third time” and similarly “love a second and a third girl”. Colin is a “crypto-Christian.” Scobie loves Louise and Helen as Fitzpiers loves Marty South and Grace in Hardy’s *The Woodlanders*. “Love is a western
word” and one uses it “for sentimental reasons or to cover up an obsession with one woman.” Strange argument in *The Quiet American*! “Love was not gratitude, love was not this dependence of the brain, this thought-reading, this inconvenience of shared pain, ……love was fun, love was good time, loved was Annette, was Mabel.”

“One can’t love humanity. One can only love people.” Can loving take one to hell? His pity is cruel. Pity destroys. Love isn’t safe when pity’s prowling around. “He wasn’t interested in saving his own soul.” Digby in *The Ministry of Fear* conveys to us “the conception of Hell presented by sympathetic theologians—a place without inhabitants which existed simply as a warning.”

He received communion in a state of mortal sin. Personally he has no hope. “No hope at all.” He suffers because of pity: “Pity is a terrible thing. People talk about the passion of love. Pity is the worst passion of all: we don’t outlive it like sex.”

Though *The Heart of the Matter* is apparently the most traditional of Greene’s novels in both ‘content and construction’ and looks like a typical nineteenth century novel, but in effect it is a ‘theodicaea’ reconciling the sufferings of Scobie ‘the just’. He sins like a Catholic; his sin-consciousness is his Catholic consciousness; his “unshriven death” though not unexpected or sudden, provokes a theological question.

Added to all this is the suicidal angle to his death.

“Oh that this too too solid flesh.” …………..*Shakespeare.*

In which context it is worth remembering that the novel on Scobie was
written after the Second Vatican Council’s declaration that suicide is not totally an act of man and that it is not irredeemable.

Father John Burke, the technical adviser to the film version of The Heart of the Matter (1953) shows Scobie’s death not as suicide but as a death on duty while breaking up a street brawl. This change was made by film producers that Catholics will take exception to a Roman Catholic committing suicide in spite of the clarification offered by Second Vatican Council Declarations. This is not a very flattering commentary on the speculative capacities of the Catholic population, which is more reticent than even the dogmatic Church. Adds some glory to the speculative and progressive thinking of Graham Greene in spite of his being a neo-convert.

Scobie’s is a kind of Shakespearean tragedy and is the result of Scobie’s tragic flaw which is ‘pity’ which R. W. B. Lewis explains as an inability to watch pain in others, mental or physical and take the responsibility of relieving that pain. This human characteristic has been analysed by Greene in The Ministry of Fear “the entertaining trial run for The Heart of the Matter in which Arthur Rowe’s troubles begin when he performs a ‘pity-killing’ Greene’s term for mercy killing This ‘pity’ is different from the other ‘pity’ referred to by Aristotle. ‘Tragic pity’ relates us to the human sufferer while ‘tragic terror’ springs from our awareness of the cause of suffering which any human being can share. In The Heart of the Matter the cause is the action of God.

The Heart of the Matter as a phrase takes us to the philosophical root of any problem. The phrase occurs first in A Burnt-Out Case, and Scobie resembles Querry who claims he is not a Catholic, “not even a Christian”
who “won’t be adopted by the Church”. “Can one pity even the planets”,
asks Scobie and prays for a small girl soon after asking God to take his peace
but to give her peace.

Take away my peace forever, but give her peace.

God does exactly that. His prayer is heard. The child gets the peace of
death, and Scobie loses it forever. Helen Rolt enters his heart. In a letter to
the French Christian existentialist Marcel Moré, Greene makes it clear that
Scobie’s prayer was heard.

Scobie’s wife Louise lost faith in the word “love” and calls it Scobie’s
“favourite lie”. He loved his servant Ali whose death was his responsibility.
“I loved him” he says after he stumbled on his dead body. He felt “love for
both” his wife Louise and Helen. He felt “I am the responsible man.” “I have
committed adultery ‘many times’ he tells Father Rank at the confessional but
is “uncontrite” and without “a real purpose of amendment”. “It’s better to
sin seventy times and repent each time than sin once and never repent.” He
left the box to explore “the territory of despair”. At the Mass when the Kyrie
Eleison was reached he again tried to pray. ‘Lord have mercy …… Christ
have mercy.’

“Was it even love” that he felt for others “or was it just a feeling of pity
and responsibility”. He is not able “to go up to the Nissen hut and say
good-bye.”

He dies with the words “Dear God, I love…” without an object! But “in
spite of everything, he was a Catholic.” It is like citizenship: a bad citizen
belongs, a good non-citizen doesn’t belong.
Chapter 2. Brewing Discontent

He was a bad Catholic. "He must have known" as a Catholic, "that he was damning himself."

The great question is enlarged on the last page: Was Scobie damned or saved? Nobody knows a thing about God's mercy. The Church knows all the rules. But it doesn't know what goes on in a single human heart. Here Elizabeth Bowen's title The Death of the Heart stares us on our face. The heart in Scobie did not die. What had been born was a husband's death. But

Oh, why. Why, did he have to make such a mess of things?

But Father Rank leaps over the dogmas of his Church and says "that he really loved God." Louise agrees: "He certainly loved no one else". Once again a priest concludes the novel. Once again Greene confers salvation on Scobie leaping over the dogmas of the Church.

The real question at the end of The Heart of the Matter is the salvation of Scobie. Like the martyrdom of the whisky priest or the leap of Pinkie Brown, Scobie's salvation too raises another more fundamental question what is the use of the Church's rules and dogmas if salvation can be won in violation of these? That is where Greene says that there is only one sin and that it is spitting on God and all other sins are forgivable. Only that is the sin against the Holy Spirit. Those sins declared as sins by the Church and the dogmatic prescriptions of that Church for absolution of those sins are all given a go-by by Greene. In effect, Greene's novels paint life in all its complexity and bring out the ending of life bringing out the result of his speculation that hell cannot exist. The Church declares that hell exists and sees no contradiction
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with a merciful God. But one unique feature of Greene’s religious speculation is that no man can end up in hell while purgatory may be there. Purgatory is a temporary hell. All his novels are human spiritual comedies, there are no desperate tragedies. Scobie goes to heaven; the whisky priest becomes a saint; Pinkie is sure to be saved; the Monsignor is not only saved; he is also a saviour; he “saves” a communist.

What started as an intellectual curiosity and a simple act of convenience in a simple love affair continues as an inner dialogue and a persistent analysis and conflict takes the shape of brewing discontent. The trilogy is full of undisguised exposure of the weaknesses of the Roman Catholic Church. It is not the Church that saves man, priest or lay; it is the man, the individual who saves the Church. This exposure is done so openly and so continuously that this trilogy cannot be called Catholic; it earns the title of being ‘anti-Catholic’ however much the Church’s diplomacy may camouflage their intents. But Greene’s intentions are not destructive or negative; they are not aimed at attacking the Church: they are aimed at clarifying to himself and to other co-Catholics. Church is not the structured steel-frame: it is made up of the souls that seek salvation. Greene shows in these novels that salvation is available outside the Church: even when one goes against its rules.

With this novel the original trilogy of Greene is completed revealing the discontent of Greene with the dogma-ridden Roman Catholic Church. The trilogy grows into a tetralogy with the fourth novel, after a significant gap in his creative output, Monsignor Quixote in which the growing discontent matures into a protest.