Arriving at Protest

Now, the fourth novel of the tetralogy: the autumnal masterpiece of Graham Greene—the climax of his creative achievements: Monsignor Quixote in Two Parts.

Having completed an aerial reconnaissance of the Greenean religious attitudes, conveniently lying scattered along his major and minor works, we are now at a vantage position to assess Greene’s mature attitude towards the Roman Catholic Church. And as the Mayor puts it in Monsignor Quixote, he, like his Catholic-Protestant priest, the Monsignor Quixote, had “more belief in Catholicism than in Rome”.

In this context it is just proper for us to begin with a quotation from the Acts of the Apostles:

It was in Antioch that the disciples first got the name of Christians.

“Christians” here stands for the followers of Christ. There was nothing to
distinguish them except their allegiance to Jesus Christ, through the practice of his teachings. Theirs was Christianity un-limited. It was as wide as wide can be and unqualified by any adjective.

There were three languages sacred for them: the Hebrew, Greek and Latin; but in practice Latin alone was accepted as the language of all high knowledge. About this Geoffrey Shepherd, Professor of English Medieval Language and Literature, University of Birmingham in his writing entitled *The English Versions of the Scriptures Before Wyclif* in the Cambridge History of the Bible Vol. 2, Cambridge University Press, 1969 states that “Culture and learning for the Anglo-Saxon meant Roman culture”; and the Anglo-Saxons were not alone in their opinion. When St. Paul was arrested he took refuge under his Roman citizenship. The title ‘Roman’ meant political authority and earthly power and smacked of maximum arrogance. That is how the adjective ‘Roman’ gathered attraction and pomp and luxury. St. Paul’s “essentials” spelt out in the ‘Acts’ got crippled by rituals and rules and gave place to ‘Roman Christianity’. And Graham Greene in his works generally and in the tetrology in particular, tries to go back to the Pauline Christianity and resurrect that truly Catholic Christianity, liberated from the clutches of the rituals, theology and rules of the ‘Roman’ ‘Catholic’ Church. He was like his Professor Pilbeam “a Catholic” but “a rather a nominal one.” He wasn’t “bothered to change the label.” And of course being a Catholic helped him in his “speculations” — it opened doors that would otherwise be closed upon him. For this reason Greene’s works appeal to even non-Catholic readers as much as they appeal to the liberal minded Catholics remaining technically within the fold of the Roman Catholic Church. In all his writings he tries
to leap over the dead rules and the vulgar rituals of the Church. In this he is not merely an "unconscious Protestant" but becomes even a "conscious" Protestant, although an undeclared one. This spirit of the intentional but unannounced protestantism flows through all his literary and non-literary works. Jose Miguel Ibanez Langlois in an article in 'Atlantida' says that the novels show the Protestant streak Greene had inherited. His usual tendency is to strip all the decorative, superficial and the officialesce and glorify the bare "essentials" of St. Paul. He wishes 'to lay no further burden upon (us) beyond these essentials" as St. Paul says in the 'Acts'.

Graham was a "convert"; long before him there was another convert, St. Paul. But the disciples "did not believe that he was really a convert." If one compares the circumstances under which these two conversions were effected one can easily assess the mentality of Greene. In Monsignor Quizote he feels sad that "he could never communicate with Father Herrera on anything which touched the religion they were supposed to share" but it was easy to communicate with the Communist Mayor with whom he shared only "a sense of doubt" and not a faith. They exchanged Father Jone and "Father Lenin": "A true Communist is a sort of priest". Both agreed that one cannot "live in a wholly rational world". "What a dull world that would be!" "Complete belief" is unlivable with: "In the Prophet Marx." Or in anybody else. One hasn't to think for oneself any more. There's only one thing you will ever lack — "the dignity of despair." The muffled voice of uncertainty whispering in the ears of the believer. Who knows? Without this uncertainty how could one live?

*A Burnt-Out Case* (1961) and the short story that he wrote a little ear-
Chapter 3. Arriving at Protest

lier A Visit to Morin exhibit a crisis in Greene's own faith. They reveal a distrust in theology. Querry, once a Catholic loses both his belief and faith, both in God and in man and enters a remote African leper colony which marks the ending end of his journey and life. Rycker, a frustrated and failed priest suspects him of having seduced his wife and shoots him dead in a rage mistaking his laughter. Dr. Colin, an atheist is actually 'religious' in his concern for man. And Querry dies laughing, saying "Absurd ...... this is absurd or else ......"

Querry parodies Descartes "I feel discomfort, therefore I am alive", comes to live among pigmoids in a leproserie run in the heart of Africa. He can't feel at all and he is a leper." He has read a great deal on the subject of love, love of God. Agape not Eros." He is mistaken for "an intellectual Catholic", noetic in his faith.

When R. W. P. Lewis published The Picaresque Saint in 1956 he could talk of only the Greenean 'Trilogy' dealt with in the earlier Chapter. With the publication of one more directly catholic novel Monsignor Quixote in 1982, the 'Trilogy' grew into a 'Tetralogy'. This novel does not only add one more story to Greene's creations—it actually tells no story—but marks a major shift in Greene's attitude to Catholicism. The note of DISCONTENT brewing over a long period, through many of his novels, stories and plays takes a turn for the worse: the mood of Greene turns almost violent and bursts into a bold, loud and demonstrated PROTEST. The protest is so loud and so ideologically rooted that it sounds reformatory and Lutheran. What strikes a Greenean reader most is the inexplicable silence of the Churchmen over the tilting of our Lady's currency-clad statue. Those who could ban
Chapter 3. Arriving at Protest

The Power and the Glory at least locally, keep quiet at the 'quixotic' tilting at holy statues. The cross—a symbol of salvation—here becomes a sign of PROTEST. The first three novels in the tetralogy show that one can be saved by God even if the Church's rules condemn him. The fourth novel goes to prove that on crucial occasions true Catholic faith needs to fight the corruption in the Church like tilting Our Lady's statue. It also requires to share the Christianity of the Communist by sharing the communion with him. This gesture, of course, is reciprocated by the Communist Mayor.

In the Introduction, this thesis contested the statement that “all speculation had ended” for Greene; we also saw how, on the contrary, after his conversion, “speculation” had ‘started’ for Greene in all seriousness. In Monsignor Quixote this “speculation” reaches its highest practical limits and reaches the level of a, so called, “imprudent speculation" with the Bishop of Motopo, on the embryonic soul of animals or a mosquito. The speculative dialogues in the novel start with the Bishop and proceed with the Mayor in and outside “my Rocinante”. But the most significant facts are that “the Mayor of El Toboso suffered an unexpected defeat” in the local elections and Father Quixote is “being driven away by the bishop”: both have fallen out of their institutionalized structures because of their strong individualistic tendencies.

Here also the central event is the encounter between a Communist and a Catholic as in The Power and the Glory but now on more conciliatory terms. Captain Concasseur in The Comedians starts the discussion with Brown which reaches its logical conclusion in Monsignor Quixote (1982).

A capitalist will always be loyal if he is allowed a cut of twenty-
five per cent!
A little humanity is necessary too.
You speak like a Catholic.
Yes. Perhaps. A Catholic who has lost his faith. But isn’t there
a danger that your capitalists may lose their faith too?
They lose their lives but never their faith. Their money is their
faith. They guard it to the end and leave it to their children.

*Monsignor Quixote* resembles *Doctor Fisher of Geneva or The Bomb
Party* in its spare style; but it differs from it in content. Most part of
*Monsignor Quixote* is taken up by the dialogue —reminding us of Plato’s
*Dialogues* in its seriousness—between the Monsignor and the Mayor, the
Catholic and the Communist. The duo are caught carrying “a small green
volume marked *Moral Theology* and a book with “red covers” with the
author’s name “marked in heavy type: LENIN.” The Guardia mistake the
Mayor for a priest and mistake the Monsignor as the owner of the book writ­
ten by Lenin. They comment that the two “keep strange company”. And
“perhaps a true Communist is a sort of priest”: Like “Father Jone”, “Father
Lenin”. The whole argument is inspired by Miguel de Unamuno, the Catholic
philosopher who is strongly believed to have influenced St. Ignatius Loyola.
Unamuno opposed tyranny during the Spanish Civil War and in him politics
and religion joined and and he “compared Saint Ignatius to Don Quixote.”
He felt “they had a lot in common.”

Graham Greene is exploring the relationship between religious belief and
political commitment on a deeper level in this novel than in all his earlier
novels. The Communist ex-mayor of El Toboso whose name is Zancas which
is Sancho Panza's surname in Cervantes's novel and the Monsignor Quixote became 'compañeros' (comrade) on the road. Their debates remind one of similar exchanges on the way to Emmaus, putting "our hearts on fire".

The debates take place mostly in the Monsignor's 'little Seat 600' in its "early middle age, without air-conditioning" which he called affectionately "my Rocinante".

The Mayor wishes to liberate himself from the clutches of Marxism; and the two are brought together not by "sharing a faith" but by "sharing a sense of doubt" produces only "the chill of despair" in which "everyone is certain that the same belief is true." "No ambiguity, no room for doubt and no room for faith at all." The Monsignor whispers "God save me from such a belief," adding "Save him (the Mayor) too from belief."

Like the disciples with Christ on the road to Emmaus here too 'doubt' sets in. Monsignor attacks the mayor for his 'complete belief' which is free from the uncertainties of Anaxagoras: "I am not even certain that I'm certain of nothing." Uncertainties lend one "the dignity of despair".

Father Quixote attempts to liberate himself from the dogmatism of the Church; the Bishop and Father Herrera work against this attempt. They are the religious counterparts of the 'Guardias' who hinder the relationship between the Monsignor and the Mayor.

The Monsignor says:

there are moments ...... when I am inclined to address you as 'compañero', but not yet, not yet.

Graham Greene had read and reread Miguel de Unamuno's Life of Don
Chapter 3. Arriving at Protest

*Quixote and Sancho* who believed in his own pet theory that Cervantes had derived his inspiration from St. Ignatius of Loyola when he created the character of the Knight Quixote. Greene thought that the idealistic attitude to life is shared by both soldier heroes. After all he had created a guerrilla priest, Father Rivaz in *The Honorary Consul*. Greene wanted Monsignor Quixote to be a book about doubt, not certainty. It was to be an autobiography of some sort like *The Mill on the Floss* of George Eliot or *David Copperfield* of Dickens.

Father Quixote tells his Sancho that he too has his doubts like any other mortal. And Sancho is bemused: he had sought the priest’s company because he thought that in his company all doubt would be removed.

Father Leopoldo Duran continues that in *The Other Man* Greene immortalised that casual remark when he confessed to Marie-Francoise Allain, “I am inclined to find superstition or magic more ‘rational’ than abstract religious ideas such as the Holy Trinity.”

But simple, elemental manifestations of Faith are more convincing as when one replies “I do not believe in God, I touch him.” The trouble is there are some like Graham Greene ‘who don’t believe their unbelief’. This results in “the willing suspension of disbelief” in a totally non-literary context but not less serious than that visualised by Coleridge. The faith and effect of faith are as simple as the love that gushes out of the Ancient Mariner.

Pinkie drives an old Morris; Monsignor Quixote rides an ageing Seat 600 but calls it Rocinante for egotistical reasons. Don Quixote’s own horse was
Chapter 3. Arriving at Protest

called Rocinante. His friend, the ex-mayor of El Toboso Zancas which is Sancho Panza’s surname in Cervantes’s Truthful History.

Monsignor Quixote is an elderly parish priest of El Toboso which is the native village of Don Quixote in the plains of La Mancha, was made a Monsignor by recommendations of an archbishop and by “the official indiscrimination of the Pope” or “by some oversight of the Holy Father”. His Monsignorship was recommended in return for “a jerry can of petrol” for the Bishop’s Mercedes. Having been suspended from duty by the bishop, Monsignor Quixote and Sancho, the mayor drive in Rocinante to Madrid and Salamanca. On the way a running or driving dialogue aims at mutual conversion—the Monsignor trying to convert the communist Mayor and the mayor trying to convert the Monsignor to Marx. Most of the debates in the novel take place in a car and on the Spanish roads. These drives resemble the ones Greene had with Father Leopoldo Duran through Spain and Portugal in 1970s. When Monsignor Quixote was filmed Greene made four trips to Spain. And Father Leopoldo says that Spain “affected his entire life”, but much more, the last part of his life and the final book of his life. Above all it affected his whole view of life, of faith and of Christianity and also of Communism. The former mayor of El Toboso, a communist is modelled on Enrique Tierno Galván, the mayor of Madrid who had “made a big impression on Greene during his official visit in July, 1980.

The novel ends more or less like The Power and the Glory where the lieutenant and the priest end up as inimical friends; but here the ending is bolder and the cross and the gun of The Power and the Glory are replaced by the hammer and sickle while the cross remains the same in Monsignor
Chapter 3. Arriving at Protest

Quixote and "They are both" called “protests against injustice” and “behind humanism there’s always the shadow of religion—the religion of Christ as well as the religion of Marx.” Monsignor Quixote even repeats openly the words he used to Doctor Galván—"Bugger the bishop." The bishop represents the unredeemed Church. Father Leopoldo Duran records that Graham Greene found “no reason why a communist should renounce his Catholic faith and that communism was one thing and Marxism another.”

They debate and discuss not to “disagree” but to reconcile two irreconcilable approaches to life: Catholicism and Marxism. Greene has been, if for a moment, anti-Communist in his views once in The Quiet American but even there he eschewed the possibility of any Third Force playing a crucial role in “the final battle between the Kremlin and the Vatican. The two will end up as Communism and Christianity, merging into a grand humanism. This is what Greene means when in Monsignor Quixote he details the journey of the Mayor and Father Quixote and the dream of a deepening friendship and a profounder understanding of a reconciliation even between their disparate faiths. After all “Marx and Lenin” may prove as infallible as “Matthew and Mark”. His Catholic novels though constitute a “prolegomenon”, as a sustained essay on the Christian doctrines, it is Monsignor Quixote that climaxes his Catholic concerns. After all it is quite usual for Greene to compare these two ideologies. Even in The Quiet American Greene presents a sympathetic view of Ho Chi Minh of Vietnam. Rocinante swerves through the roads carrying its double load of the Monsignor who steers the debate when it nearly bumps into a herd of sheep: And this sparks off a discussion of the sheep as “stupid beasts” and why Christ compared them with the
Chapter 3. Arriving at Protest

Catholics. Like other good men was he also “a cynic”? Why did he prefer sheep to goats? These questions have never been answered by any of the old theologians.

Then they plan to have a good lunch at Botin’s, an expensive restaurant, which is famous for its sucking pigs. Pigs remind them of the “fable” or “parable” of the Prodigal Son. The duo start to have a new look at the “pretty fable of the Prodigal Son.” The Mayor misses the word “parable” and uses the word “fable” instead while the Monsignor casually reminds him of the biblical term. the household of the Prodigal Son is characterized as a “very bourgeois household, a father and two sons” in which “one might describe the father as a rich Russian Kulak who regards his peasants as so many souls whom he owns.” The Prodigal Son himself “who by some beneficent trick of heredity” might have “grown up against all odds with a hatred of inherited wealth.” The Mayor goes to the extent of hinting that “perhaps Christ had Job in his mind”, the Job who “was obscenely rich.” The son might have felt “stifled by his bourgeois surroundings” “a sad contrast with the poverty he sees around him.” The stage of capitalism is a necessary step to arrive at the possibility of developing a revolutionary proletariat. He has to escape and therefore he demands his share and leaves home and might have even given it away “in a Tolstoyan gesture” to become a peasant. In the absence of a philosophical support from Das Kapital which “had not yet been written” “he was unable to situate himself in the class struggle.”

The poor boy “wavered for a time” but “the same oppressive atmosphere of bourgeois materialism” and “the servility of the servants and the luxury of the food” make him yearn for “the hard earth of his hut and the farm.”
Chapter 3. Arriving at Protest

"After all, three thousand camels might well be enough to revolt a sensitive man." He remembered the old, bearded peasant at the pig farm having told him:

every state in which private ownership of the land and means of production exists, in which capital dominates, however democratic it may claim to be, is a capitalist state, a machine invented and used by the capitalists to keep the working class under subjection.

This is virtually "quoting Lenin himself." "The first idea of the class struggle is being lodged by that old peasant (... with a beard and whiskers like Karl Marx) in the mind of the Prodigal Son." There is a new dawn in his life which makes him go back to the pig farm and the old bearded peasant "determined now to play his part in the proletarian struggle": The old peasant sees him coming from a distance and running up, he throws his arms around his neck and kisses him, and the Prodigal Son says, 'Father, I have sinned, I am not worthy to be called your son'. " The ending is the familiar biblical one but the conclusion is not the familiar one. The Mayor adds that "atheist propaganda in certain circumstances may be both unnecessary and harmful." We are here reminded of Milan Kundera's accusation that it is the religions, which robbed Communism of its God. The party, says the Mayor, was not against temporarily accepting "a priest" or taking "advantage of bourgeois comfort so long as it lasts."

But capitalism and Communism and Catholicism soon give place to certain other topics in their discussion: these discussions are not only
Chapter 3. Arriving at Protest

to be enjoyed, even their conclusions are not likely to be enjoyed by the theologians of the Church. Heribert Jone’s Moral Theology offers only the skeleton but the flesh and blood that cover the skeleton are something not in the Church’s taste. Though Greene has always been against the capitalistic tendencies of the Church, the “protest” against such tendencies takes its final shape only in Monsignor Quixote.

The Monsignor and the Mayor staying or rather “hiding in a brothel”—which the Monsignor euphemistically calls a “dirty Chapel” because it offered them protection — the priest blows up “a sausage-shaped balloon” without knowing that it is a contraceptive. A Monsignor in a brothel—what would the bishop say if he knew? But Christ mixed with the publicans and sinners. But a priest in a brothel—“a monastery has the same advantage for us as a brothel … There are no forms to fill up.” Both the monastery and the brothel serve as a defence against worse evils. But a priest in a brothel, blowing a contraceptive, Father Heribert Jone would say “onanism added to fornication.” “To kill a human soul … while indulging in abortion and during coitus interruptus if the human sperm has a soul.” But even “when a man makes love he kills a million spermatozoa—minus one!” Restraining one’s sexual appetite may be called “natural means” but that is not the way desire works: mating with a woman in “safety” is a form of masturbation. The same unnaturalness and therefore sinfulness infects coitus interruptus even if it is caused by “the arrival of a third person” against what the German Heribert Jone states in the Spanish version of his Moral Theology because one can hire a butler and train him to open the door when one feels unable to contain oneself much longer and withdraws at once from the body of one’s
Chapter 3. Arriving at Protest

wife. His book is only like a book of military regulations but "moral theology is not the Church".

Graham Greene's parallel concerns with the human interest evinced by Communism through its social rather than misleading spiritual concerns, concentrate on the Roman Church's selective financial blind spots. While it has been simultaneously zealous about building its financial foundations world wide, it has been unconcerned about the economic cries of its own laity. Quebec, in an otherwise Protestant Canada, is a very good illustration of this fate of the Catholic population. Greene powerfully points out that while the Church has been crying aloud for the spiritual welfare of the sheep, it has not been paying even lip service to the economic welfare of its laity. Even its newly evolved liberation theology has not liberated the laity for its economic needs. The Church has miserably lagged behind the economic and social evolutions while shedding tears over the spiritual lapses of the community overmuch. It has always embraced the capitalist landlord whose yoke it was preaching the poor farmer not only to bear but also even to enjoy in the hope of unlimited and uninterrupted and unending joy after death, in the next world. It was heartless in punishing the heretics as long as the civilian governments permitted it to punish them, while it was not only sugar-coating but sugar-coring its attitude to the capitalistic landlords. In an attempt to ventilate this awareness of his, Greene always confronts the red Communist with the yellow papist. Even as Communism has been de-spiritualising and materialising social life, the Church was offending in the reverse direction by demystifying and de-materialising religion sacrificing the physical and economic welfare of the laity and the laity only, exclusively; re-
sulting in the Capitalists winning this world and the blessings of the Church. Rousseau was against emptying existence of all spirituality; but the Church emptied life of all its materiality, but this it did only for the laity and not for the priests and the aristocracy. It could theologise the cruelties under feudalism because feudalism was anti-poor; it could sacralize even slavery, because both feudalism and slavery were anti-poor. It could not tolerate Communism because for once the victims were the aristocrats, the traditional victimisers. Even Milan Kundera, like Greene, studies Communism and Catholicism as one pitted against the other; but Milan Kundera analyses them in philosophical terms but Greene does it in theological terms: but both arrive at the same conclusion that there is capitalistic economics and communistic economics but never and nowhere has there been a Christian economics. Similarly Christian politics are also unheard of, there is only a politics for the entire human community. Nationalisation of profit making Industrial financial houses has never been advocated by the Church. Even its liberation theologians never cross the Churchian threshold of economics.

Even in the non-political, non-economic areas of Christian life Greene is careful to reduce the effects of the preoccupations of the Church: like obligatory (compulsory) attendance at masses, traditional-confessions, etc., play very little role in the lives of his Catholic characters: sometimes they play negligible, negative roles as in *The Heart of the Matter*; sometimes they are absurdized by Greene like the smelling confession at the foul commode as in *Monsignor Quixote*.

"A small, lean man in a black suit and black tie which matched the (brief) case he carried" whom the Mayor mistook for "a secret policeman" who led
Chapter 3. Arriving at Protest

the Monsignor into a lavatory; he was really the parish undertaker. Sitting on a closed lavatory seat he heard the man’s confession and was shown a pair of brass-handles he had removed from the coffin of Father Gonzalz, his parish priest. The parish had paid for the funeral and the man had also contributed his share to the parish fund. Like all other undertakers, he too had removed the handles from the coffin to use them again. Though it was a common practice among the undertakers this man took it too scrupulously and felt guilty. He thought, he was, in a way, stealing from himself! Father Quixote, like the man at the confessional, also had felt guilty without knowing why. “He envied the certitude of those who were able to lay down clear rules—Father Heribert Jone, his bishop, even the Pope. Himself, he lived in a mist, unable to see a path, stumbling. Father Quixote simply was practising (his) profession.” This smelling confession, parodic of the serious version of the Church, exposes the absurd certitude of the moral theologians. “If Father Heribert Jone had written that it was a mortal sin to eat tomatoes”! “A rule would have been broken but nothing more. Can it be called SIN or NIS as in Edgar Allen Poe’s “The Valley of NIS”! (NIS is SIN spelt backwards). Most of the Church’s prohibitions are like prohibiting the eating of tomatoes; they are born of complete faith” which certainly destroys “the dignity of despair”. Such a faith cannot exist, if it were such it cannot be called faith. That is why the Monsignor is making the strange prayer to God: “O God, make me human, let me feel temptation. Save me from my indifference.”

This prayer, as typical Greenean prayers, is immediately heard by God. The Guardia confront Father Quixote with a question about the bank, robber whom he had allowed to hide in the boot of his car because men should not
be executioners or interrogators of others. Only god can do that. The Good Samaritan didn’t hold an enquiry into the wounded man’s past—the man who had fallen among thieves—before he helped him. Perhaps he was a social thief as a publican and the thieves were only taking back what he had taken from them” or others.

Even about hell, heaven and purgatory the Monsignor is not able to agree with the Church. Greene's “speculation” is not only not simply over, but is very active in interrogating the existence of hell. He is bold enough to say: “I believe from obedience but not with the heart”. He goes to the Bible and NOT to the Churchmen or the Roman Catholic theologians: He thinks that “the Gospel of Saint Matthew could be distinguished from the others as the Gospel of Fear,” which refers to Hell fifteen times. God need not govern by fear—because his kingdom is for ever—surely. He can leave that to Stalin or Hitler, whose reign is only for a few years. Stalin (and the camps) or Lenin, were they necessarily right? A loving God, as the old books say and hell, how can one reconcile the two. Once Theresa talked about the heat of her stove and the Monsignor reread all the Gospels. Saint Matthew mentions hell fifteen times, in fifty two pages of his copy but Saint John not even once, Saint Mark twice in thirty-two pages, and Saint Luke three times in fifty-two pages. Even Milton fumbles through hell both as a metaphorical and a spatial reality. Is Hell, just Godlessness or Absence of God? But there is a dialogue between god and a soul in Hell recorded in the Bible. About purgatory ... we have already seen the Church has been reflecting sentimental opinions which have inspired the imaginations of poets like Dante in The Divine Comedy and Edgar Allen Poe in Al Aaraaf who
Chapter 3. Arriving at Protest

believes in a Hell where souls suffer no punishments, but yet do not find that peace and happiness which is the quality of heaven.

"The small green book" by Father Heribert Jone and the red colour Communist Manifesto get deeply analysed elaborately by the pair of ideologists in Rocinante. Both enter a cinema theatre showing the film. A Maiden’s Prayer marked with a warning “S”, the maiden’s prayer being a prayer for a very handsome young man whose sexual encounters with a series of young girls ended in monotony and repetitions in bed. One could not be sure whether they were enjoying or suffering their encounters. Father Quixote realised his inability to feel sexual desires and human love making it impossible for him to feel the love for God. He prayed: “O God, make me human, let me feel temptation. Save me from indifference.” He, who could not tolerate the neutrality of Pontius Pilate whose evil consisted is not choosing between good and evil. If one wants to convert the world or reform it, one should first know it: Father Quixote did not know even a contraceptive! Father Quixote laughs rarely, a quality noted in Jesus Christ in all the four gospels.

Toward the second half of Monsignor Quixote Father Quixote “trying and failing to pray” lands “on the threshold of Nothing” where other existential heroes usually loiter. Even “logical thought” is no defence against this experience of Nothingness: a popular saint in La Mancha lost her virginity, raped by an unarmed Moor when she herself was armed with a kitchen knife in her hand thinking that her virginity was less important then the salvation of her enemy.

Both the Monsignor and the Mayor allow God to decide and plan and put God in the driver's seat. Who drives? Has god passed his driving test? Once
again, and for the last time, we find Greene indulging in an aesthetic, as
distinct from theological proof of God as he did in The Power and the Glory.
Greene's focus on the soul in The Heart of the Matter and Brighton Rock
reveal his artistic maturity. Like Christ he repeats “Let thy will be done”.

But in Monsignor Quixote, more than his artistic and aesthetic maturity
we find his humanistic and philosophical maturity. It shows man following
the “Centrifugal power of his soul” in an irresistible and unavoidable effort to
liberate himself from the “Centripetal power of the Church”, without losing
God. Yes, without losing God; it needs and bears reiteration. One can
simultaneously get liberated from the clutches of the Church and still remain
in the clutches of God.

Bold enough to announce his vocation of priesthood as a “profession”.
Sancho teasing him as “the Monsignor” of the sorrowful countenance” in
remembrance of ‘Our Lady of Sorrows’, and Monsignor having been never
“heard ... laugh before” except during his one night’s brothel-stay, all these
set the Monsignor apart as an unusual priest. Like Jesus Christ, the Mon­
signor had “never been troubled with sexual desires”, “even in dreams” that
he has to pray to God to “make him human” and “feel temptation” and to
save him from indifference and sinful neutrality.

He is able to talk casually of Sainte Therése with her “sentimental nick-
name of the Little Flower” and call her ‘Martin’ and he would even sometimes
address her in his prayers as Señorita Martin” using her family name. She
was a Maiden different from the heroine of the ‘S’-marked film, and did NOT
pray for finding a handsome young man to love. She always prayed only to
the Shelleyan “young man”. The Monsignor who was “incapable of feeling
human love” feared “he must also be incapable of feeling love for God”.

Sancho and Quixote even start discussing family planning methods, like ‘Coitus interruptus’ and baptizing “breech births”. Even drinking wine is evaluated from the Biblical point of view. The Monsignor excavates support from Saint Paul’s letter to Timothy: “Do not confine thyself to water any longer: take a little wine to relieve thy stomach.” Even the old saying of “Prophet Marx”, “Religion is the opium of the people” is said to be taken out of context as the heretics “have twisted the words” of Jesus Christ. When Marx wrote it in the nineteenth century ‘opium’, was “not an evil drug”—laudanum was a tranquilliser for the well-to-do, one which the poor could not afford. Religion was the valium of the poor—that was all he meant.” While the Mayor calls the idea of Trinity one of the “many incompatible ideas” the Monsignor tries to explain it with two full bottles of wine as representing God the Father and God the son and another half bottle of same wine as representing the Holy spirit, but soon after offering this explanation he feels he had “sinned” and therefore unworthy to be a priest because “under the influence of wine he had minimized the importance of the Holy Ghost by comparing it to a half bottle of Manchegan”.

But all these mental conflicts of the Monsignor with his Church represented by Father Herrara and the local bishop come into the foreground during his encounter with the bishop. He is accused of making friends with “a Communist” who is worse than “a tax gatherer”; Saint Matthew, chosen by Our Lord was a tax gatherer. He is also accused of drinking a great deal of wine, which should be better limited to the Mass. The bishop prefers the pure water of Jordan which the Monsignor calls “not so pure” scientifically
because Naaman, the Syrian and after him many a Jewish leper had washed and left their leprosy in the river. And Saint Paul allows wine.

The Bishop then accuses him of having seen "a scandalous film", of course, deceived by the innocent title *A Maiden's Prayer*. The Bishop is totally incapable of understanding the maturity of the Monsignor's spirituality, which steers clear of the dogmatic rigidity of the Church's pronouncements like sentimentalizing a young virgin-saint like Sainte Therése. Our Monsignor calls her "the Norman girl" whom he had the guts to address in his prayers as Señorita Martin, as a maiden who "who prays for priests". It is this 'Maiden's Prayer' that makes him enter the theatre to see the film with its misleading title. There the Maiden prays for a sexual companion. Señorita Martin's prayers were different: she will pray even for a Communist who is also a priest, in some ways, with a vocation of his own. The Monsignor is not like Saint Augustine who wrote, of sex "from experience and not from theory." The Guardia Civil would have put him in the dock for helping a bank robber and a murderer. The Monsignor is quick to retort that it was not a bank that he robbed but a self-service store and that he was not a murderer because he missed his aim. The bishop gets angry because the Monsignor often injects deliberate trivialities into what is generally a serious discussion. The Monsignor calls a lie "a little equivocation" and pleads a "broad mental restriction" following Father Heribert Jone. The bishop's ignorance of the very existence of a moral theologian like Father Heribert Jone and his book on moral theology doesn't speak highly of his vocational fitness and the composition of the Roman Catholic Church to which he belongs. Monsignor Quixote is like a " tiresome reformist" unsettling the Communist
Chapter 3. Arriving at Protest

Party. Greene views the Monsignor as a “tiresome reformist” unsettling the Roman Church.

Father Quixote reads Father Caussade’s ‘Spiritual Letters’ and ‘The Communist Manifesto’ of Marx. And when the bishop exhibits abysmal ignorance confronting the Monsignor with the statement that he is in “a dangerous situation” he retorts quickly that “all of us” are in “a dangerous situation” if only we begin to “think”, and that during this holiday trip with the Mayor he “felt a freedom” which the bishop is quick to characterize as a “very dangerous freedom” as A. J. Cronin views “individuality” as the cause for the rise of Protestantism. But the Monsignor glorifies that freedom as the greatest gift from Lord Jesus to mankind for which the enemies of Freedom crucified him.

The resultant situation is highly revealing: The Bishop and Father Herrera say that the Monsignor is “mad” like his ancestor Don Quixote and he should be shut in a madhouse to save the honour of the Church, “to guard the dignity of the Church” and that is what they almost do: “A key turned in the lock” and the Monsignor was “a prisoner,” he thought, like Cervantes. “Hypocrisy in a Bishop is almost necessary and would be considered by Father Heribert Jone a very venial sin.”

And then begins the Monsignor’s second journey with his Companero, who breaks the lock and Teresa sends a young fellow to keep Father Herrera busy with a long confession. He picks up a letter from the Bishop without even reading it. Speaking of ‘belief’ he becomes aware of a shadow of ‘disbelief’ haunting his ‘belief’. This time also they don’t make plans and leave God to make the plans for them both. The little boy at the garage comes
Chapter 3. Arriving at Protest

running to Monsignor to confess his confession because he feels he made “a mock of the confessional” with Father Herrera on instructions from Theresa to delay his return.

They turn “left” on the road and in their theology. The Monsignor is riddled by doubts

I am sure of nothing, not even of the existence of God, but doubt is not treachery as (you) Communists seem to think, doubt is human.

And then he reads the bishop’s letter announcing ‘suspensión a divinis’ to the Monsignor which comes like a ‘sentence of death’, viz. that he “mustn’t say the mass—not in public not even in private”, “must hear no confessions.” Unable to live this sort of life in El Toboso he decides to go to the Trappist Monastery in Galicia to stay for a week or two.

Greene even takes the chance to distinguish between different schools of communists as he distinguishes between the Jesuits and the Trappists.

I am not a Stalinist, but at least you know where you are with them. They are not Jesuits. They don’t turn with the wind. If they are cruel, they are cruel also to themselves. When you come to the end of the longest road of all you have to lie down and take a rest—a rest from arguments and theories and fashions. You can say, ‘I don’t believe but I accept,’ and you fall into silence like the Trappists do. The Trappists are the Stalinists of the Church.

This is in the third chapter of Part Two. In Chapter IV of the same part Prof. Pilbeam tells the Mayor:
Chapter 3. Arriving at Protest

Father Leopoldo is a little absurd about Descartes. I suppose in that silence, which they all have to keep here, strange ideas get nourished like mushrooms in a dark cellar.

Then he exploits the Mexican factor in Spain: The Mexicans corrupt the local Catholic priests by giving them money; “the priests have grown greedy for more—they prey on the poor and they prey on the superstition of the rich. They are worse than the Mexicans. Perhaps some of the Mexicans really believe they can buy their way into Heaven. But whose fault is that? Their priests know better and they sell Our Lady. You should see the feast they are celebrating in a town near here today. The priest puts Our Lady up to auction. The four Mexicans who pay the most will carry her in the procession.” “But this is unbelievable”, Father Quixote exclaimed. “Go and see for yourself.” Father Quixote takes it as his “duty” and goes “into battle.” He feels the need for his armour and helmet.

When he went there the procession had not started. Last year there were only four bearers. The priest has made the stand bigger this year, so that there will be six. Next year there will be eight.

The pre-Reformation scene is recreated. The Mexican recreates the Tetzel factor; and the Monsignor plays the Luther. The mayor compares him to “a tiresome reformist” in the Party. Though this can be considered a valid criticism of the Church not condemned by Popery, no Cardinal or priest can write like this under imprimatur. The Roman Catholics have a tendency to play down such factors because the Church takes all steps direct and indirect to suppress such publications. So far there is no history to prove that Church or the Churchmen have ever written about such practices in their Church or
have taken any action on such practitioners. Luther has been condemned and excommunicated; but till today Tetzel has not even been condemned.

He promises to the mayor not a city or governorship but offers him a kingdom. Here in this novel the climax comes slowly but surely and the Monsignor makes his ‘PROTEST’, his last adventure among the Mexicans, playing the role of the violent Christ in the Temple; he is not able to tolerate their paying to God what belongs to Caesar:

Put down Our Lady. How dare you clothe her like that in money.

It would be better to carry her through the streets naked

The Mexican retaliates: “the man’s a Communist”. “He pulled the hundred-dollar bill off the statue’s robe” and “Our Lady went crashing to the earth.” Somebody hit him on the head; it was bloodstained. One “can’t start a revolution without bloodshed,” even in the Church. Communists are not the only ones who shed blood. He is finally called a rebel for what he was from the beginning. The bishop forbids him to say Mass. He passes ‘Suspension a Divinis’ on Monsignor Quixote. He would even like to burn his books, the books that made him what he is: “The books (he) love(s). Saint Francis de Sales, Saint Augustine, Señorita Martin of Lisieux”! He is not trusted even with Saint John! Chapter 20 of St. John’s Gospel was a favourite of Graham Greene and it strengthened his “tortured faith”. He begs … for “the sword” not “death by pin stabs.”

The word “responsibility” has strangely been reduced in frequency in this novel because Monsignor Quixote takes it in action, not merely in word. It has become fused with his life. But ironically his bishop says that “his
mental health made him irresponsible for his actions, especially when he is most responsible as a Christian". But the reader knows that he is fully responsible for his actions as a result of his long, seclusion with his Sancho. He learns from the mayor that "there is always a fallacy to be found in a logical argument"—even in those of Saint Thomas Aquinas. There is a popular saint in La Mancha who lost her virginity when she was raped by a Moor in her own kitchen when he was unarmed and she had a kitchen knife in her hand.

"She wanted to be raped, I suppose."

"No, no, her thought was quite logical. Her virginity was less important than the salvation of the Moor. By killing him at that moment she was robbing him of any chance of salvation."

Such situational discussions abound in Monsignor Quixote, reinforcing contextual ethics: Father Quixote hearing a confession from a lavatory, hiding a bank robber in the boot of the car. Monsignor's actions and musings make him a peculiar priest:

They say you are mad. They say you should be shut in a mad-house to save the honour of the Church.

Like the other priests in the tetralogy, Father Quixote also has difficulty with the rules of the Church. For him "it's a battlefield, all through!"

He is not like the missionary fathers in A Burnt-Out Case "too busy to bother themselves with what the Church considered sin (moral theology was the subject they were least concerned with). But unlike Doctor Colin, he had belief in God to support him in his hard vocation.
Chapter 3. Arriving at Protest

Sometimes he envied the attitude of those who were able to lay down clear rules—Father Heribert Jone, his bishop, even the Pope. Himself, he lived in a mist, unable to see a path, stumbling." Hearing confession from a "lavatory" which reappears from It’s a Battlefield after so many years.

Professor of Hispanic Studies at Notre Dame University in the United States, Professor Pilbeam "the greatest living authority on the life and works of Ignatius Loyola, who considers the label of being a Catholic very useful for his research on Saint Ignatius. He is staying at the Osera Monastery with Father Leopoldo. Professor Pilbeam is a ‘nominal’ Catholic but finds the ‘label’ helpful in his research on Ignatius Loyola. The label was useful to Greene also.

These two preside over the epilogue of the novel: Father Quixote, still under the sleeping pills walked to the altar of the great Church and began to say the words of the old Latin Mass, in an oddly truncated form—no epistle, no gospel; he was racing towards “the consecration of the non-existent wine in the non-existent chalice”. His mayor-friend had forgotten most of the Mass. The Monsignor “took from the invisible paten the invisible Host and his fingers laid the nothing on his tongue. Then he raised the invisible chalice and seemed to drink from it. The Mayor could see the movement of his throat as he swallowed," and “took the non-existent Host between his fingers”, seeking the communicants. “Compañero,” he said, “you must kneel, compañero.. He came forward three steps with two fingers extended, and the Mayor knelt. The Mayor felt the fingers, like a Host, on his tongue”. One can believe the invisible and the unseen. The Monsignor collapsed in the arms of his Sancho.
And then the post-mortem: Was there no Host and no wine or whether just he saw no bread or wine? Monsignor Quixote quite obviously believed in the presence of the bread and wine. Does it mean that the Mayor had received Communion from the Monsignor, though in the eyes of the Church he was a very unworthy recipient because he was a communist. Is it “more difficult to turn empty air into wine than wine into blood”

Two general ideas are borne out: One, the priest defies the ban imposed on him by the bishop. Two, he gives Communion to an ‘unconfessed’ Communist, with early childhood Catholic memories, though he prefers “Marx to mystery.” Though during their journey the Mayor starts “to confess” to Father Quixote after picking up courage from drink.

At the end of the novel, after the Monsignor has been ordered by the bishop NOT to say mass he consecrates the non-existent Host. Offering it to his Sancho: ‘Kneel, compañero’. Reconciliation between the two faiths has been achieved. Love for his friend brings back the Mayor to God. Destination—the Kingdom of God does not exclude the secular concerns of Communism but includes the earthly aspirations of the human needs. This is the only novel among Greene’s novels where one character refers to the “whisky priest” of The Power and the Glory.

It is in this novel that Graham Greene quotes Shakespeare from Hamlet:

There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so.

Thinking is the one thing that the Church does not appreciate, allow or tolerate. Father Heribert Jone’s “Moral Theology” is analysed as well as ‘The Communist Manifesto.’ The Monsignor has a trained “instinct” and finds
Chapter 3. Arriving at Protest

“religion is the opium” but “not an evil drug”; it has relieved the suffering of so many. “Religion is the valium of the poor.” “Marx and Lenin are as infallible as—well, Mathew and Mark.” “It’s human to doubt.” One cannot live in “a kind of Saharan desert without doubt or faith.” “One cannot be neutral”; one has to take sides, unlike Pilate.

The Monsignor takes sides against the Mexicans who buy Our Lady with their money. Unusually for a Greenean character, the Monsignor has made his protest who asserts “the authority of any Catholic to fight blasphemy.” Greene uses the word “PROTEST” as symbolized both by the “CROSS” and “the hammer and sickle”; both protests against injustice; for the first time ‘salvation’ takes a back seat. The Mexican shouted at the Monsignor:

The man’s a Communist.

The Monsignor is converted; now it remains for the Mayor to be converted: that is to take place in the Trappist Monastery at Osera, where Professor Pilbeam, “the greatest living authority on the life and works of Ignatius Loyola” and Father Leopoldo (Greene’s own guardian priest) are discussing the similarities between Saint Ignatius and Don Quixote. Both hear an explosion and Rocinante has crashed and the Monsignor is injured. The bishop has forbidden him to say Mass. In his sleep-walk he says mass without paten, without chalice, without epistle, without Gospel and tells the Mayor:

I offer you a Kingdom.

The imaginary ‘Host’ is placed on his tongue and he becomes his ‘Compañero’; the Monsignor dies; the Mayor becomes a “Catholic” as the Monsignor had become a “Communist” earlier.
Chapter 3. Arriving at Protest

The ending of *Monsignor Quixote* is extremely revolutionary, though it takes the shape of a dream-sequence. His sleep-walk which though takes him to the right place in the Trappist Monastery (whom Greene calls the Marxists in the Church) goes through the gestures of 'a Holy Catholic' Mass: the absence of the host or the chalice does not hinder him. He seems to rush through the mass—no reading, no sermon—and reaches the transubstantiation and communion.

This mass in *Monsignor Quixote* is not an isolated event, but the logical culmination of all that goes on before—the parish-house, the elevation as Monsignor, the journey, the ban on saying mass, the bringing down of the statue of the Virgin Mother Mary. The wine which flows down not only the throats of the pair in Rocinante but through the novel, among the vineyards of the Mexicans, gains a central position in the novel. Like Christ, he bleeds towards the end of the novel, his Rocinante crashes, where but against a Catholic Monastery, damaging it however slightly. His mass is not a repetition as a usual Catholic Mass in the Church; it is new and revolutionary, not ritualistic but speculative: he gives communion to a communist which is the climax of the novel. "A living faith was taking the place of the dead formalism in which the Church had so long been held," applies here. This is what E. G. White says in his Inspiration Book *The Great Controversy* published without date by Phoenix, Arizona of the coming of the Protestant Revolution in Germany under Martin Luther.

Looking now at the Greenean tetralogy, we can see that all the four novels indulge in pairing of some kind to make their meaning: Pinkie-Rose pair in *Brighton Rock*; priest-lieutenant pair in *The Power and the Glory*;
Chapter 3. Arriving at Protest

Scobie-Louise pair in *The Heart of the Matter*; and once again the Father Quixote-Communist Mayor pair in *Monsignor Quixote*. In the first novel we have another kind of pairing, Rose-Ida pair. In the second novel also another pair involves the Lutheran-Catholic pair. In *The Heart of the Matter* Scobie-Helen Rolt pair also lights up the theme to some extent. The fourth novel pairs Father Leopoldo and Prof. Pilbeam who show up towards the end of the novel.

In all these four Catholic novels, Graham Greene's central idea is that though the Church preaches about salvation and purgation, people achieve them always not through the Church but above the Church. They leap over the Church. The Church stands stunned and glorifies the mysterious working of the will of God mostly outside its own rules and regulations. Salvation is available outside the Roman Church; it is available even to those unbaptized by the Roman Church; it is available to the Communists; it is available to all.

Ida Arnold “wasn’t religious, death shocked her, life was so important. Let Papists treat death with flippancy! Life wasn’t so important perhaps to them as what came after: but to her death was the end of everything”.

But life after death is not the monopoly of the Roman Church; there are so many primitive religions which believe in this like the Papists. This discussion of Hell and Heaven started as early as Brighton Rock but reappears with greater clarity in *Monsignor Quixote*. Once again the Roman Church stands exposed.

Leopoldo is a Catholic, Jesuit priest; was in contact with Graham Greene from 30th June, 1964 to the moment of his death at 11.40 am at Vevey in Switzerland in the Hospital de la Providence on 2nd April, 1991. Both have
Chapter 3. Arriving at Protest

had “hours of conversation” driving around in a car journeying through Spain and Portugal in 1970’s. His biography of Graham Greene: Friend and Brother translated by Evan Cameron. When he first met Greene in his impeccable priestly garb of a black suit and snow-white Roman collar, more or less the same as that of Father Herrara’s affected attire in Monsignor Quixote, he commented on them: “bourgeois vestments”. This cryptic remark is more than sufficient to indicate Greene’s attitude to the Roman priests. Greene’s attitude to Opus Dei—that club of intellectual catholic activists was one of suspicion because of its cloud of secrecy.

His two audiences with Pius XII and Paul VI did not affect him much. He regretted the encyclical Humanae Vitae though Leopoldo Duran pointed to some hope in the last pages of the document which “left the final decision on certain fundamental points to the conscience of the individual.” Individualism may not fit in with the dogmatic church but it improved the functioning of the church.

During his private audience with Pope Paul VI Graham Greene told him of Cardinal Pizzardo who had banned The Power and the Glory exactly when the Pope was reading it. The Pope asked him not to worry about the ban! Similarly, Cardinal Griffin had ‘by implication’ condemned The End of the Affair. Greene’s distaste for D. H. Lawrence’s physical apocalypse is because of his belief in the total inferiority of the body in contrast to the glory of the soul. For him it is always

\[
\frac{SOUL}{BODY}
\]
not even

\[ SOUL \equiv BODY \]

. He cannot accept the Laurencian dictum of the body redeeming the soul’s faltering. His play *Carving a Statue* (1964) where the statue is that of God, the Father, who has power and wickedness in one eye and a little tenderness in the other. To man God is cruel and unpredictable. How can this power be reconciled to his tenderness? “God doesn’t love. He communicates, that’s all. He is an artist. He doesn’t love.” The religious problem is how any evidence of divine love may be detected in the world which God has created and which he controls. The statue of God, the Father is incomplete and could not be completed. “I’ve ruined a fine piece of stone!” He sent His son down here to die. He wiped out the whole world except Noah without blinking one stony eyelid. The Egyptians were drowned in the Red Sea like so many Chinamen. Abraham is called a scoundrel by the Mayor because he was prepared to kill his own son. He calls God “a much worse scoundrel” because “he actually performed the ugly deed”.

He causes the sufferings of Rose, the priest, Scobie and the Monsignor. The one word ‘mystery’ cannot solve all these problems. His love is not love as we understand it. Inscrutable are his ways!

The theology of the Church doesn’t make allowances for the inscrutability of the ways of God to man. Its rules, credo and the Ten Commandments are more humanistic and sociological, are given a divine twist rather than become clarifications of God’s Being or Behaviour. They make not only man simplistic, they also do something worse, make God simplistic.
Chapter 3. Arriving at Protest

Like in the stoic writing of the ancients, humanistic writings of Shakespeare and Marlowe, Greene’s novels raise man to heroic heights through his nobility, sacrifice and considered actions and reactions and above all his existential responsibility against the odds faced which glorify his heroes.

The Catholic aura is only an addition, fitted as a suffix or an epilogue, that too by a priest who is wedded to the Church’s position by his ordination. Speculation becomes sharpened when the religious animal rises to the heights of a noble being, in spite of God’s extricating himself from the labyrinthine life lived by him abandoning him with no help other than his own responsibility. This position taken by Graham Greene is far different from that of the Roman Church.

What started as a ‘DISCONTENT’—a hint of it—has solidified into a ‘PROTEST’. The trilogy of discontent matures into a tetralogy of protest.

“There was not more of a future for Rocinante than for Father Quixote.” Greene’s novelistic career too ends with this masterpiece. May be Greene has reached his maturity and had leapt over his Church: into a real Christian.

Though the theological terms abound in the tetralogy, these terms shared by other non-Catholic denominations as well, the solutions finally are only humanistic and psychological.

The thesis stated in Chapter I is thus borne out to the fullest extent by the tetralogy. Graham Greene was technically a Roman but inwardly a Catholic in its etymological sense. In all these novels and plays we find “the Querry” not Querry: ‘Fragestellung’ the German word for the way of putting of the question.