CHAPTER THREE

INTERPLAY OF SPIRITUALISM, COMMUNISM AND HUMANISM

Human behaviour and problems are inseparable from religion and politics. It appears that Greene constantly considers human problems and human behaviour in unison from the point of view of religion and politics. As identified by Dhruv Shankar “Greene’s novels challengingly display religious and political problems of abiding importance” (“Graham Greene’s Paradoxical” Vision 214). Greene exhibits an exceptional skill of imagination that has two aspects: religion and politics. In his novels he presents a fine blend of religion and politics to enforce his paradoxical vision of life. According to Dhruv Shankar:

The novels present characters often in close-up, in extreme situations at dramatic moments, to accentuate that there is no true religion, nor the moral life without its embodiment in politics, and there is no true politics without religious underpinning. (214)

Moreover, the thirties were a decade of fear, misery, and panic. It was a time when the spectacle of poverty and the ever-increasing danger of war compelled even the common man in the street to consider the nature of economic power, and think about political issues. There was a general feeling that Western civilization was doomed and that,

Only the violent extremities, Left or Right, who had rejected any idea of liberal democracy and gradual progress, could save Western civilization. Or, if they could not, if it were inevitably doomed, then why still attempt any restraint and balance; why not recklessly indulge every passion and prejudice? (Priestly 246-47)
This mood helped to shape and colour the thirties. It was only natural in such an age for writers and young writers particularly, to deal with the social and economic malaise of the time in their works. We find this spectacle of human misery and the mood of the times vividly depicted in the early novels of Graham Greene. Greene’s novels of the thirties have an immediate topical reference and have a contemporary atmosphere.

Some of his novels, superficially at least, deal with the great thirties themes:

- Strikes and political murder in *It’s a Battlefield*,
- the irresponsible power of international finance in *England Made Me*,
- the machinations of armament manufacturers in *A Gun for Sale*,

The uprooted man adrift in urban society may be taken as a symbol of man’s essential situation on earth. Greene deals with this phenomenon of the displaced person in many of his novels.

Fear, Misery, despair, panic and many more worst evils made man drift away from all hopes and faith in religion, uprooted his life and reduced him to the status of a mere cog in the machine. Frazer also says that the literature written then had a “topical urgency reflecting a feeling of tension and an awareness of crisis” (84). He adds that therefore the novels of the age turned out to be “the focus of the insecure, frightening dangerous state of the contemporary world” (86). “Between 1935 and 1939”, George Orwell says, “the Communist Party had an almost irresistible fascination for any writer under forty” (*Selected Essays* 32). Greene and some of his
friends were too under the spell of the Marxian ideology thinking that Communism alone was the only panacea to meet the needs of the downtrodden and the underdogs of the society. But seeing the atrocities committed by the revolutionaries in Mexico and Vienna, Greene beats a retreat and changed his attitude.

Greene had a passion for travel which served as a stimulus for his art and a therapy for depression. This also resulted in his paradoxical vision of life which includes the contradictory ideas of religion and politics. His novels echo the conflicts experienced by modern-day men and women in an age of competing ideologies, global wars and blood-spattering revolutions. “The intense focus on moral issues, politics and religion mixed with suspense and adventure become the trademark of Graham Greene’s ingenious works” (“Graham Greene”, New World Encyclopedia). The present chapter intends to study how Greene juxtaposes Communism with that of Catholicism.

It is in Greene’s most powerful novel *The Power and the Glory* one finds the clash between the values of Communism, spiritualism and humanism, and the victory and superiority of the last one over the other two. *The Power and the Glory* is popularly called a Catholic novel. It is set in Mexican region where the government has decided to stamp out Catholicism and raise in its place Socialism and atheism as guiding principles. It is about a Catholic priest who is worldly in every sense of its term. As such it is not specifically a catholic novel. Kesava Prasad says that in the novel “Greene’s human sensibility reaches new heights. He picks on the life experience of a priest and dramatizes it with a sureness of touch which is rare in the history of fiction. The priest is reduced to common humanity. . .” *(Graham Greene: The Novelist* 123). He adds that like Evelyn Waugh, Greene writes out of “love for the suffering humanity” (124). Greene’s focus in the novel is
not in Catholicism or Spiritualism which generally kindles in its adherents a strong desire to spiritualize people and bring them all under the fold and banner of the Church and its authority. But, against this, in the novel Greene chooses to bring under discussion human depravity in all its verities and to show that human love alone can save man and set him free from the shackles of all kinds of evils and wickedness to which he has become a prey. Marie-Beatrice Mesnet remarks:

Greene himself has said that his purpose like Francois Mauriac’s in choosing the weakest, the most abandoned human beings as material for his creative imagination, was to throw a brighter light on God’s infinite mercy and His power to turn evil- *etian peccata*- in to good.

(79)

The nameless priest is known as whisky priest as he seems to subsist only on liquor. But he serves God, not through his personal example, but by going from place to place in the Swamp area of the Godless Southern States of Mexico during an anti-clerical purge – as the country is being ruled by the rude Communists who have almost eradicated Christianity and all those who have belief in Christ.

To the whisky priest what is important is not God or the Church, but the people, who have betrayed God,

He never abandoned himself to sin without a soul-tearing struggle, and he continually fights his bondage . . . Greene does not glorify sin, he glorified humility. The Priest’s love for Christ, like that of Peter, the prototype of all priests is not augmented by his betrayal but by the sorrow that ensues from the betrayal. (Kunkel 51)
So he moves from hut to hut not preaching the Bible and not showing himself a model Christian, but doing the work allotted to him by God – distributing the Holy Sacrament to the believers who live in the fear of the Communist forces. At the same time the priest symbolizes “infirm glory”. He knows well his desperate inadequacy—“a proud, lustful, greedy man” (PG 93). Yet, as he is the only surviving priest in the Godless state, he carries out his duties honestly and sincerely in spite of all his infirmities and inequities. Greene’s “insistence, indeed is on the underlying power and glory that shine through his life however flawed by weakness” (Collins 255).

According to Greene, man’s weakness is his strength. The novel exemplifies the daring human spirit bent on saving humanity which is ready to plunge itself headlong into the perilous pit of sin and damnation. Kesava Prasad rightly comments: “In writing of the priest, Greene writes of humanity” (Graham Greene: The Novelist 122). The corrupt and suffering priest easily identifies his own lot with the fallen humanity. As Mary Beatrice Mesnet says “the priest’s destiny is linked with that of the other men. . .” (105). She adds: “A progressive realization of the sense of fellowship in wretchedness marks the sinful carrier of the priest” (105). As one reads the novel further, one finds that the priest feels “an enormous and irrational affection” (PG 125) for the thieves, criminals and even for the couple making love with cries of intolerable pleasure: “Again he was touched by an extraordinary affection. He was just one criminal among the herd of criminals . . . He had a sense of companionship which he had never experienced with the old days [. . .]” (125).

The change discernible with the priest is from firm faith in God and his works to total involvement in human miseries and the resulting corruption and moral
degradation. It is interesting to note what Mesnet says about the transformation that comes upon the priest’s character and attitude.

One of the greatest mysteries of the spiritual world is the communion of all men in evil and in good, the communion of saints and sinners— for we are never alone, as the whisky-priest knew. We share responsibility for our sins as we also share love . . . . (105)

Paradoxically enough, through his immersion in sin and suffering the priest emerges as a humanist having love “not for the best love, but love all the same” (PG 97). In the past the priest used to be “conceited, proud, over bearing – a bad priest” (116). He was “a proud, lustful, greedy man” (93), who loved authority too much. He ate good meals, had a woman and a bastard child through her, Brigitta, by name. Now, he is totally damned and bereft of all his former glories. He has become a liquor-addict. He has enormous love for his illegal child and his heart often beats with its secret and appalling love. He even prays for her; “Oh God give me any kind of death – without contrition, in a state of sin – only save this child” (82). “Oh God help her. Damn me. I deserve it, but let her live forever” (207). Soon his love for his child expands into love for all those who suffer in life. The change in his attitude is surprising and amazing. It is something unbelievable on the part of the priest like him.

While in the prison crowded with lustful men and women as a criminal among a number of criminals, he develops an enormous and irrational affection for all of them. He remembers Jesus who came down to the world out of his abundant love for the sinners. He realizes the paradoxical truth that the half-caste, the Judas, who is out to betray him is God’s child having His face. He develops great love for him. “Poor man, the priest thought he isn’t really bad enough . . . .” (184). As
Graham Smith says, the whisky priest “is unable not to love . . .” (86). Greene faithfully brings out the priest’s love of humanity. In the novel through priest Greene says that we are all made in God’s image and God is a parent, the policeman, the criminal, the priest, the maniac and the judge.

Greene’s attempt to find God in man and man in God leads to an extreme form of humanism. Greene endows his character, the whisky priest, such a rare gift. According to him both God and man have the same infirmities and weakness. In other words, he finds divinity in all human beings in spite of all their shortcomings. It is interesting to note that Swami Vivekananda too employs a nearly identical exhortation:

May I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all the soul, - and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is special object of my worship. (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*)

Thus, in the novel, Greene shows that human love can elevate an individual to the stature of a saint. Greene assigns to the priest, the highest mark of heroism not by presenting as a dogmatic and spiritual catholic priest, but by making him a victim of human love.

Greene’s art is shaped by the modern malice of materialism and it correctly points out the predicament of man who is well caught up in a world which is evil and wicked. John Atkins’ comment in this context, is worth recording. He says that Greene’s Catholicism is based only “on intellectual grounds” (55). One has to
understand after studying the behaviour of the priest that Catholicism gave Greene a new anchorage and a more comprehensive perspective to understand how even a priest struggles in the modern complex world which has gone into piece. Greene himself said in an interview: “If my critics still think that I am a confronting Catholic, I admire their forbearance for evil” (A.S. Raman, Illustrated Weekly, 20)

The strength of *The Power and Glory* is found in the interesting contrast between the materialistic and the spiritual approach to life however flawed it is. The former approach is represented by the Lieutenant in the novel and the latter approach is presented by the whisky priest. Both bring into the novel a clash between religious humanism and non-religious humanism which Greene totally abhors. Both men are alike in their sense of an inescapable vocation. The priest runs from place to place without taking any rest. The only thing that delights the lieutenant is his job. He is fully committed to it. He is ever on the chase to capture the priest and those who refuse to give up their religion. He is a Communist serving and safe guarding a totalitarian state. There is something priest-like about him. Kulsherestha says that he is “a theologian going back over the errors of the past to destroy them [Christianity] again” (88).

There is also an ironic contrast that serves to define him and the priest. The Police Lieutenant is a Staunch Communist, a priest of what is called “authoritarian humanism” promising to people material progress and comforts. He vows to bring happiness to people as long as they live in this world. He therefore denies the spiritual happiness promised to them in the other world. He is an ascetic unlike the priest. He does not want the pleasures of the flesh and blood though they are readily open to them. He lives in a sparsely furnished room in which
there was a bed made of old packing-cases with a straw mat laid on top, a cushion and a sheet . . . . There was a picture of the President on the wall, a calendar, and on the tiled floor a table and a rocking-chair. In the light of a candle it looked as comfortless as a prison or a monastic cell. (PG 18-19)

He has no inclination to drink and to have women. At times he wonders why there are still people in the totalitarian and Communist State who believe in “a loving and merciful God” (PG 19).

There are mystics who are said to have experienced God directly. He was a mystic, too, and what he has experienced was vacancy – a complete certainty in the existence of a dying, cooling world, of human beings who had evolved from animals for no purpose at all.

He knew. (19)

As a non-believer and a Communist he wants to “destroy everything: to be alone without memories at all” (PG 19). So far, they had shot down at least five priests– two or three had escaped. The Bishop was safely in Mexico City, and one man had conformed to the Governor’s law that all priests must marry and others have fled away from the land. Only one remains and that is the whisky priest doing what God has assigned to him.

The Lieutenant’s brutal coldness and callousness is seen when he proposes to shoot hostages from villages who offer shelter and protection to the priest. When the chief of police protests and says that a lot of people would die, the lieutenant driven madly by the obsessive thought replies that wiping out religion and to be rid of the priests from the country would give him great exaltation which has no parallel.
In spite of all his brutal convictions and attitude, the Lieutenant is essentially humane. His love of children and his desire to free the country from all kinds of corruption and exploitation and give people a better life speak his humanity. During his first meeting with the priest, he is struck by his utter poverty, starvation and old age and so he hands over to him a five peso pieces. Later, when the priest is arrested he goes to the house of Padre Jose and requests him to come to the prison and listen to his final confession. He has real concern for the poor villagers whom he thinks are exploited by the priests. In his speech to the villagers, one can see a bond of natural sympathy he has struck with the poor suffering humanity. He tells them:

You’re fools if you still believe what the priests tell you. All they want is your money. What has God ever done for you? Have you got enough to eat? Have your children got enough to eat? Instead of food they talk to you about heaven . . . . This child is worth more than the Pope in Rome . . . . if you’ve seen the priest speak up . . . . (PG 71-72)

The Lieutenant’s humanity can be seen in the inordinate he has for children. It is for them that he wants to reform the world and purge it of hunger, superstitions, poverty, starvation, corruption and exploitation. Greene succinctly and beautifully brings out the real feelings of the officer. When he says:

He would eliminate from their childhood everything which had made him miserable, all that was poor, superstitious and corrupt. They deserved nothing less than the truth . . . . He was quite prepared to make a massacre for their sakes . . . . first the church and then the foreigner and then the politician . . . . He wanted to begin the world again with them, in a desert. (PG 54)
However, at the end of the novel, after achieving his purpose of arresting the priest and sending him to the gallows, what the Lieutenant experiences is not any elation in spirit or joy, but utter helplessness, emptiness and meaningless which are the usual experiences of all atheists. After putting the priest in the cell and closing the door, he clearly understands the purposelessness of his aim and meaningless of his mission.

The spring of action seemed to be broken. He looked back on the weeks of hunting as a happy time which was over now forever. He felt without a purpose, as if life had drained out of the world. He said with bitter kindness (he couldn’t summon up any hate of the small hollow man) . . . . He went into the office the pictures of the priest and the gunman were still pinned up on the wall: he tore them down – them would never be wanted again Then he sat at his desk and put his head upon his hands and fell asleep with utter weariness. He couldn’t remember afterwards anything of his dreams except laughter, laughter all the time, and a long passage in which he could find no door. (PG 205-206)

Greene seems to say that denial of God makes man to lose all his strength to achieve and realize the purpose with which he begins his vocation. In spite of all his valour and welfare schemes for the uplift of people, the Lieutenant is a failure as he has denied the existence of God. Although, he is a humanist and a humanitarian, he is unsuccessful because of the feelings of despair and desolation that come upon him at the end. The passage quoted above pictures him as a prisoner well caught within a trap without a door. He has no escape.
This juxtaposition of the priest with his spiritual values (in spite of all his depravity and facilities) with the Police Lieutenant with all his promises for creating a new world using the Communist ideology is something remarkable and Greene’s singular artistic achievement. Greene’s contention is that any kind of humanism that is preached and practiced for human welfare is good and laudable, but no humanism which has no spiritual base is doomed to have its inevitable failure. Dhruv Shankar in his “Graham Greene’s Paradoxical Vision” rightly affirms,

Greene is of the belief that it is better to keep hold of the comforts provided by religion than be disillusioned by the hypothetical happiness based on materialism. He points out that man will be left with nothing in the absence of belief in God. (http://www.rjelal.com Vol.2)

The interplay of spiritualism, Communism and humanism forms the essential core and the main staple of Greene’s novel *The Honorary Consul*. S.K. Sharma comments “the novel rejects Catholicism as well as Marxism as the key to the world’s problem. The only religion that is favourably projected in the novel is the religion of man, the lonely man, the unhappy man, the divided man, the confused man. (185). Again Roger Sharrock in his book *Saints, Sinners and Comedians* seems to verify the religio-political nature that is reflected in the core of *The Honorary Consul*:

The theme of political commitment and political duty of a Christian in an unjust society is even more to the fore in *The Honorary Consul* than in Comedians: father Rivas is a Catholic priest who has become a Marxist revolutionary . . . . (238)
The Times Literary Supplement reviewer rightly calls the novel “a serious and moving indictment, at once religious and political” (Unsigned, 204). The novel, set in the seventies has historical significance having a number of topical allusions. Greene heavily borrows from newspaper reports and journals and throws light on the Paraguayan terrorists, all Communists who were engaged in revolutionary activities in a small river port near an Argentinean town during 1973. Greene highlights one episode in the Communist soldiers of the Paraguayan army who mistakenly kidnap Charley Fortnum, the Honorary Consul for Great Britain in the place of the American Ambassador to Argentina. The kidnapping involves the interaction of private and public lives and has far reaching consequences.

Among those affected is one Dr. Eduardo Plarr who is drawn into the kidnapping vortex without willing it. Plarr helps the Paraguayan terrorists thinking that they will release his father who is supposed to be languishing in jail under the control of the Communist rebels. Besides, Plarr is known to be the lover of Fortnum’s wife, Clara. Again he is persuaded to become involved by his old school friend Leon Rivas who was once a servant of the Church. Rivas has lost his priestly faculties by marrying outside the Church. All along he has been dreaming of the Great Church beyond time when rules will make more sense. He is also troubled by the injustice around and the corruption in the Church and he prefers to live away from it. He once tells Plarr: “‘I have told you – I never left the Church. Mine is only a separation, Eduardo, a separation by mutual consent, not a divorce I shall never belong to anyone else. Not even to Marta.’ [his wife]” (HC 215).

Rivas’ contention is that the Church has not understood the misery and poverty of the have-nots. It should have used the priest to work among them so that he could lift them up from the mire into which they have fallen. He tells Plarr:
‘Even if I cannot love, I see no reason to hate . . . . Now if I feel any
emotion for the Church; it is regret, not hate. I think she could have
used me easily for a good purpose if she had understood a little
better. I mean about the world as it is.’ (HC 215)

Seeing that the Church is indifferent to the sufferings of the poor, he turns his back
on it and comes out breaking all its bonds. And when the Church excommunicates
him, he marries Maria and joins a gang of terrorists who profess to work for the
betterment of the poor folks.

As one who has developed the conviction that he is to be with the poor, he
suffers no pangs when he does something evil or sees something evil. He tells Plarr
that “‘In a wrong society’ . . . ‘the criminals are honest men’” (HC 98). He tells him
about the “night-side” and the “day-side” of God (224). He finds God as benevolent
and malevolent. “The God I believe in must be responsible for all the evil as well as
for all the saints” (224). Like the Whisky Priest in The Power and the Glory, Leon
Rivas, the renegade priest also finds the image of God in man.

The following paradox is highly significant to understand his essential
humanism:

‘I believe in the evil of God’, Father Rivas said, ‘but I believe in his
goodness too. He made us in his image – that is the old legend . . . so
I too believe in an old legend which is almost forgotten. He made us
in his image – and so our evil is His evil too. How could I love a
God if he were not like me? Divided like me. Tempted like me’.

(HC 223)
His contention is that he does evil out of love for those who suffer and that God also loves those who suffer by doing evil. This is how he is driven to rebellion. He has utmost love for the poor and those who do evil.

Greene’s *The Honorary Consul* illustrates the dictum: once a priest always a priest! One has to remember what Greene does to Father Jose who figures in *The Power and the Glory*. In fear of the Communist forces, he renounces his priestly duties and marries a woman to save his head. However, when the whisky priest is about to be sent to the gallows, the Police Lieutenant goes to his house and requests him to come and listen to the priest’s final confession before he dies.

In spite of his differences with the Church, Father Rivas is bound to his priestly vocation. Though the guilty stream of the religious authorities overpowering the provincial state stimulates him to give up his priestly profession he is unable to drop out his faith. Though he has become a revolutionary, he behaves and talks like a priest. He is easily spotted by Fortnum. The priest in him often comes out and refrain him from doing acts of violence which the life of an *abogado* requires. His generosity, compassion and sympathy for those who suffer draw him to his victim, Charley Fortnum. In one scene, he kneels before Fortnum, like a penitent sinner in the Confessional and seeks his forgiveness. He has lost his right to say the Mass as he has come out of the Church. But, as said earlier, once a priest is always a priest. When Marta, his wife, asks him to say it, he agrees because he cannot deny the duties of a priest. He says the Mass without vestments and altar. He does not carry out the execution of Fortnum. This indicates the failure of his revolutionary ardour. Instead he urges Fortnum confess so that he could grant him absolution. He says:

... if there was another priest here I would say to him, Yes I *am* sorry, I am sorry I did not live in an age when the rules of the Church
seemed move easy to keep – or in some future when perhaps they will be changed or not seem so hard. (*HC 244*)

At the end Rivas, the *abogado*, dies during the performance of his priestly duties. When Plarr is shot by the paras surrounding the hut, Rivas runs out to him telling Aquino that for a priest there are always priorities. But, he too, is shot and dies murmuring “I am sorry . . . I beg pardon” (*HC 250*). One is left to guess and find out to whom does he speak these words. One may say that he asks God’s pardon for betraying Him or for carrying out religious duties in a state of mortal sins. It may be, he is asking the pardon of his friends for not carrying out the duties assigned to him by the head of the rebel group. The wounded Plarr responds with the phrase of absolution – “*ego te absolvo*” (250).

Ironically enough, Greene makes Rivas a penitent and by reversing the roles makes the unbeliever Plarr a priest answering the renegade’s Confession. The scene helps the reader recall to his mind the whisky priest’s sacrifice in *The Power and the Glory*. Both Father Rivas and the whisky priest die as criminals in the eyes of the Communist state and renegades in the eyes of the Church. The observation made by Kulshrestha is worth remembering. He remarks: “. . . *The Honorary Consul* is a moving indictment of the unjust state and the silent acquiescent Church” (177). He further remarks “*The Honorary Consul*, in one sense, may . . . be a plea for the awakening of the Catholic conscience to be more effective and for the Church to play a more dynamic role in public affairs” (237).

The foregoing discussion with pinpoint accuracy proves the fact that Greene accords utmost importance to the values of humanism and not to those of Spiritualism and Communism.
Through the story of Dr. Eduardo Plarr who figures in the novel, Greene adds more dimension to the values of humanism. Plarr is a young doctor born to an English father, a political activist in the jail. His fate is not known to Plarr. Twenty years ago, with a stiff upper lip he said good bye to Plarr and his mother and went away. Plarr loves his father very much and detests the behaviour and attitude of his mother. His father is compassionate and kind to everybody, but she has “mislaid her beauty and become querulous” (HC 4). Plarr, therefore, comes to live in a small river town (leaving his mother in Buenos Aires) so that he may be away from her but close to his father.

Plarr is a grief-stricken isolated man, a exile in a continent of exiles. He is unhappy and he has lost the love of his father. He lives with a sense of guilt because of the safety and comfort he enjoys while these are denied to his father. He has inherited from his father a compassion for the poor and those who live in abject poverty and misery. He says to Saavedra: “In the barrio of the poor I am aware of doing something he [his father] would have liked to see me do, but when I am with my rich patients, I feel as though I had left his friends to help his enemies” (HC 161).

Dr. Plarr does not straight away become a Communist thinking that Communism and its ideology will save the poor. For some time he remains cool and indifferent to human suffering. Plarr is also an emotionally deficient man. He never suffers from the sickness called love. “‘Love’ was a claim which he wouldn’t meet, a responsibility he would refuse to accept, a demand . . .” (HC 166). In his affairs with the women who come to his hospital he avoids the theatrical phrase “‘I love you’” (136). For him, love is a comedy of passion which whores only play out to please their clients. If at all he has love for a woman, he attributes emotion to “a
quite different malady – to loneliness, pride, physical desire or even a simple sense of curiosity” (136). With regard to love and relationship with others, he is “a cold fish” (208) as Fortnum describes him. He remains withdrawn and detached attending to his job.

His coldness and obsession to live alone as an alienated being vanish when he sleeps with Clara, Charley Fortnum’s wife and an ex-whore from Mother Sanchez. “An obsession may sleep a while, but it doesn’t necessarily die . . .” (HC 78). A week passes away and he gets the feeling that he has no life apart from her. He wants to see her again and again “He would have liked to hear her voice, however indifferent it might sound on the telephone, but the telephone never rang with any message of importance” (78). When one goes deep in to their affair one finds that it is not “love” but “lust” that binds him with her. When Clara starts a child and her husband is kidnapped he feels an odd sense of responsibility. Yet he has no patience with the word love. He says, “That banal word love” (248). “It’s never meant anything to me. Like the word God. I know how to fuck I don’t know how to love. Poor drunken Charley Fortnum wins the game (248). Earlier to Rivas he says “I am jealous. Jealous of Charley Fortnum” (248). He is impatient with all man-made institutions – love, marriage, Church, even with The Bible and Marxism. He says, “I feel no more interest in the church now than I feel in Marxism. The Bible is as unreadable to me as Das Capital. Only sometimes, like a bad habit, I find myself using the crude word God” (216).

All on a sudden he turns out to be a different man. Like his father he too becomes a victim of human love, and compassion. He learns that “caring” is more important than anything and so it is a “dangerous thing” (HC 237). He feels an odd sense of curious love for Clara, Fortnum and the child.
He says that he cannot believe a God who is totally insensitive to human suffering. He says:

I have seen a child born without hand and feet. I would have killed it if I had been left alone with it, but the parents watched one too closely – they wanted to keep that bloody broken torso alive. The Jesuits used to tell us it was our duty to love God. A duty to love a God who produces the abortion? It’s like the duty of German to love Hitler. Isn’t it better not to believe in that horror up there sitting in the clouds of heaven than pretend to love him? (HC 222)

Again, later, he tells Rivas “It’s much easier not to believe in a God at all (226).

There are good reasons for Plarr to join the gang of the Communist revolutionaries led by father Rivas. He hopes that they will fight and find release for his father. He also feels that it is utmost responsibility to set free Fortnum, Clara’s husband who is wrongly arrested in the place of the American Ambassador. He falls into the net spread before him to gather information about the Ambassador whose agenda is not known. His school time association with Leon Rivas also supplies another motive for his involvement in the plot. But, Walter Sullivan does not ascribe to him any reason for joining the revolutionary gang. To him, Plarr is essentially an existential character and he has only chosen to join Rivas and his Communist followers only to turn of events. He says: “. . . he is in essence an exhausted man in an absurd and sterile society, and he helps the revolutionaries . . . because, one feels, he is too weary to refuse” (Sullivan 145). He says:

Nothing is ever what we intend. They didn’t mean to kidnap you. I didn’t mean to start the child. You would almost think there was a
great joker somewhere who likes to give a twist to things. Perhaps
the dark side of God has a sense of humour. \((HC \ 234)\)

Evidently, Plarr puts the blame on God who according to him is malicious
having a dark side. The moment Fortnum recognizes Plarr in the kidnapper’s hut,
Plarr too is arrested. Soon he learns the confirmed news of his father. With that,
one of the motives for joining the gang is lost. Though his sense of humanity and
responsibility is deeply shaken he feels that it is impossible for him to retrace his
steps from the abyss of involvement. He feels that he cannot break his bond with
Clara’s child, which is now not, “a useless part of Clara like her appendix; perhaps
diseased appendix which ought to be removed” \((HC \ 208)\).

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\text{it was no longer just one more wet piece of flesh like any other torn out of the body with a cord which has to be cut. This cord could never be cut. It joined the child to two very different grandfathers . . . .}
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The cord joined it to a father who was a provincial doctor, to a mother from a brothel . . . . (208)
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He is very anxious to make some sort of arrangement for the child. Knowing fully well that the rebels will shoot him down, out of compassion and pity for Clara and the child, he walks out of the hide-out and gets himself killed while attempting to save Fortnum whom he thinks “would make a better father” \((HC \ 165)\) than he would ever be.

Gangeshwar Rai comments on this as: “Dr. Plarr embraces death out of concern for others. Thus his personal commitment leads him to connive with the revolutionaries whose political commitment is alien to him” \((89)\). Till the end he remains as a non-believer. The absolution he gives to Father Rivas saying \textit{ego te absolvo} should not be taken seriously. It is one of their boyhood jokes. Like father
Rivas, he too rejects stoutly all belief in rigid and straight-jacketed Catholicism and revolutionary Marxism.

Once again, through the character portrait of Dr. Plarr, Greene gives humanism an edge over the other values under discussion in the novel.

Charley Fortnum, the title character of the novel, is sixty years old man living on whisky. He is lonely, melancholic and full of self-pity. He is married to a former whore, Clara and is concerned with life here and now. He has no faith in the life “afterwards” (HC 118). To Aquino, he says, “I don’t know anything about that ‘afterwards’. I only know I would like to live another ten years, at my camp watching the little bastard grow” (118). He has also no revolutionary ardour and no political ideology to embrace. He is mistaken for the American Ambassador and is kidnapped by desperadoes who plan to blackmail the government by demanding the release of some prisoners of war. But their plans end in smoke because Fortnum is only an Honorary Consul for Great Britain. He tells Father Rivas who understands the wrong arrest committed: “I can see how the American Ambassador from your point of view – well, he was a legitimate objective. But me – I’m not even a proper Consul and the English are not in this fight.” (112).

Fortnum, the Honorary Consul, is just an inconsequential pawn on the political chess board and is treated dishonourably by Great Britain which he represents.

Throughout the novel Fortnum presents himself only as a tragic figure. However, at the end he emerges as a merciful and all forgiving father. He felt “an odd kinship with that priest [Rivas]” (HC 257) who intends to kill him. Fortnum’s capacity to show human love even to his worst enemies is a part of his humanity.
The last pages of the novel which pictures a conversation between Fortnum and his wife reveal his profound and abundant humanity which mainly lies in his readiness to forgive all those who work against him. The conversation reveals: “He felt a pang of pain because Plarr was dead” (HC 263). He seems to be a little angry with Clara as she was not present to witness the death of Plarr. “Surely she should have been faithful for a short while to a dead man – it would have been like wearing something black for a week or two” (263). He is happy to find that she has enormous love for the bastard child she is carrying. He understands that “She isn’t all deception . . .” (263). She talks about a whore in the brothel who strangled her baby. Fortnum is very much moved and “He took her hand and pulled her gently down beside him” (263). She confesses what had passed between her and Dr. Plarr. She tells him that the whole affair started when she was in Senora Sanchez, the brothel. She adds “He never loved me . . . To him I was only a girl from Senora Sanchez” (264). When Fortnum asks her, “Did you love him Clara” (264) her reply is “No . . . No . . . I love you, Charlie (264).” Thinking that she feels sorry for what she has done, he begins to comfort her. He tells her, “There is nothing wrong in love, Clara. It happens. It doesn’t much matter who with. We get caught up . . .” (264). To convince Fortnum, she says: He wanted it [the child] killed. He really wanted it. I knew then he could never love me” (264).

When Clara asks Fortnum whether they can call the child Charley if it is boy, he says: “One Charley’s enough in the family. I think I will call him Eduardo. You see I loved Eduardo [Dr. Plarr] in a way. He was young enough to be my son” (265).

It is here one finds the greatest reach of Fortnum’s humanism. His love for Clara, his bastard child, and Dr. Plarr who is the real father of Clara’s child are so deep and profound that he can never give her up and speak ill of her illicit paramour.
“He put his hand tentatively on her shoulder and he felt her body shaken with tears. He wanted to comfort her, but he had no idea how to do it. He said, ‘He really loved you in his way, Clara, I don’t mean anything wrong . . .’” (HC 265).

He does not take anything seriously. When she repeatedly tries to convince him saying “I never loved him, Charley” (HC 265), he knows that the rat is out of the bag and that she is telling a lie. The novel ends with the comment made by Greene throwing additional light on Fortnum’s humanism”.

Her lie meant nothing to him at all. It was contradicted too plainly by her tears. In an affair of this kind it was the right thing to lie. He felt a sense of immense relief. It was as though, after what seemed an interminable time of anxious, after what seemed an interminable time of anxious waiting in the ante-room of death, someone came to him with the good news that he had never expected to hear. Someone he loved would survive. He realized that never before had she been so close to him as she was now. (265)

Such thoughts rising up in the mind of a seedy old man steeped in alcohol really makes him a humanist par excellence. The willingness and readiness to accept kinship with Rivas, to call Plarr his own son and think that Clara, in spite of all her depravity and moral lapses is very close to him, make Fortnum a rare human being endowed with an extreme kind of human love.

Greene’s condemnation of Communism and its fanatic adherents and his glorification of humanist values over and above all “isms” including spiritualism can be seen in a few more novels and they should be referred to at least in passing.
As a young man, while at Paris, Greene and a friend Cloud Cockburn became probationary members of the Communist Party. The truth was, as Greene himself says, there was not even “a scrap of Marxist belief” (SL 97) in them, and they “joined only with the far-fetched idea of gaining control and perhaps winning a free trip to Moscow and Leningrad, cities which six years after the Revolution still had a romantic appeal” (97). Their “mercenary motive was seen through almost at once by a very serious Australian Rhodes scholar who was much older . . .” (97). Greene and his friend, therefore, ceased to attend meetings. However, Greene was invited to attend a meeting in Paris which bored him to exhaustion. There were endless messages from many enthusiastic foreigners who upheld the values of Communism. The messages were read out amidst cheers. As there was nothing to interest Greene, he “slipped away” (97) to his hotel.

Greene, confessed years later that he transferred the bitter experience to his novel It’s a Battlefield. He wrote “. . . I used this meeting and the sense of futility it conveyed to describe rather unfairly a branch meeting of the Communist Party in London” (SL 97-98).

In this novel Greene heavily comes down upon Communism and its fake and fraudulent followers and advocates. Mr. Surrogate who figures in it is a Communist professing that he is committed to bring about social progress. But, in truth, he does not properly understand the difficulties of the masses. To him individuals gave pain by their brutality, their malice, their lack of understanding” (44). He loves only “abstractions” (43). His speeches are inscrutable couched in obscure language. People who listen to him are not able to grasp what he says about “Social Betterment, the Equality of opportunity, the Means of Production” (43). If at all anybody prefers to be with him, he believes that what he says about Capitalism and
Socialism, Wealth and Poverty are real. He never cares for people who suffer with their children living in overcrowded rooms. He is, in short, a pretender who professes to suffer for the welfare of people and their social cause. He has developed a fine trick of remembering causes in human terms. For example, he serves for the cause of “Emancipation of Woman” by sleeping with them. He is never touched in his conscience. He is too happy to live in a world which is totally given to all kinds of disorder “a world of religions, of political parties and economic creeds” (44). What marks him as a unique fraud is his total impatience with men and women in a troubled world. He declares his respect for his dead wife, but at the same time, he seduces girls who come on his way. After seducing Kay Rimmer to his heart’s content, he feels that she is not really fit for him. After elucidating all his abominable habits, Gangeshwar Rai concludes:

Greene’s Communists do not believe either in themselves or in their theories, they are like rats behind wain’s coting. Greene appears to be stressing the need of a genuine revolutionary leader who actually lives the ideals and points out that Mr. Surrogate is only a poor substitute.” (18)

Greene’s most brutal attack on Communism and its adherents can be found in his *The Quiet American*, the main staple of which consists of his bitter personal experiences in the war-torn Indo-China where he stayed for four years a correspondent of *Life* and the *London Times*.

Greene pictures how the land is totally ravaged and plundered by different conflicting political and ideological groups – Pro-Western Government at Saigon, underground Communist cells in the South, Chinese Communist on the north, war-lords like General “Che” and the “third force” which breaks the deadlock between
Colonialism and Communism. Absolute anarchy rules the roost and all kinds of violence are rampant in every part of the land. The novel is replete with images and descriptions of a world shattered and splinted by brutal and inhuman forces. Scenes of violence and bloodshed come one after another and point out the inhuman activities and atrocities perpetrated by the Communists along with the other warring forces. Fowler, one of the characters in the novel goes out with a French Patrol and they cross a canal which is “full of bodies” – Fowler is reminded of “an Irish stew containing too much meat” (The Quiet American 51). He says:

The bodies overlapped: one head, seal-gray and anonymous as a convict with an unshaven scalp, struck up out of the water like a buoy. There was no blood. I suppose it had flowed away long time ago . . . . I . . . took my eyes away. (The Quiet American 51-52)

When Pyle in the novel tells Fowler that people do not want Communism, the latter readily agrees with him: “They [people] want enough rice. They don’t want to be shot at. They want one day to be much the same as another. They don’t want our white skins around, telling them what they want” (94).

Fowler has great contempt for Communism. After seeing the savage and brutal attacks made on the poor by its faithful followers, denounces both God and all “isms”. The near hysterical tone of Fowler in the passage quoted below bears out in ample measure his inner disturbances with regard to dogmas and ideologies: “Isms and ocrasies. Give me facts. A rubber planter beats his labourer – all right, I’m against him. He has not been instructed to do it by the Minister of Colonies. In France I expect he’d beat his wife” (The Quiet American 95-96).
The violence committed by the Communists changes Fowler’s attitude towards religion. He loses his faith in both Communism and spiritualism. As R.W.B. Lewis has commented *The Quiet American* is Greene’s secular novel in which “religion plays little or no part” (“The Fiction of Graham Greene”. *The Kenyon Review*, XIX). S.K. Sharma has said: “The novel shows what God can mean in a godless world. It deals with faith and the failure of faith” (143). He adds that Greene’s range in the novel “includes colonialism and communism, nationalism and humanism, theism and atheism” (43).

Love, politics, humanism and religion touch upon one another in the novel and give an exciting twist to man’s searching for meaning in a world which has gone awry. In their rat race to possess the heart of man, Greene is anxious to explore the total experience of life and is concerned not with the social man or the political and the religions man but with Man who is willing to have a share with the larger humanity that values love – love that goes beyond doubt and belief, life and death.

After pointing out the failure of political values (Communism) and, spiritual values, Greene takes up for discussion ‘human love’ which alone, according to him is the only panacea for all human ills and maladies.

Fowler has great pity and sympathy for those who suffer – the dead men floating on water, the woman and her child lying dead in the ditch, the young soldiers in the tower, the child and the trishaw driver killed in the bomb blast and even for Granger and Pyle.

Greene uses Fowler as a representative of the humanist philosophy of life. He endows him with utmost pity and compassion for those who suffer in the hands of the Communist rebellious forces. A.A DeVitis remarks: “Stripped of Rowe’s
sentimentalism and Scobie’s religious preoccupations, Fowler seems less noble than his predecessors, but he is, nevertheless, propelled by the same compassion” (119).

As in *The Quiet American* Greene, once again, juxtaposes Communism and humanism in his *The Comedians* and condemns the high-handed activities of the Communist terrorists in places like Haiti and speaks in favour of men who serve for human cause.

*The Comedians* is set in Haiti which is under the dictatorship of Doctor Duvalier better known as “Papa Doc”. Greene presents Haiti as a country reeling under his dictatorship. Greene, in this novel condemns all forms of dictatorship and its coteries sworn to hearless violence and endless butchery. In this work, he condemns all kinds of terrorists who flourish in the name of Communism and indulge themselves in destructive activities crippling the lives of even the most innocent natives. The violence rocking the land is terrific so much so violent deaths are considered to be “natural deaths” (*The Comedians* 97). Under the dictatorship of Papa Doc, Haiti has become a country of fear and frustration and a shabby land of terror.

It is interesting to note that the best Communist in the novel is a lover of humanity. Dr. Magiot, the black Communist, finally becomes humanist par excellent. He becomes very unhappy about the activities of the terrorists and the dictator and he comes to believe that a palace revolution is necessary to bring about a purge for the people. His letter addressed to Brown reveals his new faith in humanism and his readiness to eschew Communism altogether. The letter is very important because it is yet another record in which Greene, though Dr. Magiot, asserts his infallible and unassailable faith in humanism and shows how much he
discards and disregards both Communism and Catholicism. The letter reads as follows:

Do you remember that evening when Mrs. Smith accused me of being a Marxist? But Communism, my friend, is more than Marxism, just as Catholicism is more than the Roman Curia. There is a ‘Mystique’ as well as a ‘Politique’. *We are humanists, you and I* (emphasis added) (*The Comedians* 286).

Greene becomes so much obsessed with the terror going on in Haiti that it colours his vision of the contemporary world, a world of isolated and unhappy men who enact the drama of pain and suffering and bring untold miseries to the innocent inhabitants. In brief, as Walter Allen has said Greene finds “the universal in the local” (*The London Magazine* 74). Needless to say that Greene finds only humanism as the best solution for all the complex issues of modern man and his predicament.

In fact, Greene has built up his own vision of life in both religion and politics. The religio-political ideas are a result of his conversion to Catholicism, his flirtation with Communism and his travelling as a spy growth in his fictional world.

Greene’s conversion to Catholicism and his knowledge of *the Bible* and the Church, has only helped him to have a deep peep into evil and human depravity and expanded his perspective that the Church should have more flexibility to accommodate within its folds not only the believers but all those who founder in filth and sin because of the changes in human life have increased the problems and difficulties of the people of today. His own personal experiences in life and what he witnessed around him and in places he visited made him come to the conclusion neither the Church, nor any political ideology (Communism) can offer any solution
to the proliferating ills and maladies of man living in the present day society. Therefore, it was quite natural for him, to express more clearly and categorically through chosen characters in his novels his belief in human values – humanism in which man can always find a sure and certain anchorage.