Conclusion

An indepth analysis of Greene's novels as contained in the previous chapters would assert his deep insight into the problem of evil. Greene as we have discussed earlier, can never shake off the scar of a primal wound – his unhappy childhood which makes him conscious of the all-pervasive presence of evil at an early age. This impression becomes stronger in later years when he finds himself in the midst of man-made evil – poverty, economic and social deprivation, corruption of childhood, unending violence, abominable dishonesty and cruelty, and the most brutal repression characterizing the generation of Burgess, Maclean and Philby, the generation of assassins and spies. This naturally brings him face to face with some fundamental questions regarding human existence. Is there nothing which can enable man to survive this onslaught of evil? Is suffering a necessity in so far as human existence is concerned? These questions Greene feels can never go unanswered.

In his novels Greene thus attempts to solve a fundamental mystery – the riddle of sorrowful human existence which remains unsolved by our power of reasoning. Greene therefore affirms his faith in religion which alone, he believes, can offer a solution. Infact Greene's novels display
his growing impatience with materialism, liberalism and the so called progress of civilization. He feels that all social revolutions featuring humanitarianism and general welfare have obvious limitations, their inability to wipe out evil and suffering from the world. They can offer no substitute to faith. So return to the faith is the motto that Greene seeks to emphasise. He exposes the spiritual vacuity of a world reigned by materialism and its consequent hedonism and prefers the primitive way of life to a faithless world.

Though certain modern thinkers like H.G. Wells and Shaw have regarded poverty simply as a malady and a curse, Greene highlights its necessity – the purgative value of suffering in the spiritual life of man. In The Power and the Glory the priest therefore tells the Lieutenant:

... the poor are blessed and the rich are going to find it hard to get into heaven. Why should we make it hard for the poor man too? Oh, I know we are told to give to the poor, to see they are not hungry – hunger can make a man do evil just as much as money can. But why should we give the poor power? It's better to let him die in dirt and wake in heaven – so long as we don't push his face in the dirt. (199)

Almost same idea has been expressed earlier in the novel when the priest tells the ignorant villagers:

... joy always depends on pain. Pain is part of joy We are
hungry and then think how we enjoy food at last.... We deny ourselves so that, we can enjoy. You have heard of rich men in the north who eat salted foods, so that they can be thirsty—for what they call the cocktail. Before the marriage, too, there is the long bethrothal....(69)

Greene seems to be distressed to find the state of Roman Catholicism as preached by the Church. The religion has been reduced to a mere show of piety – the observation of rituals supposed to redeem the soul. The genuine love of God is not so important as the cultivation of this habit of piety. Thus in The Power and the Glory when the priest is imprisoned for illegally carrying liquor against the Prohibition Law of the state he comes across a pious woman in the same cell. The pious woman is willing to confess her sins to the priest even in the midst of all other prisoners since she has not confessed for a long time. It is a ritual which she probably thinks will help her to attain salvation. But what shocks us is her lack of fellow feeling. She has nothing but contempt for the couple indulging in carnal pleasures in the same cell as she says:

Why won't they stop it? The brutes, the animals! (130)

Stop them. It's a scandal. (131)

But the priest, Greene's candidate, for sainthood displays an immense understanding of the weakness of others as he finds God in the
darkness and stench of prisons, among the sinful and wretched human beings:

Saints talk about the beauty of suffering. Well, we are not saints, you and I. Suffering to us is just ugly. Stench and crowding and pain. That is beautiful in that corner – to them. It needs a lot of learning to see things with a saint’s eye: a saint gets a subtle test for beauty and can look down on poor ignorant palates like theirs. But we can’t afford to. (130)

We are all fellow prisoners. I want drink at this moment more than anything, more than God. That’s a sin too. (131)

Thus Greene firmly denounces the show of piety and declares the passionate love of God, manifested in the feeling of compassion towards the fellow human beings as the very basis of religion. His view is akin to Unamuno’s whose words he quotes in his preface to *A Burnt-Out Case*:

Those who believe that they believe in God, but without passion in their heart, without anguish of mind, without uncertainty, without doubt, without an element of despair even in their consolation, believe only in the God Idea, not in God Himself. (3)

In solving the problem of human existence Greene shakes off all dogmatism associated with the Roman Catholic Church. To him no man
or woman is fallen for ever. There is hope even for the people, guilty, of mortal sin and supposed to be condemned to eternal damnation. To substantiate his view he glorifies the infinite mercy of God, all-encompassing and all-pervading. In his novels Greene presents a contrast between man's capability of committing great sins on the one hand and his feeling of compassion and truly Christian humility on the other. These virtues, he feels can alone make one recipient of God's mercy and thereby save his soul.

Greene has the firm belief that man's original sin is the root cause of all his sufferings. This sin, he committed by defying God, by consuming the fruit of the tree of knowledge. But God is always ready to rescue man even from the darkest pit of evil and sin. He therefore decries all attempts to rationalize, circumscribe and condition the divine grace and asserts the illimitable span of the God's mercy. It is the agonizing consciousness of his sins, his terrible inadequacy which is nothing but a consequence of his sense of humility and his spirit of self-sacrifice and love for his fellow human beings that ultimately save the sinner's soul.

However it is Catholics only who according to Greene enjoy this exclusive privilege of redemption. His non-catholic characters like Ida Arnold in Brighton Rock and HelenRolt in The Heart of the Matter are
neither aware of their sins nor long for the divine grace. As a result the chances of their salvation reach the remotest possibility.

Finally we can not overlook Greene's intense humanism which also leads him to suggest the redemption of quite unlikely characters. Greene's deep insight into the world that "makes a devil of man" leads him to consider "evil as the natural concomitant of the world". His human ideology leads him to believe that however detestable the evil may be it is always possible to feel sympathetic towards the guilty if we can trace the real origin of his action. His humanistic ethos therefore eulogises relentless struggle against the evil world and at the end there comes redemption not only to testify God's boundless love but also to reward man's humanitarian concerns.