Chapter VIII

The Satire in Brideshead Revisited focuses upon the modern church and England’s upper class society

Brideshead Revisited, Waugh’s most critically acclaimed novel with a subtitle ‘The Sacred and profane Memories of Captain Charles Ryder’ is a very deep study of human aspirations and the expression of their desperate need for happiness. Narrated in first person by Charles Ryder in an introspective manner quite different from Waugh’s pre-Brideshead novels, the novel discusses the deeper issues of moral degradation and a desperate need to return to age-old traditions and faith. In this way, he champions the cause of sticking to values and traditions.

In the novel, Waugh satirizes the representatives of modern aristocratic society who indulges themselves in every conceivable form of decadence. By satirizing the shallow life of people of aristocratic class, Waugh brings out that while running after the pelf and power these people got deprived from the eternal bliss of God and found themselves caught in the web of materialistic world. Rex Mottram, Celia Ryder, Anthony Blanche were the true epitome of this deteriorated aristocratic world.

Rex Mottram was a true aristocrat. His unwillingness to break his immoral relationship with Mrs. Brenda Champion even after his marriage with Julia Flyte clearly proves that he never wanted to loose that ladder due to which he succeeded in making his mark in the society and who could be of much help to him in the near future. However, this further depreciated his value as people started identifying him less because of his own qualities and more because of his illegitimate affair with Mrs. Brenda Champion.
“....everyone who had ever met Rex knew of his affair with Brenda Champion; knew also that it was from this affair that he derived everything which distinguished him from every other stock-jobber; his golf with the Prince of Wales, his membership of Bratt’s, even his smoking-room comradeship at the House of Commons, for, when he first appeared there, his party chiefs did not say of him, ‘Look, there is the promising young member for north Gridley who spoke so well on Rent Restrictions.’ They said: ‘There’s Brenda Champion’s latest’; it had done him a great deal of good with men; women he could usually charm.”

Rex’s love for Julia was also a medium through which he wanted to attain the social heights and so he was keen to have the marriage settlements in order to avoid any financial loss, which brings out his materialistic nature, as he wanted to use her dowry for his own needs.

“…Anyway, I don’t want to marry without doing the thing properly…nothing hole-in-corner. … I have to see she isn’t jockeyed out of her proper settlement.”

“Rex hoped to have the whole of Julia’s dowry in his hands, to make it work for him.”

Thus, he became highly disappointed when Julia became a social outcaste after marrying him in a Protestant Church against her mother’s wish, as it deprived him of the entire dowry as well as the social connections; he wanted to have after

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203 Ibid., p. 170.
204 Ibid., p. 184.
his marriage. The narrator proves through this example that he was nothing more than an opportunist that the modern society is producing.

“In fact, poor Rex found he’d married an outcast, which was exactly the opposite of all he’d wanted.”

The tortoise that he gave to Julia with her name set in diamonds on the shell was a symbol of his superficial and materialistic thinking. And though at that time Julia liked it a lot, but soon an year after her marriage she realized that Rex was not a complete man, but a mere epitome of this degenerated modern world.

“You know Father Mowbray hit on the truth about Rex at once, that it took me a year of marriage to see. He simply wasn’t all there. He wasn’t a complete human being at all. He was a tiny bit of one, unnaturally developed; something in a bottle, an organ kept alive in a laboratory. I thought he was a sort of primitive savage, but he was something absolutely modern and up-to-date that only this ghastly age could produce. A tiny bit of a man pretending he was the whole.”

He was in love with himself and so he failed to love Julia and was unmoved even after the death of her unborn daughter just because she was a girl, which kills the scholar’s sympathy for this character. His indifference to the illegitimate relationship between his wife Julia and Charles brings out the weakness of his character. He only objected quite later when Julia decided to divorce him in order to marry Charles but even then his objection was not due to his love for Julia but because of the material loss, he will be facing after the divorce, as his political career was not going smooth at that time.

\[205\] Ibid., p. 192.
\[206\] Ibid., p. 193.
‘I’m a man of the world. I’ve had my own fish to fry too… I’ve tried to keep out of the way as much as I could; if I’ve been around too much, just tell me; I shan’t mind. But there’s too much going on altogether at the moment, what with Bridey wanting me to clear out of the house; its disturbing, and I’ve got a lot on my mind.’

And in the character of Rex we receive Waugh’s admonition about the modern decaying world, dissipated people with rotten ideals and practically no moral code. He was everything that Waugh ever hated in a human being.

Charles’ wife Celia was also an embodiment of this degenerating cocktail society. Enjoying the rich life as a wife of successful architectural painter, she was a deteriorated soul. Charles never liked her and admitted that their marriage was a marriage of convenience. On finding about her infidelity, he felt relaxed that he was right in hating her and admitted it in front of Julia.

‘I was glad when I found Celia was unfaithful,’ I said. I felt it was all right for me to dislike her.

‘Is she? Do you? I’m glad. I don’t like her either. Why did you marry her?’

‘Physical attraction. Ambition. Everyone agrees she’s the ideal wife for a painter. ..’

No, doubt she proved to be an ideal wife for Charles as far as his professional career was concerned as she shrewdly promoted Charles’ career by arranging cocktail parties in the aristocratic circles, and by taking care of critics (holding private exhibitions of paintings for them on Friday so that they can have a weekend to write about the paintings). However, in return she enjoyed the social

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207 Ibid., p. 282.
208 Ibid., p. 245.
status, pelf and power earned by her husband without any moral obligation as she continued having a dissipated relationship with Robin. Morally she was an empty character. With the help of her brother Boy Mulcaster she manipulated Charles to give her a good financial alimony including the financial support for children that were not his. David Wykes referred her as a more cuckolding wife than anyone found in Waugh’s previous novels.

“… a loveless marriage for Ryder, betrayed by his wife, who has gone a step further than the earlier cuckolding wives in that she has fathered on him the child of her adultery.”

Robin in himself was a reincarnation of John Beaver in A Handful of Dust living at the expenses of his beloved’s husband. The fact was disclosed in a single sentence spoken by Boy Mulcaster during the divorce settlements of Celia and Charles where he asked a favour from Charles to give Old Rectory to Robin as he did not have his own place and will have one only after the death of his Uncle.

"Then what about the Old rectory?...
... Robin’s got no place of his own till his Uncle dies…"

This brings out his emotional emptiness as if he was praying for his Uncle’s death in order to seek financial gains, and this made him a true companion for Celia who in herself was a degenerating soul.

After a disillusioned marital relationship, Charles’ futile attempt to find satisfaction in Army brings out his constant struggle with life and his affirmative approach towards life. However, his disillusion in the army forced him to

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209 Wykes, David, Evelyn Waugh a Literary Life, op.cit., p. 142.
210 Waugh, Evelyn, Brideshead Revisited -The sacred and Profane Memories of Captain Charles Ryder, p. 281.
compare it with marital disillusionment. His agony finds expression in his own words, when while comparing them he describes his disillusion with both of them.

“Here my last love died…. I was aghast to realize that something within me, long sickening, had quietly died, and felt as a husband might feel, who, in the fourth year of his marriage, suddenly knew that he had no longer any desire, or tenderness, or esteem, for a once-beloved wife; …I knew it all, the whole drab compass of marital disillusion; we had been through it together, the Army and I, from the first importunate courtship until now, when nothing remained to us except the chill bonds of law and duty and custom.”

Like the superficial marriages of Charles and Celia, and Rex and Julia, the marriage of Bridey and widow Mrs. Beryl Musapratt was not an exception. A widow and a mother of three children (from her previous marriage) she decided to marry Brideshead in order to have financial security for her children, as she was financially poor. She made religion as a hand maiden tool to impress Bridey and succeeded in marrying him. Julia explained about her to Charles

“She’s just a good-hearted woman who wants a good home for her children and isn’t going to let anything in her way. She’s playing up the religious stuff at the moment for all it’s worth. I daresay she’ll go easier when she’s settled.”

211 Ibid., pp. 11-12.
212 Ibid., p. 284.
Lord Marchmain’s contempt for her was quite clear and later he admitted openly that he disliked her. He refused to leave Marchmain House to her as he failed to imagine her occupying the place once owned by his beloved mother.

‘…but I am frankly appalled at the prospect of – of Beryl taking what was once my mother’s place in this house… I will not disguise from you that I have taken a dislike to Beryl.’

In her character we find a personification of an opportunistic lady with a manipulative mind whose aspirations got shattered with the return of Lord Marchmain. Therefore, when at the end all her dreams also ended she found herself powerless and even without a home, and though she was not very ambitious but it was something she never expected after marrying Bridey.

“She was not, as I have said, a woman of high ambition, but, having had her expectations so much raised, it was disconcerting to be brought so low so suddenly.”

The novel brings out the fate of marriages made for convenience in the aristocratic cocktail societies. Waugh clearly affirms that a marital relationship should have permanence and they cannot last on a weak foundation and he proves his point by showing the unsuccessful marriage of Rex and Julia, Charles and Celia and Bridey and Mrs. Musapratt, which proved transitory as they failed to have ‘longevity’. Waugh points out that a strong relationship is essential to sustain a marriage, but the superficial relationships between these couples failed to provide them the eternal bliss, which they kept searching outside even after getting married and this resulted in the failure of their marriage.

\[213\] Ibid., pp. 304-305.
\[214\] Ibid., p. 297.
Another epitome of superficiality was Anthony Blanche a friend of Sebastian and Charles, having all the appalling habits of aristocracy. Having cured of drug taking and Oedipus complex, he became a nomad. After travelling a lot with his mother and her second husband after the First World War, he finally got settled in Europe along with them.

“..by his own account he had practiced black art in Cefalú and had been cured of drug-taking in California and of an Oedipus – Complex in Vienna.”215

On the other hand, the sad demise of Lady Marchmain brought out this fact that money could not buy happiness and it could never make a person wise. Despite being too religious (a popular belief as Cordelia called her a ‘Saint’) she was unhappy throughout her life and so failed to provide happiness to others also. The worst effect of her power was seen on her son and Charles beloved Sebastian. With her pelf and power Lady Marchmain tried to control the life of Sebastian, and went to the extent of appointing Mr. Samgrass to keep an eye on Sebastian but she herself failed to give him love and affection which he needed the most. Despite a number of warnings from Charles her mishandling of the situation resulted in destroying the sweet and innocent Sebastian. Sebastian’s referring his home as the place where his family lives brings out his agony and pain as due to lack of love and affection he failed to associate himself with his family members and so this lack of attachment forced him to say so.

‘It’s where my family live’; and even then, rapt in the vision, I felt, momentarily, an ominous chill at the words, he used – not, ‘that is my house’, but ‘it’s where my family live.’216

215 Ibid., p. 47.
216 Ibid., p. 36.
The pain of Sebastian was more because he always had the doubt that with all the charms of the aristocratic class his family will take away everything that he will ever like or love. His vain attempt to keep Charles away from his family brings forth his insecurity and he admits this fact in front of Charles.

“I’m not going to have you get mixed up with my family. They’re so madly charming. All my life they’ve been taking things away from me. If they once got hold of you with their charm, they’d make you their friend not mine, and I won’t let them.” 217

And later Sebastian’s doubt became true when charmed with their aristocratic ways, Charles started meeting the Marchmain family and as a result Sebastian started feeling himself distant from Charles too. Charles noticed this behavioural change the reason to which he realized was his proximity with the world Sebastian was escaping.

“I had seen him grow wary at the thought of his family or his religion, now I found I, too, was suspect. He did not fail in love, but he lost his joy of it, for I was no longer part of his solitude. As my intimacy with his family grew, I became part of the world which he sought to escape…”218

So Sebastian’s charging Charles for taking the side of his family was in fact the inner suffering that he had, and so while listening to Charles he felt as if disguised as Charles his own family is giving him a lecture. In addition, as Charles found himself closer to the Marchmain family, his distance from Sebastian started increasing, and Sebastian felt that like his family Charles is also against him.

218 Ibid., p. 123.
“Why do you take their side against me? I knew you would if I let you meet them. Why do you spy on me?”

Sebastian’s drinking habit was also an escape from the materialistic world of his mother who wanted to control him and never tried to understand him. All she did was to compare him with her dead brothers and thus vainly tried to make Sebastian like her own brothers whom she blindly admired, therefore, She even did not feel bad when Sebastian got caught by the police just because once her brother also got arrested, so she felt nothing wrong in it.

“She knows you were in the clink. I told her. She was divine about it, of course. You know anything Uncle Ned did was always perfect, and he got locked up once for taking beer into one of Lloyd George’s meetings, so she really feels quite human about the whole thing.”

However, Charles realized that Lady Marchmain did a big mistake in comparing her son with her dead brothers because of their being different individuals, having different personalities as well as different family conditions. Therefore, all this mishandling played a vital role in ruining Sebastian and resulted in his escape from this world that he despised and thus he never came back, not even on the death of his mother.

Whereas, Hooper the Platoon Commander in Charles Company was a symbol of hypocrisy and superficiality in its prime stage, an embodiment of modern degenerate man. Waugh described him as a ‘sallow youth’ who knew less about his work. He joined army after trying every other work and so accepted it as a disease.

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219 Ibid., p. 129.
220 Ibid., p. 118.
“He had come to it reluctantly, under compulsion, after he had made every feeble effort in his power to obtain deferment. He accepted it, he said, ‘like the measles’.”221

He found a place for himself in the army despite being incapable of performing any duties assigned to him properly, through this Waugh satirizes the selection procedure in the army. His coming to the attentive position with a ‘kind of shuffling dance-step’ brings out the lack of seriousness in him. Moreover incapable to do anything himself properly he had a habit of comparing the working patterns of army life with that of business life, which describes the modern youth who want everything without work.

“Though himself a man to whom one could not confidently entrust the simplest duty, he had an over-mastering regard for efficiency and, drawing on his modest commercial experience, he would sometimes say of the ways of the Army in pay and supply and the use of ‘man-hours’: ‘They couldn’t get away with that in business.’”222

Through him, Waugh tried to present the future of England if nothing would be done to raise the morality of the people. Waugh emphasizes the moral and ethical degradation in the modern youth, who have to imbibe the ideals of adherence to the traditional values. By Hooper, Waugh brings out the aimless, shallow and superficial modern man, and Charles became his spokesman when he described about Hooper as a symbol of modern youth.

“In the weeks that we were together Hooper became a symbol to me of Young England, so that whenever I read some public

221 Ibid., p. 14.
222 Ibid., p. 15.
utterance proclaiming what Youth demanded in the Future and what
the world owed to Youth, I would test these general statements by
substituting ‘Hooper’ and seeing if they still seemed as plausible.
Thus in the dark hour before reveille I sometimes pondered:
‘Hooper Rallies’, ‘Hooper Hostels’, ‘International Hooper
Cooperation’, and ‘the Religion of Hooper’. He was the acid test of
all these alloys.”223

Due to his own conversion to Catholicism in 1930, through Brideshead Revisited
Waugh tried to bring out the importance of faith in the life of an individual, but
at the same time the use of religion as a tool for pressing human needs disturbed
him. Moreover, Waugh clearly brings out that religion is not an important factor
as far as happiness is concerned and it has nothing to do with making or keeping
the people in the ordinary sense happy. Therefore, Sebastian becomes Waugh’s
representative when he admits before Charles that religion has nothing to do with
happiness, and half of his family members who believe in religion are unhappy.

“So you see we’re a mixed family religiously. Brideshead and
Cordelia are both fervent Catholics; he’s miserable, she’s bird-
happy; Julia and I are half-heathen; I am happy, I rather think
Julia isn’t; mummy is popularly believed to be a saint and papa is
excommunicated – and I wouldn’t know which of them was happy.
Anyway, however you look at it, happiness doesn’t seem to have
much to do with it….”224

Waugh himself admits that he accepted the church on firm intellectual conviction
but with little emotion, and though he never believed in the logic given by the
church but he had the trust in the thousand years old existence of the church.

223 Ibid., p. 15.
224 Ibid., pp. 86-87.
Frank Kermode aptly says “.. the author has himself written that he was admitted into the Church “on firm intellectual conviction.” As Mr. F.J.Stopp comments, in his admirable Evelyn Waugh, it is also apparent that this “firm intellectual conviction” relates “not primarily to the vanquishing of philosophical doubts about the existence of God, or considerations of the nature of authority,” but rather to “a realization of the undeniable historical presence and continuity of the Church.”

Julia also conveys the same fact to Charles when he opposes the presence of Priest at Lord Marchmain’s deathbed.Though she admitted that Christian religion has maintained its sanctity by its existence for nearly two thousand years, but what she forgot was that though Christianity has maintained its sanctity, but modern church does not contain those ideals, which were the very foundations of Christianity. In addition, modern man is blindly following everything on the name of religion without understanding its depth.

“It’s such a lot of witchcraft and hypocrisy.’
‘Is it? Anyway, it’s been going on for nearly two thousand years.’

Critics also noticed that in modern Church Waugh failed to found those traditional values, which he would have admired. Steven Marcus pointed out that “The unpleasant atmosphere of Brideshead Revisited was directly a result of the far-reaching disagreement between Waugh and his religion”

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225 Kermode, Frank, Essay Mr. Waugh Cities in Encounter, Vol XV, No. 5, November 1960, p. 66.
226 Waugh, Evelyn, Brideshead Revisited -The sacred and Profane Memories of Captain Charles Ryder, p. 310.
The conversation between Sebastian and Charles brings out Waugh’s feelings regarding his religion. It seems as if Waugh’s own belief and logic has taken the form of Sebastian and Charles and through them Waugh tries to bring his own inner conflict.

“I suppose they try and make you believe an awful lot of nonsense?”
‘Is it nonsense? I wish it were. It sometimes sounds terribly sensible to me.’
‘But my dear Sebastian, you can’t seriously believe it all.’
‘Can’t I?’
‘I mean about Christmas and the star and the three kings and the ox and the ass.’
‘Oh yes, I believe that. It’s a lovely idea.’
‘But you can’t believe things because they’re a lovely idea.’
‘But I do. That’s how I believe.’  

Thus, the scholar finds that Waugh joined Church amazed by its thousand years old existence, but he himself failed to find any answers to most of his questions and so the modern church failed to provide any happiness to its followers including Waugh.

Waugh expected the aristocratic society to stand for those moral values but was disappointed on seeing the moral degradation in the upper strata of the society, and this disappointment took a form of satire in most of the Waugh’s novels and thus by return to tradition Waugh’s meaning was quite different. Frank Kermode aptly says – “The consistency of Mr. Waugh’s opinions is indicated by his admiration for Baroque art, the plastic expression of Tridentine Catholicism and

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228 Waugh, Evelyn, Brideshead Revisited - The sacred and Profane Memories of Captain Charles Ryder, p. 84.
a great European movement that left England almost untouched. His version of English history at large is simply but fairly stated in this way; after being Catholic for nine hundred years, many English families, whether from intellectual confusion or false prudence, apostasised in the 16th century to schismatic institutions which were good only in so far as they retained elements of the true worship. The consequence has been modern paganism (at a guess, Mr. Waugh thinks of this as an atavism in degenerating stock); the inevitable end is a restoration of the faith, but the interim is ugly and tragic except in so far as it is redeemed by the suffering of the martyrs and the patience of the faithful.”

He satirizes those people who use religion as a hand maiden tool for curbing human desires and for serving their own selfish purposes. The acceptance of religion by Lord Marchmain at the time of his death after living a sinful life with his mistress Cara proves that people come back to religion only in their hour of need, pain and sufferings. Moreover, through Julia he articulated his thoughts when he ridiculed at those people who can get anything done at the church through a penny, due to which the superficial relationship of Bridey and Mrs. Musapratt got recognition and the meaningful relationship of Charles and Julia was termed as ‘living in sin’.

“…They knew all about it, Bridey and his widow; they’ve got it in black and white’ they bought it for a penny at the church door.
You can get anything there for a penny, in black and white…”

Thus, Julia and Charles thought that they have committed a crime by falling in love with each other and so at last accepted religion to save them from damnation by leaving their most precious wish of getting married. However, as a result of

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229 Kermode, Frank Essay Mr. Waugh Cities in Encounter, op.cit., p. 68.
this they lost what they had and even failed to achieve the true meaning of life. Charles discloses his pitiable condition to Hooper at the end of the novel.

“I’m homeless, childless, middle aged, loveless, Hooper.”^231

Julia’s earlier antipathy for religion was due to her inability to find satisfactory answer to her queries regarding her relationship with Rex Mottram, which forced her to stop looking at religion for finding any answers, though earlier she went to seek help from her religion when Rex accused her for providing less physical intimacy.

“She took her problem to Farm Street and propounded it in general terms, not in the confessional, but in a dark little parlour kept for such interviews.

‘Surely, Father, it can’t be wrong to commit a small sin myself in order to keep him from a much worse one?’

But the gentle old Jesuit was unyielding. She barely listened to him; he was refusing her what she wanted, that was all she needed to know.

When he had finished he said, ‘Now you had better make your confession.’

‘No, thank you,’ she said, as though refusing the offer of something in a shop. ‘I don’t think I want to today,’ and walked angrily home.

From that moment she shut her mind against her religion.”^232

Thus, the issue of religion became a barrier in the catholic marriage of Julia and Rex when Bridey found out that Rex was a divorcee and his ex-wife is still alive,

^231 Ibid., p. 330.
^232 Ibid., pp. 181- 182.
and so he cannot marry Julia, as there is nothing like a divorce in Catholic religion.

‘Don’t you realize, you poor sweet oaf,’ said Julia, ‘that you can’t get married as a Catholic when you’ve another wife alive?’

‘But I haven’t. Didn’t I just tell you we were divorced six years ago.’

‘But you can’t be divorced as a Catholic.’

‘I wasn’t a Catholic and I was divorced. I’ve got the papers somewhere.’

‘But didn’t Father Mowbray explain to you about marriage?’

‘He said I wasn’t to be divorced from you. Well, I don’t want to be.’

And so later a marriage in a Protestant church resulted in making Julia a social outcaste, but her admission in front of Charles, that Father Mowbray warned her about Rex brings out the righteousness in religion. And later she admitted that she was punished for marrying Rex.

“I’ve been punished a little for marrying Rex. You see, I can’t get all that sort of thing out of my mind, quite – Death, Judgement, Heaven, Hell, Nanny Hawkins, and the catechism”

And so it was Julia’s inner guilt that forced her to take Catholicism at the end of the novel. She opted for religion to prevent herself from damnation, and not for any absolute belief in religion. She admitted that she may be bad again and need help and so by opting for religion she tried to save herself.

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233 Ibid., p. 189.
234 Ibid., p. 247.
“I’ve always been bad. Probably I shall be bad again, punished again. But the worse I am, the more I need God. I can’t shut myself out from his mercy. That is what it would mean; starting a life with you, without him... It may be a private bargain between me and God, that if I give up this one thing I want so much, however bad I am, he won’t quite despair of me in the end.”\textsuperscript{235}

But the religion took a different form in the faith of Cordelia whom Sebastian called “bird-happy” and so she was one of the most important characters in the novel who succeeded in achieving the true purpose of life in the selfless service of needy and poor war victims and found satisfaction in it. Julia’s following the path laid by Cordelia was an attempt to achieve the true happiness like the one Cordelia used to enjoy. However, the reason for Cordelia’s happiness was not only the religion, she was happy as she did what she believed and so throughout our reading we never found her repenting for any of her deeds. She herself admitted that like Sebastian she is also not suitable either for this world or for the religious order but as she is not a drunkard, it becomes easy for her to find a job.

“... people who can’t quite fit in either to the world or the monastic rule. I suppose I’m something of the sort myself. But as I don’t happen to drink, I’m more employable.”\textsuperscript{236}

However, Brideshead was a blind follower of religion but he failed to attain the eternal bliss enjoyed by the Cordelia. A true aristocrat living a superficial life Bridey imitated church activities as a blind follower without understanding its depth. Charles once admitted that a few minutes conversation with Bridey is enough to prevent someone from being a Catholic. Thus, the narrator mocks that

\textsuperscript{235} Ibid., p. 324.
\textsuperscript{236} Ibid., p. 293.
despite being a fervent Catholic and despite his deep belief in the religion, Bridey was so poor at explaining what he believes.

‘D’you know, Bridey, if I ever felt for a moment like becoming a Catholic, I should only have to talk to you for five minutes to be cured. You manage to reduce what seem quite sensible propositions to stark nonsense.’

While discussing the need of calling a priest before Lord Marchmain’s death, Charles admits about Cordelia and Bridey’s blind adherence to religion stating the lack of understanding among the modern Catholics regarding their religion. –

‘There were four of you, ‘I said ‘Cara didn’t know the first thing it was about, and may or may not have believed it; you knew a bit and didn’t believe a word; Cordelia knew about as much and believed it madly; only poor Bridey knew and believed, and I thought he made a pretty poor show when it came to explaining. And people go round saying, “At least Catholics know what they believe.”

But far from the materialistic world and with the purity of his heart despite being a drunkard Sebastian escalated to the level of holiness. And later Cordelia told Charles that with his drinking habit though Sebastian may not get a place in the Monastery but he may became an under porter as he was one of those people who are not suitable either for this decaying society or for the religious sect.

“He’ll never be able to go into the bush, of course, or join the order, but the Father Superior is going to take charge of him. They had the idea of making him a sort of under-porter; there are usually

[237] Ibid., pp. 158-159.
[238] Ibid., p. 315.
a few odd hangers-on in a religious house, you know; people who can’t quite fit in either to the world or the monastic rule. ’239

Thus, in a world where everybody was busy in making his own gains Sebastian selflessly devoted himself in taking care of his German friend Kurt and Waugh proved that the path of holiness comes from sufferings or penance. Therefore, Sebastian’s understanding of religion was much deeper than many fervent Catholics as he once told Charles that Catholics are usually quite different from other people and everything they like is different, and they can never hide this fact.

“…they’ve got an entirely different outlook on life; everything they think important is different from other people. They try and hide it as much as they can, but it comes out all the time. It’s quite natural, really, that they should.”240

Thus, Waugh clearly brings out that more than a blind adherence to religion, morality, ethics and purity of heart are more essential to lead a happy life.

Further, Waugh successfully brings out the aimlessness of the people in this chaotic modern world. Charles’ asking about the place is symbolic of his search for an aim or purpose in life that he does not have.

‘I say any idea where we’re off to?’

‘None.’241

Sebastian also confirms about the same aimlessness in Lord Brideshead, when he tells Charles that Bridey is not sure about the aim of his life and so keeps changing his mind.

239 Ibid., p. 293.
240 Ibid., p. 87.
241 Ibid., p. 17.
“Now he’s trying to make up his mind. He talks of going into the Guards and into the House of Commons and of marrying. He doesn’t know what he wants.”

Sebastian himself kept wandering throughout his life escaping from his family, Charles got attracted towards him due to his good looks, his habit of carrying a teddy bear and his eccentric behaviour, but in reality Sebastian due to lack of purpose in life was reluctant to give up his childhood and take on the responsibilities like a man. Once even Cara conveyed this to Charles while discussing about Sebastian,

“Sebastian is in love with his own childhood. That will make him very unhappy. His teddy bear, his nanny and he is nineteen years old…”

However, like all his other novels, Waugh’s moral concern seems visible in this novel also when he emphasizes for return to traditional values and morals, but he was not a conservative person, who has closed his eyes towards the changes in the modern world. He was a firm supporter of ethics and reasoning and so anybody diverging from the path of righteousness became a butt of his satire. Alvin B. Kerman aptly says – “Waugh has frequently been accused of being a snob and deadly conservative, but in fact he treats the representatives of the old order as savagely as he does the new barbarians. He defends tradition, not the status quo; social order, not the establishment. The standards against which his fools are measured and found to be fools is not, in his early novels, located in any

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242 Ibid., p. 86.
243 Ibid., p. 100.
individual but in the values and social forms to which his characters without knowing what they are doing still give voice…”  

Dealing with the deeper issues of life the book turned out to be a best seller in England and America. John K. Hutchens admired the book in New York Times – “Brideshead Revisited has the depth and weight that are found in a writer working in his prime, in the full powers of an eager, good mind and a skilled hand, retaining the best of what he has already learned. It tells an absorbing story in imaginative terms.” The novel in totality warns the society as a whole to save itself from the evil effects of modernization and shows a path of ‘Return to tradition’ to save itself from annihilation. Waugh used genteel satire to serve his purpose by denouncing the degenerate souls like Rex Mottram, Celia Ryder, Hooper, etc.

Thus, the novel succeeds in establishing the value of traditions in the modern world. After showing the modern degenerate world, the narrator efficiently conveys that only an adherence to traditional values can provide salvation to human life. While establishing the value of faith in life, the narrator also warns the modern man from blindly following it without understanding its deeper meaning. Thus, the novel brings forth the point that religion is not merely a shelter for morally degenerate people, but a place for those who want to understand the true meaning and aim in life as it helps the man in rising above perishable materialistic pleasures and by this attain salvation. Thus, where people like Cordelia and Sebastian succeeded in their attempt to find the true meaning of their life, there on the other hand people like Bridey and Lady Marchmain, despite following the religion fervently failed to attain salvation.