CHAPTER – 3

(I). ‘THE POWER AND THE GLORY’
‘THEME OF SALVATION THROUGH SUFFERING AND DAMNATION’

‘O God, forgive me – I am a proud, lustful greedy man. I have loved authority too much. These people are martyrs-protecting me with their own lives. They deserve a martyr to care for them-not a man like me, who loves all the wrong things. Perhaps I had better escape- if I tell people how it is over here, perhaps they will send a good man with a fire of love………….’

(Part II, Chapter –I, P – 774)

The Power and the Glory, published in 1940, is the consummation of the story of chose. The story is based on Greene’s experiences while he was traveling across Mexico in 1938. The novel is set in a Mexican region which has been declared a totalitarian state. Religion is banned and there is a prohibition on the drinking of wine in the state. The priests have been subjected to prosecution. Most of the priests have either fled the state or given up the profession. However, there is one priest who decides to stay back and secretly performs his priestly duties. It completes the cycle of novels dealing with the harrowing experience of an outlaw.
The title of the novel is taken from the Lord’s Prayer in the Bible. The words are:

“For thine is the Kingdom the power and the glory”

The title is meaningful and hence appropriate. Both power and glory belong to God. There are two interpretations of the title. One is that power belongs to the government but glory belongs to the priest.

In the novel the whisky priest, the protagonist is a sinful man but his last action is one of self sacrifice and raises him to the height of a martyr. The second meaning is that true power and glory in reality belong to God, but a priest can get both these unknowingly. The whisky priest gets both in the Mexican state. Towards the end of the novel Greene has shown that the state makes all efforts to wipe out religion but God’s glory is unending. As soon as the whisky priest is killed another priest secretly enters the state. The world is essentially evil but God’s grace is seen to operate in a very mysterious way.

Graham Greene, in ‘The Power and the Glory,’ has dexterously intertwined the story of pursuit with the story of man’s search for salvation, his unbending faith in God and his willingness to bring damnation upon himself for the sake of benefiting others. Hence, the main theme of the novel is the theme of salvation though suffering and damnation. Whisky priest is the protagonist of the novel. Greene has portrayed in the whisky priest an emotionally strong character
who is aware of his sins (drinking of whisky, having sexual relationship with a woman who is not his wife, fathering a defenseless child) and get he prays to God for the salvation of others. The awareness of his own sins does not weaken his faith in the powers of God and he is confident that God in all his mercy will forgive his sins.

In a nutshell the story of the whisky priest is the account of his spiritual rebirth. He is seen emerging from his own sense of pride, false piety and selfishness into a wide world of corruption and sin which in turn becomes instrumental in bringing about his spiritual revival. Because it awakens in him a true love for fellow human beings, his realization of God’s will and his final submission to it. John G. Mackenzie’s views are relevant in this context:

_In a true repentance the consciousness of outraging God’s love is far more prominent than any concern of the sinner with his own fate. He many feel he is ‘hell-deserving’ but his anxiety is for restored relation with God. The novel becomes a story of prolonged, though faltering repentance. ‘Against thee, thee any, have I sinned, and done this coil in they sight’. Restore upto me the joy of salvation. We watch the priest working out his salvation with feat and trembling, never with a conviction that he is saved. Each act of charity or loyalty or self sacrifice, each moment of suffering and mortification establishes the attitude of penitence and thus produces a character who evermore frequently and strongly turns to God the process is complete when the_
priest, a waiting execution, makes him private confession (sacramental confession having been derived to him), though he is conscious only of his sin and failure. It is in this way that the sinner-saint paradox is resolved.

The Power and the Glory is a novel in its own right. It is the story of a Catholic Priest. His experience, comic as well as tragic, forms the theme of the novel. The Power of the novel lies in the ‘deeply felt complexity of the priest’s life.’ Greene humanizes the weakness of the priest. His weakness becomes his strength. The priest is undoubtedly the most important character in The Power and the Glory. The whole story centres round him. The priest never fails to respond to the call of duty. He faces lots of sufferings throughout his life. He has all the evil habits in him but more over his virtues and dutiful attitude are heavy on his evil activities. In this chapter we will prove how the poor in spirit, the weak in will, and the proud in soul after facing lots of suffering and damnation will be received in heaven.

Theme of salvation through suffering and damnation is worked out through the portrayal of the whisky priest. And yet this priest not only gives up his plan to escape to safety in the opening chapter of the novel but goes back at the end from place of safety to one where the police is waiting for him:
He said sadly, ‘It always seems to happen like this.’

‘You’ll have a job not to miss the boat’.

‘I shall miss it. ‘I am meant to miss it’.

‘Give me my brandy. He took a long pull at it, with his eyes on the impassive child, the baked street, the vultures moving in the sky like indigestion spots’.

‘But if she’s dying ….’ Mr. Tench said.

‘I know these people, she will be no more dying than I am’.

(Part I, Chapter – I, P – 721)

Thus, from the very first chapter priest’s sufferings start. The weaknesses of the priest are many and glaring. In his prosperous days he was guilty of the sin of pride. He was, and still is, a habitual drunkard. The priest’s being a liqueur-addict surely goes very much against him. In first chapter priest hides his identity as well as he shares his own whisky with Mr. Tench. Whisky priest is to catch the boat to Veracruz but on Mr. Tench’s desire for a drink, the stranger said that he had a little brandy with him:

‘O God, I’d like a drink. Ora pr onbis’.

I have a little brandy, the stranger said.

Mr. Tench regarded him sharply. ‘Where’?

The hollow man put his hand to his hip—he might have been indicating the source of his odd nervous hilarity. Mr. Tench seized his wrist. ‘Careful’, he said ‘Not here’.
Mr. Tench stared at him blankly.

‘We could open the brandy’.
‘Oh yes, the brandy’.
‘Water’? the stranger asked.

(Part I, Chapter – I, P – 718,719)

A Roman Catholic priest has to take a vow of celibacy, and this priest: too was, expected to lead a perfectly chaste life. When priest is drinking with Mr. Tench a child comes there and says that his mother was dying. Mr. Tench remarked that, if she was dying, there was no, point in a doctor’s going to see her. But at this point stranger intervened and got ready to visit the sick woman despite his great anxiety to catch the boat to Vera Cruz. He said, if the woman was dying, it would be necessary for him to go to her:

‘He said sadly, ‘It always seems to happen. Like this’.
‘You’ll have a job not to miss the boat’
‘I shall miss it,’ he said. ‘I am meant to miss it’. He was shaken by a tiny rage. Give me my brandy’.
‘But if she’s dying ……’ Mr. Tench said
‘I know these people. She will be no more dying than I am’.

(Part I, Chapter – I, P – 721)
This incident shows that thought priest had a bad hobbit of taking liquor but he is fully dedicated to his job for this he can ever sacrifice his life.

Moreover, Captain Fellows is naturally surprised that a priest should ask for brandy is a shameless manner when he is given shelter in his house.

‘Hungry’?
‘A little. It does not matter’. He said with a rather repulsive humility,’
If you would do me a favour…….’
‘What’?
‘A little brandy’.
‘I’m breaking the law enough for you as it is’, Captain Fellows said.
‘What a religion, Captain Fellows said. ‘Begging for brandy. Shameless.

(Part I, Chapter – III, P – 735)

Captain Fellows dislikes presence of whisky priest in his house. But his daughter Coral provides full co-operation and helps the priest. When, in her girlish ignorance, she asks why he cannot renounce his faith for the sake of his safety, the priest’s reply is:

“It is impossible. There’s no way. I’m a priest. It’s out of my power.”

(Part I, Chapter – III, P – 737)
What he means is that he is completely in the hands of God and that, having taken the vows of priesthood, he cannot now give them up without a message from God. Although he needs brandy desperately, being a hardened addict, he would not like Coral to steal it from her father’s cupboard.

*She said, ‘I think I could find my father’s brandy.’*

‘*Oh no, your mustn’t steal*’.

*(Part II, Chapter – I, P – 739)*

We find him asking for brandy when he arrives at a village some time later. We find him being offered brandy by Maria when he arrives at her village.

*He said, ‘My case, Maria’? Where’s my case?*

‘*It is too dangerous to carry that around any more,*’ Maria Said.

‘*How else can I take the wine?’*

‘*There isn’t any wine*’.

‘*What do you mean?’*

*I’ve broken the bottle. Even if it brings a curse…….?*

*He said sadly “You mustn’t be superstitious. That was simply – wine”.*

*(Part II, Chapter – I, P – 763)*

In fact, among the reasons which led him to indulge in the sexual act with Maria was half a bottle of brandy which he had
consumed by that time. As a result he fathers an illegal child Brigitta. He is deeply concerned about the welfare of his daughter.

‘He prayed silently, ‘O God-give me any kind of death-Without contrition, in a state or sin-only save this child.

(Part II, Chapter – I, P – 765)

He was aware of the fact that he wronged his daughter very much. When he is in prison, waiting for his execution next morning, his thoughts go back to her again, and he says:

“Oh God, help her. Damn me, I deserve it, but let her live for ever”

(Part III, Chapter – IV, P – 846)

He knows that he should pray not only for his daughter but for everybody in the world, but his thoughts go again and again to his daughter only. This is the human side of the priest who is all too human. We find him buying brandy in the town where he meets Mr. Lehr and Miss Lehr. We find him drinking brandy procured for him by the lieutenant when he has to spend his last night in prison.

‘I should like to do something for you’, the lieutenant said. ‘I’ve brought you some brandy’.
‘Against the law’?
‘Yes’.
‘It’s very good of you’.
‘We have to die some time’, the lieutenant said. ‘It doesn’t seem to matter so much when’.

(Part-III, Chap-IV, P-845)

So, this alcoholism and this act of fornication are permanent blots on the priest’s character. Above all, he is acutely and painfully conscious of his unworthiness, his failures, and his inadequacies.

Moreover, whisky priest suffers a lot because of Red Shirts and lieutenant. Because of his duty he couldn’t leave Vera Cruz. But his life was at stake:

‘The Governor was at me again today’, the chief complained.
‘Liquor’?
‘No, a priest’.
‘The last was shot, weeks ago’.

(Part – I, Chapter – II, P-724)

However, the lieutenant wants sufficient authority to take whatever steps he may deem fit in order to catch the priest. He can guarantee the priest’s capture within a month if he gets the necessary authority:

‘I will tell you what I’d do. I would take a man from every village in the state as a hostage. If the villagers didn’t report the man when he came, the hostage would be shot and then we’d take another’.
‘A lot of them would die, of course.
‘Would it be worth it’ the lieutenant demanded.

(Par-I, Chap-II, P-726)

From this point of time the sufferings of the priest begin. He wanders here and there only to save his life and during this period he performs his priestly duties. Whisky priest hides himself in the house of Captain Fellows. He suffers a lot there as the lieutenant reaches there to catch him. But Coral hides him in the big barn Captain Fellows assures lieutenant that he will be informed about the priest. After the arrival of lieutenant when he comes to know that priest is in the house he warns him to leave his house as early as possible:

‘I am looking for a man, the lieutenant said.
‘He can’t be here’.
Your daughter tells me the same.
‘She knows’
‘He is wanted on a very serious charge’.
‘Murder?’
‘No, treason’.
‘Oh, treason’, Captain Fellows said.
‘He is a priest. I trust you will report at once if he is seen’. The lieutenant paused.
‘You are a foreigner living under the protection of our laws. We expect you to make a proper return for our hospitality. You are not a Catholic?"
‘No’
‘Then I can trust you to report, the lieutenant said.
‘I suppose so’.

(Part – I, Chapter – III, P-734)

After leaving Coral’s house the priest reaches a village where villagers have no priest. Priest’s condition is very miserable and poor. He is hungry and tired. He asks a boy for some food:

‘Can you let me have a hammock for the night?
‘Ah, father, for a hammock you must go to a town.’
Can you give me a little spirit?
‘Coffee, father. We have nothing else.’
‘Some food.’
‘We have no food’.
‘Never Mind’.

(Part – I, Chapter – III, P-739)

Priest assures the villagers that he will listen to their confessions but he is too tired. The villagers are very excited because they meet a priest after five years. They don’t pay attention to priest’s request and start conversation with him:

‘We have no money, father to give you. The other priest Padre Jose....’
‘Give me some clothes instead’, he said.
‘But we have only what we wear’.

(Part-I, Chap-III, P-740)

Priest again and again requests the villagers to let him sleep for sometime. He shuts his eyes but in dream too he is very much afraid of lieutenant. Villagers assure him that they will inform him if there is any danger. In his sleepy state the priest hears their confessions and due to rough and selfish attitude of villagers he bursts into tears:

‘Can’t you let me sleep for five minutes?’
Old man said, It would be a pity if the soldiers came before we had time….such a burden on poor souls, father .......

‘Very well. Begin I will hear your confession.’
‘Can I bring the women?’ The old man was saying. ‘It is five years…’.
‘I am your servant’. He put him hand over his eyes and began to weep’.
‘Come,’ he said. ‘you must say your confessions. It is only polite to the father’……..He is very holy father’.

(Part – I, Chap – IV, P-742)

When whisky priest reaches Maria’s village, all the villagers welcome him. They request the priest for the Mass. Priest was aware that saying Mass would be dangerous activity for him. Moreover for the welfare of villagers and for his duty towards God he pronounces Mass in village. His preaching’s in Maria’s village show how different he is from other priests? Why he should get salvation?
'He said, one of the fathers has told is that joy always depends on pain. Pain is part of joy. We are hungry and then think how we enjoy our food at last. We are thirsty............’.

He stopped suddenly.

‘That is why I tell you that heaven is here: this is a part of heaven just as pain is a part of pleasure.’ He said, ‘Pray that you will suffer more and more and more. Never get tired of suffering. The Police watching you, the soldiers gathering taxes, the beating you always get from the jefe because you are too poor to pay, small pox and fever, hunger ....... that is all part of heaven – the preparation. What is heaven? ‘Heaven is where there is no jefe, no unjust laws, no taxes, no soldiers and no hunger. Your children do not die in heaven’.

(Part II, Chap- I, P – 756,757)

Thus, Priest gets a narrow escape because of Maria and villagers. They all know that priest has so many bad habits but, they save him because they are aware of his good qualities too. He hides his identity too and calls himself Montez in front of the lieutenant. Already he has suffered a lot. Now, he faces a new difficulty in his life in the form of mestizo. In the course of his travelling from village to village, the priest happens to meet a mestizo or a half-caste who recognizes the real identity of the priest and thrusts himself on the priest as a companion on his journey to Carmen which is priest’s next destination. The mestizo has heard that there is a reward on the priest’s head and he therefore attaches himself to the priest, so that he
may inform about the priest at an opportune time and claim the reward which the authorities have promised to pay to the man who will help to capture the priest. In the course of the journey, the mestizo addresses the priest as ‘senor’ and, on being asked why he is using this mode of address, the mestizo replies:

‘You are not offended, senor?’

‘Why do you call me senor?’

‘Anyone can tell you’re a man of education?’

‘The forest is free to all’, the priest said.

‘Do you know Carmen well?’ the man asked.

‘Not well, I have a few friends’.

(Part II, Chap- I, P – 768)

The mestizo tries his utmost to convince the priest that he has no evil motive, that he himself is a good Christian, and that he is a reliable man, but the priest knows that the mestizo means to betray him:

‘I’m not very sleepy’.

‘Blow out the candle. You’ll sleep better’.

‘I don’t like darkness’, the priest said. He was afraid.

‘Won’t you say a prayer, father, before we sleep?’

‘Why do you call me that?’ He asked sharply.

‘Oh, I guessed, of course. But you needn’t be afraid of me. I’m a good Christian’.
’You’re wrong’.
‘I could easily find out, couldn’t I? the half caste said, ‘I’d just have to say – father – hear my confession you couldn’t refuse a man in mortalism’.
‘Oh, you needn’t fear me’, the mestizo went carefully on.
‘I wouldn’t betray you. I’m a Christian. I just though a prayer …….. would be good ……….’

(Part II, Chap- II, P – 770,771)

It is with great difficulty that the priest is eventually able to get rid of the mestizo. As the mestizo is having fever, the priest gives his own mule to the mestizo to ride upon and then makes the mule take the path leading to the city of Carmen, himself taking a different path. The mestizo is now greatly upset at being separated from the priest and keeps shouting:

“Call yourself a Christian!”

He then begins to shout words of abuse at the priest and finally says:

“If I see you again, you can’t blame me. I don’t forget a face”

(Part II, Chap- I, P – 778)

The mestizo is a thorough hypocrite and a traitor. He is the villain of the piece. The mestizo turns up again when the priest, after
having arrived in a village where he is perfectly safe, is ready to proceed to the city of Las Casas where he proposes to start life a fresh as a priest. The mestizo has followed the priest to this place also and informs the priest that an American gangster who had been chased by the police lies seriously wounded and would like to make a dying confession in a village which is not very far from here. The priest knows that his going to hear the dying Yankee’s confession would mean risk to his own safety, but he cannot refuse to go, and the Mestizo knows this very well. In this way, the mestizo pushes the priest back into the territory where he is an outlaw. The police is of course waiting for the priest to arrive, and after the priest has vainly urged the Yankee to make a confession and the Yankee has died, the lieutenant appears and takes the priest into custody. Thus, the mestizo is directly responsible for the capture of the priest:

‘Didn’t you say he was dying?’ the priest asked.

‘Oh yes, dying, of course. But that can take a long time.’

‘The longer the bitter for all of us’, the priest said.

‘Perhaps you are right. I’ll take a rest here ……..’

‘Yes, where is it?’

‘Nothing, father’.

‘Why did you call me?’

‘I said nothing’, he lied.

The priest turned and went in ………..

‘Listen, father ………..’ the man said.
‘I am listening’.

‘You beat it out of here quick. I didn’t know …………’.

‘I haven’t come all this way to talk about myself’, the priest said.

‘The sooner your confession’s done, the sooner I will be gone’.

‘You don’t need to trouble about me. I’m through’.

‘You mean damned’? the priest said angrily …………’

‘I have come here to listen to your confession. Do you want to confess?’

‘No’

‘Did you when you wrote that note ………….?’

‘May be …………….’

‘Father’

‘Yes’

‘You take my gun father. Seen what I mean? Under my arm’

(Part III, Chap- II, P 833,834)

Because of such betrayals and sufferings, priest confesses to Padre Jose. And finally he concludes that Padre Jose is better than him in every way. He puts a question and asks that what he is doing and for what? He himself answers that he is too ambitious. Perhaps, Padre Jose did compromise with the circumstances and is a relaxed life. Padre Jose is more practical than him:
“Perhaps Padre Jose was the better man – he was so humble that he was ready to accept any amount of mockery, at the best of times he had never considered himself worthy of the priesthood”.

(Part II, Chap- I, P – 773)

When priest with the Governor’s cousin at the hotel room, he provides the priest illicit liquor. When priest comes out of the hotel he is caught by Red Shirt. Priest runs away from the hotel. Whisky priest, who is being pursued by a Red Shirt. And a few others, comes running to Padre Jose and begs for shelter for the night. Whisky priest was sure Padre Jose. But when the whisky priest reiterates his appeal, Padre Jose says:

‘Why come to me? Why should you think ..........? I’ll call the police if you don’t go. You know what sort of a man I am’.

He pleaded gently, ‘You’re a good man, Jose. I’ve always known that’.

‘I’ll shout if you don’t go.

He said, ‘If I ever offended you, Jose, for give me. I was conceited, proud, over-bearing – a bad priest. I always know is my heart you were the better man’.

‘Go’ , ‘go’. I don’t want martyrs here. I don’t belong any more. Leave me alone. I am all right as I am. Go and die quickly. That’s your job’.

(Part-II, Chap-II, P-788)
Thus, Padre Jose becomes more blunt and more rough in his refusal. His fear of the consequences is greater than his sense of duty as a human being or as an ex-priest. In the prison where the priest has to spend a night the charge of possessing a bottle of brandy, we again find him brooding upon his own sinfulness and worthlessness. He frankly tells his fellow – prisoners that he is a bad priest and a bad man living in a state of mortal sin:

‘Yes. Perhaps you are right. You see I am a bad priest and a bad man. To die in a state of mortal sin’.

(Part II, Chapter III, P – 794)

When a female prisoner refers to him as a martyr, he says that martyrs are not like him but they are holy men. He says that he is not only a drunkard, a whisky priest, but he has also fathered a child. He than falls to thinking and realizes that he is hardly in a position now to perform any spiritual duty, and that he is still afraid of death:

The woman said suddenly, ‘Think. We have a martyr here……’.

He said, ‘I don’t think martyrs are like this, ‘Martyrs are holy men. I tell you I am in a state of mortal sin. I have done things I couldn’t talk to you about. I could only whisper, them in the confessional’.

‘I don’t know how to repent’.

(Part II, Chap- III, P – 794)
At last, because of mestizo whisky priest is caught by the lieutenant. Whisky priest is so good and noble is attitude that lieutenant himself helps him by breaking all rules and regulations. When the priest has been captured in the end and expects to be shot immediately, the lieutenant says that he is not a barbarian and that the priest would first be tried in a court of law. Not only that; the lieutenant shows certain broadmindedness in appreciating what seems to him the good points of the priest. For instance, he says to the priest:

‘I have nothing you as a man’.

When priest says to lieutenant:

‘There are good priests and bad priests.. It is just I am a bad priest’.

Subsequently, the lieutenant clearly shows that he is not a rapid fanatic when he says to the priest:

“You aren’t a bad fellow. If there’s anything, I can do for you.................”.

(Part III, Chap-III, P – 736)

On the priest’s expressing a desire to make a confession, the lieutenant breaks all the rules and goes to the houses of Padre Jose to bring him to the priest. It is another matter that Padre Jose refuses to come, but the lieutenant does his best:
'Lieutenant said: you are wanted at the station to see a man – a priest. He wants to confess'.
'To me'?
'Yes. There’s no one else’.
'Poor man’. Padre Jose said.
'Is it against the law, isn’t it? Padre Jose asked.
'You needn’t trouble about that’?
The lieutenant said slowly, ‘This priest – he has been working for ears secretly - for your church. We’ve caught him and, of course, he’ll be shot to-morrow. He’s not a bad man, and I told him he could see you. He seems to think it will do him good’.
'I promise you’. Lieutenant said, ‘nobody shall know’.

(Part III, Chap- III, P – 844)

Lieutenant does this all only for the priest’s virtues. Not only that; the lieutenant breaks another law and procures some brandy for the priest, knowing the priest’s dire need of it:

'I should like to do something for you’ ‘the lieutenant said.
'I’ve brought you some brandy’.
'Against the law?’
'Yes’.

(Part III, Chap- IV, 845)

His legs may have been shaking when he faces the firing squad, but there is no doubt in our minds that he has died a heroic death.
Even the hard-hearted lieutenant is struck by his sincerity. He feels a kind of vacuum is his life after the death of whisky priest. And yet his faith does not waver, as another priest suddenly makes his appearance. The very victory of the lieutenant over the priest, and the church thus proves to be the lieutenant’s defeat. He has definitely achieved a certain degree of power and glory, spiritual power and spiritual glory which are divine in origin.

Thus, the priest is being hunted not only by the police lieutenant but also by God. It is a fact that Greene disliked being described as a catholic writer. None the less, his name became known around the world as the author of The Power and the Glory. The Power and the Glory is a remarkable and convincing amalgam of Greene’s researches, his experiences and his convictions interpreted by his skill and imagination as a creative writer. Edith Sitwell’s comment to Greene was, ‘What a great priest you would have made’.

In a sense The Power and the Glory is a powerful picture of the world in which man has done his best to destroy the individuality and freedom of his fellow man. On the one hand, it shows the revolution gone wrong, the hope for a better world dashed in violence, and draws the conclusion that after all, the end was under the pavement all along. Man reared in a wasteland cannot be expected to do better. On the other, it is individual transcendence through Catholicism. Just before his death the whisky priest says:
‘at the end there was only one thing that counted to be a saint’.

(Part-III, Chap-IV, P–838)

Greene’s ending suggests that man might even succeed where he thought he had failed. Moreover, the lieutenant is moved by the priest’s suffering. He realizes the intrinsic power and glory of the priest:

‘Well, you’re’, the lieutenant wittily says, “going to be a martyr – you’ve got that satisfaction”.

(Part-III, Chap-IV, P-839)

But the priest does not feel flattered. He knows what he is. Greene shows a complex sense of human predicament. The progression shows the priest moving from pride to sin, to God’s mercy. The priest and the lieutenant have something in common. Paul west comments:

‘Yet Greene is on both sides, the whisky priest’s and the police lieutenant’s both embody a discipline; both present modified extremes’.

The priest is a bundle of weaknesses. He is a drunkard. He has committed fornication, and become the father of a child. In his prosperous days he was proud and arrogant, and even afterwards proud is largely the motive for his having decided to stay on in the
country at a great risk to his life. His life has been full of sufferings. And yet this priest not only gives up his plan to escape to safety in the opening chapter of the novel, but goes back at the end from a place of safety to one where the police is waiting for him. The priest thus never fails to respond to the call of duty. His decision to go back in order to hear the dying confession of the American gangster especially raises him greatly in our admiration. He himself does not admit that he is a martyr, but a martyr he is. He himself says that he will be damned, but because of his love for humanity and devotion to duty, he most definitely is entitled for a place in heaven.

(II). ‘THE HEART OF THE MATTER’

“Scobie Sat down in the living room and put his feet upon another chair. He felt unwilling get to go to bed, but he was sleepy – it had been a long day. Now that he was alone he could indulge in the most irrational act and sleep in a chair instead of bed. The sadness was peeling off his mind, leaving contentment. He had done his duty. Louise was happy. He closed his eyes.”

(Part-I, Chap-IV, P-82)

The Heart of the Matter is one of the finest novels of Graham Greene, published in 1948 after several unproductive years. The scene of the novel is laid in a West African part during war. The place is inhabited by outsiders- British officials, Asians, Syrians, West Indian
Negroes. Greene has given quite an appropriate and meaningful title to the novel. In the novel the actual heart of the matter relates to Scobie, a Deputy Commissioner of Police and the hero of the novel and his relations with his wife, Louise, with his mistress Helen and with Yusef. In the case of Scobie, the heart of the matter is that Scobie (who can discard his mistress, Helen and stay with his wife who can forsake his wife to live with Helen, who can stay with his wife but continue to keep Helen as his mistress), can commit suicide. There is also the possibility of the problem being solved through some divine miracle. But, as it is not in anybody’s hands, the novelist selects suicide as the only recourse for his hero.

Seen from another angle, it may also be said that the heart of the matter for Scobie is that he is a good man with a fatal weakness, the weakness being the feeling of spontaneous pity which he experiences for everybody in distress, but which he experiences specially for Louise, then for Helen, and finally for both of them simultaneously. Eventually his feeling of pity and his sense of responsibility for both women becomes too powerful for him to bear any more. Besides this, he also feels a greater responsibility towards God. And this is the crux of the problem. This is, in fact, the heart of the matter.

A brief analysis of the novel reveals that he was preoccupied with the conflict between good and evil within man’s soul. The theme
of pursuit runs side by side, the guilty man is pursued by the inner-self, his conscience and also by the presence of God. God pursues the sinner who initially tries to run away but ultimately surrenders to divine will.

The main theme of the novel is salvation through suffering and damnation. But there is always a struggle between damnation and salvation.

What ever may be the theme-love, pity, fear, sex or even God’s mercy, violence always characterizes his novels. The criminal atmosphere lends an air of suspense and the novels tend to take the shape of thrillers and detective stories capable of attracting and engaging the reader’s attention.

Thus Graham Greene has successfully portrayed the

“Uprooted man adrift in urban society”

His characters are isolated creatures who are always trying to come to terms with life. There is a close connection between the inner conflict raging within the characters and the violence existing around them.

Walter Allen has rightly commented:
“The outer violence mirrors, as it were the violence within the characters”.

However, the main character Scobie in the novel is seeking salvation inspite of his evil and sinful deeds. He is saved by mercy of God. It is faith in God which finally wins.

To quote Maria Conto:

“Catholic belief and dogma is central to Greene’s fiction but theology is not his only concern. His novels are carefully controlled interweaving of metaphysical issues merging, into the fabric of political and social problems of our time. The thrust of his argument – be it in his thriller, entertainment, or novel – point to the individual faced with a conflict between various set of values”.

Scobie who is basically a person of excellent qualities becomes a sinner. He shows his innate pity and sympathy for those who come into his contact and he has a great sense of responsibility, but it is on account of these traits that he suffers. He is irresistibly drawn towards a sinful life, though is sinfulness does not make him a repulsive character. He is intended by Greene to be a tragic hero, though not one of classical proportions. A police officer he is rather undistinguished in appearance and hardworking and conscientious. The Commissioner calls him ‘Scobie the Just’. His asceticism and his fear of retirement bring to mind the Assistant Commissioner of It’s a
Battlefield. Scobie’s fatal flaw is pity which causes wrong appraisals and bungling of situations in his life. An element of pride is inseparable from Scobie’s pity because of his feeling that he owes it to himself to relieve the suffering of others.

R.D. Smith argues that Scobie

‘has chosen an inferior way of life because he is an inferior way of life because he is an inferior person who can get from life only the perverted satisfaction that comes from humiliation and frustration’.

So, Scobie is a man, who is betrayed by his natural inclinations in a world of evil. When the novel opens, we learn that he has been passed over for promotion. This hurts his wife, Louise, who has social and vaguely artistic ambitions. She is an ambitious woman. She tells Scobie that she has heard about his not being promoted to the post of commissioner. Scobie tells her that he already know about this. Then Louise expressed her dissatisfaction saying that. She would not be able to show her face in the club before other officer’s wives. Therefore it would be better if he resigned from his post under protest. But Scobie says that would not be possible because he would not get a good job and his pension would not be sufficient for them.

‘She says the commissioner’s retiring, and they’ve passed you over’. ‘Is it true’?
‘Yes. I’ve known it for weeks. It doesn’t matter, dear, really’. 
Louise said, ‘I’ll never be able to show my face at the club again’.

It’s not as bad as that. These things happen, you know’.

‘You’ll resign, won’t you, Ticki?’

‘I don’t think I can do that, dear’.

‘Ticki. You can’t take it lying down. You’ve got to think of me’.

(Part –I, Chap -III, P-29)

Louise has never been satisfied with the position of Scobie. Scobie’s transfer to a small town may be one of the causes of her frustration. But the greater blow comes when she learns from her friend Mrs. Castle that the present Commissioner is soon retiring and Scobie is not being promoted to that post. Scobie denial to resign from his post also adds to Louise’s displeasure. In fact, she does not like the place, nor the people of this coastal town. Therefore, she has decided to go to South Africa. She urges Scobie to think of her feelings. She goes to the extent of saying that Scobie bothers only for his own feelings and is selfish. He does not even respect the Catholic religion. Thus Louise expresses her great disappointment to Scobie:

Louise said, ‘If only we could go the South Africa I can’t bear the people here.
You’ve got enough for both of us, dear. Come and have some food’.

‘Ticki’ I sometimes think you just became a Catholic to marry me. It doesn’t mean a think to you, does it’?

(Part – I, Chap-III, P-29, 30)
Major Scobie has been presented as a man of limited economic needs. He is satisfied with what little he has. Like other officers he does not believe in piling money. Even in his office he does not believe in piling money. Even in his office he has only a few things. It is so because he is an honest and fair-minded person. The Commissioner calls him ‘Aristides the Just’. On the other hand Louise again and again puts immense pressure on Scobie to go to South Africa. But this proposal of Louise would mean a lot of money to him which was difficult for Scobie as he had no money. But Louise could not bear to live at that place. Scobie suffers a lot, but tries to make her understand the things saying that is South Africa the cost of living was very high. At this Louise says that he could drop some of his insurances and he could also try to minimize his expenses in her absence. She says that they did not have anybody to save money for.

“I could go the South Africa and wait until you have leave. Ticki, you'll be retiring soon. I'll get a home ready for you, Ticki’.
‘Ticki, I’ can’t bear it any longer her’.
‘I’ll have to figure it out, darling’.
‘Ethel Maybury’s in South Africa, and the Collinses. We’ve got friends in South Africa’.
‘Prices are high’.
‘You could drop some of your silly insurances’.
‘He doesn’t cost much’.
‘Every little helps, Ticki’.
‘I’d miss you’, he said.

(Part –I, Chap-VIII, P-42)

Scobie assures her that he would try to find some way out. Hearing this she at once falls asleep.

“She was like a tired carries who has slopped his load. She was asleep before he had finished his sentence, clutching one if his fingers like a child, breathing as easily. The load lay beside him now, and he prepared to lift it”.

(Part –I, Chap-II, P-43)

Scobie is

“corrupted by love & pity both into sin and into breach of duty”. 7

Scobie is a good man, but his fatal weakness is that he cannot bear that sufferings of those whom he loves. He carries an overcharge of pity. But before demanding money from Yusef, Scobie goes to his bank to meet the manager Mr. Robinson to ask him for an overdraft of two hundred fifty pounds, even though there was not enough balance in his own account.

‘Give me two hundred and fifty pounds’, Scobie said with a nervous attempt at jocularity’.
‘You people always think a bank’s made of money’.
Robinson mechanically jested. ‘How much do you really want’?
‘Three fifty’.
‘What’s your balance at this moment’?
‘I think about thirty pounds. It’s the end of the month.’

(Part-I, Chap-II (1), P-43)

Robinson replies that on account of the war conditions the banks are ordered to be very strict about overdraft. The manager also does not agree to give money against the guarantee of Scobie’s insurance policy, one of which he had already dropped three years ago.

Scobie is an honest officer. He has never taken any bribe. Hence he is always short of money. But the important thing is that in his dire need he does not stoop to adopt any dishonest means to raise an amount of two hundred and fifty pounds. He simply approaches the bank for an overdraft. But when he gets a negative reply:

“He felt as though he had been detected in a mean action – he had asked for money and had been refused. Louise had deserted better of him. It seemed to him that he must have failed in some way in manhood”.

(Part – I, Chap-II (i), P-44)

He is highly disappointed because he finds himself unable to arrange money of the sake of Louise. So out of pity for Louise, he
borrows money from Yusef, the Syrian trader. Under the stress of circumstances Scobie forgets what his experience has taught him, ‘that no human being can really understand another, and no one can arrange another’s happiness’.

The crux of the moral problem and suffering for Scobie also lies in his adulterous relations with Helen. Scobie is a married Catholic. When Louise goes away to South Africa, Scobie happens to meet Helen Rolt, a young nineteen year old widow, who in willingly provokes a crisis in his relations both with his wife and his Church. Helen comes into his life ‘on a stretcher grasping a stamp-album with her eyes shut fast’. This image haunts Scobie’s mind. Greene’s obsession with evil can be recognized in the malevolence which henceforward seems to pervade Scobie’s life, thwarting his aspirations and endeavors.

Scobie falls in love with this young woman so much so that he begins to seek in her a consolation for his isolated soul. The act of love with Helen opens a decisive phase in Scobie’s life. Driven by his own loneliness, Scobie extends himself in sympathy and compassion towards Helen. It is a brief Indian summer of love. Scobie feels drawn to her by her loneliness and innocence.

“Sadly like an evening tide he felt responsibility bearing him up the shore”.

(Part –III, Chap-III (i), P-165)
The conjunction of love and pity in human relationships in often found in Greene’s novels, particularly so in The Heart of the Matter. Discussing the anatomy of pity, Conor Cruise O’ Brien remarks that pity is:

“The form of Scobie’s relationship with those around him. This solitary tentacle of his takes hold only on children, or on adults who appear to him in the guise of children.......... . The people who touch him must be immature and helpless, he alone is responsible, the policeman, the father”.

But soon a sense of guilt overcomes him and he begins to contemplate that he will have to tell a number of lies in order to conceal this extra-marital affair. He knows that adultery is a damnable sin according to the Roman Catholic faith. He has betrayed the trust of Louise. At the time of his marriage with her he had taken a vow to fulfill his responsibility towards Louise but now he has accepted the contradictory responsibility by coming into contact with another woman Helen and entering into an affair with her. After an argument with Helen ,Scobie writes a letter telling her that he loves her more than himself, more than his wife, ‘more than God’. As he takes the letter to Helen’s lodging, he feels that he ‘carried a sense of corruption’ and wonders why he wrote the words ‘more than God’. It is as if his pity for Helen has led to his desertion of God.
“The sky wept endlessly around him: he had the sense of wounds that never healed”.

(Part –III, Chap-I (i), P-135)

In real sense, Helen wants to marry Scobie. But Scobie is a Roman Catholic and hence he cannot marry her. Helen is surprised to see that a Roman catholic can sleep with her but not marry her. There is thus a quarrel between the two:

‘It’s a wonderful excuse being a Catholic’, she said.
‘It doesn’t stop you sleeping with me, it only stops you marry me?’

(Part –III, Chap-I (i), P-133)

Helen is also seen as a repulsive girl. When Scobie tells her that he cannot marry her, she loses her patience and repulses, saying.

“Go to hell. Go to hell. Clear out’.

(Part-III, Chap-I (i), P-134)

This aggressive attitude of Helen tortures Scobie too much. Scobie says that he would go, she angrily replies.

‘Yes, go and don’t come back”.
Scobie thought, “why did I write that? Why did I write ‘more than God’?”

(Part –III, Chap-I (i), P-134)
Here lies further moral and spiritual deterioration. He has involved God in his sinful affair. So he expresses his disgust thus:

“O God, I have deserted you. Do not you desert me”.

(Part –III, Chap-I (ii), P-135)

These words clearly indicate that Scobie is very much conscious of his degeneration, suffering and moral decline for the sake of others.

Rather than this Scobie’s relations with Yusef may be considered as unfortunate and undergoing suffering. Right from the beginning Scobie does not have a good opinion about Yusef. Yusef in reality has his grievances against another trader named Tallit. He wants to use Scobie to settle the old scores with Tallit:

Won’t you come in and have a little whisky?
‘Sorry. I’m on duty, Yusef’.
It is very kind of you, Major Scobie to give me this lift. Would you let me show my gratitude by sending Mrs. Scobie a roll of silk’?
‘Just what I wouldn’t like, Yusef’.
‘Yes, yes, I know. It’s very hard, all this gossip. Just because there are some Syrians like Tallit’.
‘You would like Tallit out your way, wouldn’t you, Yusef?’
‘Yes, Major Scobie. It would be for me good, but it would also be for your good’.

(Part –I, Chap-II, P-36)
So he gives false and misleading information about Tallit’s cousin and by acting upon this information Scobie discredits himself in the eyes of his higher official. Scobie suffers a lot, for taking financial help from Yusef, a trader. An enquiry is held to investigate this matter but he is exonerated. But the most serious incident takes place when Yusef asks Scobie to hand over the packet to the captain of the ship. In this affair Yusef takes recourse to black mailing Scobie because he has with him the letter which Scobie had written to Helen. Yusef threatens Scobie to hand over the letter to Louise if he refused to do what he desires.

‘And now may I talk to you about diamonds, Major Scobie?’
‘Fire away then’.
‘You know I think the Government is crazy about diamonds. They waste your time, the time of the Security Police; they send special agents down the coast: we ever have one here you know who, though nobody is supposed to know but the Commissioner: he spends money on every black or poor Syrian who tells him stories. Then he telegraphs it to England and all down the coast. And after all this, do they catch a single diamond?’
‘This has got nothing to do with us, Yusef’.

(Part –III, Chap-I (i), P-83,84)

Thus Scobie becomes an accomplice in the smuggling carried out by Yusef. To make the matters worse Yusef sends a diamond to
Scobie as a reward for his act done in favour of Yusef. Scobie however refuses this gift. But gradually Scobie feels that he can get some comfort in the company of Yusef. So when he is passing through an utter spiritual agony he goes to Yusef to get some relief. Here too he gets himself involved in another trouble Ali is murdered. Scobie begins to feel himself responsible for the death of Ali. This murder comes as a great shock to his already tormented soul.

From all this it appears that the actions taken by Scobie as means of attaining happiness for others and peace for himself are the very actions which result in suffering for him as well as for others and which ultimately destroy him. Scobie’s career is marked by terrible human suffering, the result not only of his own obsession but also of a fatality that intrudes upon his life. We witness in Scobie, as in Pinkie and the whisky-priest earlier, a conflict between evil and faith in human nature. With the return of Louise events move swiftly, with a great deal of irony towards Scobie’s attempt to damn himself to put himself out of the reach of God. At the same time, his pity drives him to struggle with a God who does not seem to have the same compassion as he has and who would not allow him to the happiness of others as he wishes. There is bitterness between them and ‘he could speak to Him only as one speaks to an enemy’. The tension in the novel arises from Scobie’s endeavour to pit his own compassionate self against the Omnipotence which allows unreasonable anguish in human life.
For the first time in Greene’s fiction as Kenneth allot and Miriam Farris observe,

‘the problem of reconciling the existence of suffering with an omnipotent and merciful providence is now raised explicitly’.\(^9\)

The religious motivation grows stronger in the novel when Scobie is faced with the problem of religious observance. Louise, who has heard about Scobie’s affair with Helen, asks him to accompany her to the Mass. As a Catholic, Scobie has the alternative of making his confession as an unavoidable preliminary, or, by his refusal, give himself away and let Louise know the worst. He cannot hurt Louise by his refusal and he cannot hurt Helen by giving her up. He is concerned by his wife’s insistence. But going to the communion without prior repentance means damnation, ‘taking his God’ in a state of moral Sin. Scobie must, however, decide between the conflicting claims of his wife and Helen but, as he cannot decide without causing pain to one of them, there is in fact no choice left open to him.

Father Rank refuses absolution and it seems to Scobie that ‘he had only left for his exploration the territory of despair’. But now he is determined to clear himself in his wife’s eyes by going the whole hog. By participating unshriven in the celebration of the Eucharist, Scobie is convinced that he is sinning more grievously than the celebrants of a Black Mass: he does not love evil or hate God:
“He was desecrating God because he loved a woman – was it even love, or was it just a feeling of pity and responsibility!”

(Part -III, Chap –III (i), P-168)

Kneeling at the Communion rail, as he partakes of the Host, he prays:

‘Oh God, I offer my damnation to you. Take it. Use it for them’.

(Part -III, Chap –II (i), Page – 185)

He says to Helen, who taunts him about his Roman Catholicism,

‘I believe, I tell you. I believe that I’m damned for all eternity…. What I’ve done is far worse than murder – that’s an out, a blow, a stab, a shot: it’s over and done, but I’m carrying my corruption around with me. It’s the coating of my stomach. I can never void it’.

(Part -III, Chap –III (i), P -169)

Isolated and suffering, Scobie is overtaken by weariness of spirit. He has betrayed Louise, his Government and his God, and it seems to him ‘one of the qualities of deceit’ that makes him lose the sense of trust. The unbearable conflict between his love for Louise and Helen (that he pities Louise and does not love her is not important because pity means more to him than sexual love), neither of whom he can leave to the wisdom and mercy of God, and his love for God,
who he cannot go on desecrating, is revealed in an inner dialogue between him and God. Scobie reasons that by killing himself he will stop inflicting pain on those he loves – Louise, Helen, God:

‘O God! I am the only guilty one because I’ve known the answers all the time. I’ve preferred to give you pain rather than give pain to Helen or my wife because I can’t observe your suffering. I can only imagine it. But there are limits to what I can do to you – or them. I can’t desert either of them while I’m alive, but I can die and remove myself from their blood stream. They are ill with me and I can cure them. And you too God – you are ill with me ……. You’ll, be better off if you lose me once and for all. I know what I’m doing. I am not pleading for mercy – I’m going to damn myself. Whatever that means’.

(Part -III, Chap –II (i), P – 185)

A voice within, the voice of God, pleads with him, urging him to live, to give up either Louise or Helen and to trust them to his mercy, but Scobie, caught in the conflicting tides of love cannot but go down. He cannot transfer to God his burden of responsibility and he cannot make either Louise or Helen suffer so as to save himself Laurence Lerner writes:

‘Scobie mistrusts God because he cannot Shrug off his part in Helen’s happiness: the selfish action and the right action would, in his case,
be the same, and he has to do the wrong compassionate action, even if it means given up salvation'.

Scobie, therefore, tries the only way he can to see it through: he prepares methodically for the ultimate sin of despair, suicide. He is going to commit the worst crime a Catholic can commit and he is going to make it a perfect one. He finally decides to commit suicide. Therefore he does not want that Louise should be shocked to learn about his suicide. He wants that his death should look natural. He does not want people to know that he has committed suicide. He also does not want that the insurance company should refuse to pay to Louise the insurance money. And above all he does not want to bring disgrace to the Roman Catholic Church. Therefore right from the beginning he begins to take some steps. He makes it known to others that he is suffering from angina on account of which he experiences severe pain in his chest. To this effect he makes entries in his dairy. He creates evidence in his dairy to persuade his survivors to believe that he had no anticipation of his death. He does not, of course, die without a bitter struggle. He feels the ‘imploring fingers’ touching him, trying to hold him.

In Greene’s novels, God does not quite give up a sinner and His grace always tries to reach him. But Scobie feels so mired in Sin, so ‘greased with falsehood, treachery’, that he cannot believe that any
hands can hold his fall. We may agree with Marie-Beatrice Mesenet when she says that:

‘Scobie’s ultimate fault is to believe that his sin is too great for God to forgive it’.

(Part I, Chap I (i), P – 89)

As he swallows the overdose of Evipan tablets, Scobie tries to say an act of contrition, but ‘he couldn’t remember what it was that he had to be sorry for’. His fatal sense of responsibility stays with him. He starts up at ‘the cry of a victim’, someone outside seeking to get in, someone appealing for help. God is his victimizer as well as his last victim. He says aloud:

‘Dear God, I love …………….’

(Part III-, Chap-I (iii), P – 190)

and falls dead. Scobie’s last words put the final seal of ambiguity on his character and life.

The novel ends with a conversation between Mrs. Scobie and Father Rank. When Louise goes to Father Rank and expresses her horror and sense of religious shock, the Father makes some very significant observations about church. When Louise mentions the rules of the church, Rank says that:
‘the church knows all the rules. But it doesn’t know what goes on in a single human heart.’

*(Part -III, Chap - I (i), P – 194)*

Father Rank tells Louise that Scobie really loved God.

Thus in his opinion Scobie is not damned. His earthly sins culminate in the sin of suicide, but still he gets salvation. He deserves God’s mercy. Scobie had a love for human beings and this love, combined with love of God, entitles him to divine mercy and forgiveness. The final opinion of Greene about Scobie is that Scobie is a man who has committed damnable sins and yet is a human being with human infirmities. That is what Father Rank, at the end of the novel suggests:

‘It may seem an odd thing to say – when a man’s as wrong as he was – but I think, from what I saw of him, that he really loved God’.

*(Part- III, Chap –I (i), P – 194)*

Thus, it is imperative that Scobie should not be denied the mercy, grace and forgiveness from God, who eventually knows the minds and hearts of his creation.
“A man in that position burying himself in a leproserie, spending a night praying with a leper in the bush – you must admit, Monseigneur, that self sacrifices like that are rare. What do you think?”

(Part III, Chapter I (i), P – 69)

Graham Greene’s ‘A Burnt-out Case’ (1961) set in Belgian Congo, showcases the feeling of anxiety and the significance of human love and suffering in an individual’s life. The novel emphasizes upon Greene’s usual criticism of modern life that has deprived man of his existential humanity. His love for the simple and peaceful life of the African natives that is still capable of revitalizing man also comes to the fore front. The novel offers an interesting contrast between contemporary civilized life and the primitive African life. The pressure of the ordered, systematized life has made modern man selfish, brutal and violent, whereas in the primitive way of life man is still full of concern for his fellow beings. Greene criticizes the dehumanizing elements of modern life, condemns all political and economic progress and reveals a nostalgic longing for more humane and personal conditions of life.

Querry, a typical Greene protagonist, wary, polite, highly intelligent offers a horrifying picture of a man who is sick of European civilization. He is the central figure in the novel, and
represents the contemporary man. He can face a fact; he cannot feel it. He has

“gone in pursuit of his dead self to the ends of the earth.”

The novel depicts the dilemma of Querry. Burnt out by his success as an architect and as a womanizer in Europe, he arrives at a leper village in the Belgian Congo. Querry’s moral condition is much like the physical condition of Deo Gratias, the servant whose body has been mutilated by leprosy. Querry is first unaware of the suffering as he himself remarks:

‘I want nothing. I suffer from nothing, I no longer know what suffering is’.

(Part I, Chapter - I (i), P – 10)

Like other characters of Greene, Querry also does suffer and die for the mistakes of others. Rycker shoots him. Rycker is the husband of a young woman Marie for whom he had felt sorry. Like Scobie his own pity is the cause of his destruction. Instead of the success that was thrust upon the unwilling Scobie, Querry has virtues foisted on him by other people. For example, Father Thomas thinks he is a good Catholic at heart; Parkinson the popular journalist thinks that he has gone to Congo to sacrifice himself for the good of others; Marie thinks she is in love with him. The absurdity of illusions that have led to his death strike. Querry at the end. It was absurd that he, a burnt out
case, unable to feel suffering or sympathy, should have been killed by the jealous husband of the girl he has pitied, or else, there had been a plan in his life which he realized at the moment of death.

The novel exposes the dilemma of the hero who is told,

“Sometimes I think that the search for suffering and the remembrance of suffering are the only means we have to put ourselves in touch with the whole human condition. With suffering we part of the Christian myth”.

(Part V, Chap - I, P – 141)

The question posed by the novel in the end is whether Querry gets salvation for his sins, sufferings and denials. Though earlier he led a corrupted life but like other characters of Greene, Priest, Scobie etc. he devotes and dedicates rest of his life for other people. But in that gentle and noble phase of life he suffers a lot because of others. Moreover he never loses his temper and tries to convert every odd in his favour.

Querry is a man who is sick of European civilization. Bored of his worldly success, Querry tries to escape to a remote leper colony. Driven by a sense of revulsion, he wants to be in a place where nothing will remind him of his pose where he.

“was alive, with aocation and a capacity to love – if it was love”.

(Part II, Chap - III (i), P – 46)
The suffering of the world’s untouchables, the humanity of Doctor Colin and the priests, the peaceful life of the Leproserie stir a sense of kinship with the people in distress and revive his love for man. The representatives of the civilized world, on the other hand, which Querry has left behind, stand as hurdles in the way of his self-knowledge. Querry experiences a lot of suffering and finally dies because of three persons namely Rycker, Marie and Parkinson. All three create a storm in the peaceful life of Querry.

Rycker, the manager of a palm oil plantation, a smuggler, pious, formalistic, self-centred Catholic is a dehumanized figure. A man interested in moral theology, he bores his young wife with his spiritual discussions. While talking to Querry he reveals that his wife does not love him and she could leave him at any time. He also says that she refuses to fulfill her marital duties. Rycker said:

“That’s no protection. We are men of the world, Querry, you and I. A love like that doesn’t last. I tried to teach her the importance of loving God. Because if she loved him, she wouldn’t went to offend him, would she? And that would be some security. I have tried to get her to pray, but I don’t think she knows any prayers except the Pater Noster and the Ave Maria’.

(Part- II, Chap - II, P – 41)

He is proud, full of self-conceit and has no genuine sympathy for the lepers. He helps the mission only out of charity. Rycker
propagates Querry’s presence in the colony and puts in his way Parkinson, a vulgar, corrupt, English journalist, so as to obstruct Querry’s self-knowledge. With the arrival of Parkinson, the great world, which Querry has left, makes a path to his door and Querry’s quest for identity is interrupted by the sensational and ridiculous accounts of his achievements spread by the journalist. The doppleganger motive suggested in the relationship between the whisky priest and the Half Caste and between Scobie and Yusef is hinted at here.

Having found Querry, Rycker imposes himself upon the famous man. He praises Querry all over the cocktail party, and introduces him to the Director of Public works in this manner:

‘You can take it from me, is only a first step. He is designing a modern African church. He hinted at that to me himself. He’s a man of great vision. What he builds lasts. A prayer in stone. Now we shall learn what the church thinks of Querry’.

(Part III, Chap- I (i), P – 68)

Once a seminarist, now a ‘pious imbecile’, Rycker inflicts his spiritual problems on Querry and seeks solace for his own frustrated vanity and lust. He says:

‘I’m not jealous. It’s not a man I worry about. She hasn’t enough feeling for that. Sometimes she even refuses her duties.’
'What duties?'

'Her duties to me. Her married duties'.

'I've never thought of those as duties.'

'You know very well the church does. No one has any right to abstain except my mutual consent'.

'I suppose there may be times when she doesn’t want you'.

'Then what am I supposed to do? Have I given up the priesthood for nothing at all?'

(Part II, Chap - II, P – 41)

It is Rycker who publicizes Querry’s presence at the Leproserie and sets the journalist Parkinson on his trail. With Parkinson’s arrival at the Leproserie, the great world catches up with Querry and destroys his dream of Pendele. Querry recognizes in Parkinson’s corruption an affinity with himself. As Querry realizes that Parkinson and he are ‘two of a kind’, he loses his reticence though not his fear of the fat journalist. He said:

‘You are my looking glass. I can talk to a looking-glass, but one can be a little afraid of one too. It returns such a straight image’.

(Part- IV, Chap - II (ii), P – 132)

In his conversation with Parkinson, he virtually ‘confesses’, but Parkinson is blind to everything, except his effort to build up Querry as ‘an architect of the souls’, ‘the hermit of Congo’. The publication is made of half truths and he promises further publication which makes
Querry furious. His new life is threatened and jeopardised. Doctor Colin aptly reflects:

“The fools, the interfering fools, they exist everywhere, ....... He had been cured of all but his success, but you can’t cure success ....... Success is like that too – a mutilation of the natural man”.

(Part VI, Chapter- II (ii), P – 197)

The grotesquely fat journalist, Parkinson, draws a vampire-like sustenance from his three million readers of the Post and believes that he can manipulate Querry’s reputation at will:

‘I told you I was going to build you up ....... Unless ....... I find it makes a better story to pull you down’.

( Part VI, Chapter- II (ii), P – 197)

But the novel moves beyond this wickedly accurate caricature to reveal how media distortion has its roots in ‘ordinary’ life.

Both Rycker and Parkinson are so determined to take advantage of Querry’s reputation that Rycker provides wrong information about Querry to print in the article. Querry wants to lead a very calm and simple life at Leproserie. He wants to start a new chapter in his life by helping poor lepers but everyone wants to reveal his bad past. Everyone wants to know why he is in Leproserie. Moreover Parkinson without investigating the truth of the information provided by Rycker
prints it in an article. When Marie goes to Leproserie she reveals all
details to the superior about the rumour which her husband and
Parkinson are circulating against Querry and making Querry’s life
difficult and complex. She told:

‘My husband has told everyone that Mr. Querry is building a church’.
‘Oh no, we have better uses for him than that. The new hospital too is
a long way from being finished. Any money we can beg or steal must
go to equipping it.
‘I’ve just been looking at these catalogues …….’
‘Where is M. Querry now?’
‘Oh, I expect he’s working in his room, unless he’s with the doctor’.
‘Everybody was talking about him at the Governor two weeks ago’.
‘Poor M. Querry’.

(Part III, Chapter- II (i), P – 78)

Querry is not only betrayed by Parkinson and Rycker as well as
by Marie Rycker, the child wife of local industrialist. Querry’s
compassion for this immature wife of Rycker leads to his involvement
with her and thus to the novel’s denouement. Greene has always
looked upon innocence as a deadly trap and Querry, like Scobie in
The Heart of the Matter, is caught in it. Marie Rycker with her pretty
unformed face, her guilt and boredom and her longing for freedom
moves Querry’s heart by her unhappiness, though Querry’s
experience has taught him that ‘unhappiness was like a hungry animal
waiting beside the track for any victim’. Despite danger signals, he finds it impossible not to treat her as a child.

“It was absurd to consider that anyone so immature could be in any way a danger.”

( Part- VI, Chap- I (i), P – 171)

Querry does not have any sexual desire for Marie from the beginning. It was Marie who was young and her husband Rycker was very old and not in the condition to fulfill her sexual needs. From the very first day when Marie sees Querry she hatches a secret plan to leave Rycker as well as Africa forever.

Whenever Rycker forcefully establishes physical relations with her she imagines that Querry is sharing her bed. It is Marie who destroys the peace of mind of Querry. When Father Thomas shows a newspaper cutting to Querry, he becomes, restless and finally decides to go to Rycker to ask about all nonsense Father Thomas reads the article for Querry:

‘There’s to be a second article, it appears, in a week’s time. It says here, “Next Sunday A Saint’s Past Redemption by Suffering. The Leper Lost in the Jungle.’

‘Give it to me’. Querry tore the paper into pieces and dropped them on the floor. ‘Is the road open?’

(Part- V, Chap - I, P – 156)
When Querry reaches Rycker’s place, he was ill. Firstly, Marie meets him. Marie is in doubt of a pregnancy. She discusses this problem with Querry and asks him to take permission from Rycker to see doctor. Moreover she goes to Leproserie with Querry without Rycker’s permission. But Querry asked her:

‘Wouldn’t it be better if I went back and spoke to him?’

‘He might say no. Then what could I do?’

( Part- VI, Chap- I (i), P -170)

Marie does not have any sympathy for her sick husband. Both of them stay in a hotel side by side. They spend night in the same room but instead of seducing her he spends the night telling her the story of his life. Marie is not able to understand Querry. She says:

“I don’t really understand you. I have to stay here, but my God if I were free like you …….” ‘I will tell you a story’, he said and poured himself out a second treble scotch.’

( Part- VI, Chap- I (i), P – 170)

This story is real as it deals with the life of Querry. The parable, he narrates to Marie Rycker, is a sort of confession that gives him a sense of freedom and release from the past. He regains his real self through suffering. He reflects:
‘I think I am cured of pretty well everything, even disgust. I’ve been happy here’.

(Part- VI, Chap - II (i), P – 193)

In the hotel, where Querry and Marie are staying night, Rycker arrives the very next day. He is very angry. He finds the dairy of Marie in which it was written, ‘Spent night with Q.’’ Parkinson is also there to confirm the doubts of Rycker. Querry quietly goes away to Leproserie when he sees that Rycker is not in a mood for any clarification. After some days Marie in the stage of pregnancy reaches there and announces in front of saints and nuns that Querry is the father of the child she is carrying. Querry is shocked and asked Marie in front of all:

“Just tell them whose baby it is”.
‘I have told them’, She said,. ‘It’s yours.
Mine, too, of course,’ She added.

(Part- VI, Chap - III (iii), P – 216)

The consequence of this affair is totally anomalous because Querry has been a selfish and successful lover of women, Rycker shoots his rival. Querry dies amused at the irony of this, His power over women has always been a way of his worldly success, and when he renounced success he renounced women too, but he dies their victim. Querry’s death seems to be incomprehensible. He has not done any wrong, yet he is killed. He remains a displaced person, in both the
literal and metaphorical sense. There is no love among the lepers. This is all that he has learnt. The rest is a farce, just as his death is

David, Pryce-Jones: remarks in this connection:

“He (Greene) has rounded off the movement started by the priest who leapt out for sanctification, continued by Scobie who failed in the pain of exercise, hated by Bendrix who comprehended the full evolution, and shirked by Fowler at the peril of personal emptiness”.

Querry’s soul is always in a state of restlessness because it is constantly looking for itself but is unable to discover it. This kind of absence of itself from itself is suggestive of the state of being on the way tending towards God. This indicates that Querry has attained faith. The line from Pascal that the Superior quotes in applicable to him:

“A man who starts looking for God, has already found him. The same may be true of love—when we look for it, perhaps we’ve already found it”.

(Part- VI, Chap - II (ii), P – 198)

Thus, Querry comes very close to the ideal of Kierkegaard’s spiritual man. He gets a moment of insight into himself through suffering:

“Suffering is the distinguishing quality of religious action”.12
Querry has shaken off all attachments of the world and has given up his desire to rise to the height of worldly achievements. Querry has conquered his mind and subdued his sex-instinct and who is free from passion, fear and anger, appears to be coming very close to the ideal of the ‘Sthita Prajna’ mentioned in Bhagawad Gita. Even the scandal and abuses of Rycker do not disturb his modesty. Not afraid of his own death he feels pity for Mary Rycker who sticks to her lies as

“They are her only way of escape from Rycker and Africa”.

(Part- VI, Chap- I (i), P – 185)

He dies laughing and murmuring,

‘Absurd, this is absurd or else’.

(Part-VI, Chap-II, P-196)

His last words suggest that life and death are meaningless and they acquire meaning in some transcendental pattern offered by religion.

Thus we can say that although Querry passes his life in suffering and damnation but in the end due to his virtues, innocence, humility and cooperative nature he may get salvation .The novel conveys Greene’s reactions against the present industrialized civilization that has dehumanized man, and his love for the simple,
innocent and peaceful primitive life. It points out that theological discussions and the observance of dogmas are not relevant to faith that results from human love and suffering.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The title of the novel is taken from Lord’s prayer in ‘The Bible’.


3. Letter from Edith Sitwell to Graham Greene, 19th April, 1945


6. The Spectator, 4 June 1948, P.-688


8. Maria Cross, P-78-79

9. The Art of Graham Greene, P-217
