

**Impact  
Factor  
2.147**

**ISSN 2349-638x**

**Reviewed International Journal**



**AAYUSHI  
INTERNATIONAL  
INTERDISCIPLINARY  
RESEARCH JOURNAL  
(AIIRJ)**

**Monthly Publish Journal**

**VOL-III**

**ISSUE-VI**

**June**

**2016**

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## **‘ECCLESIASTICAL INTUITION’ IN THE FICTIONS OF GRAHAM GREENE**

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### **Abstract:**

*Henry Graham Greene, the recipient of Nobel Prize for literature, is well acclaimed English novelist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He demonstrates the social, political and economic aspects through his works. At the same time, he thoroughly explores the ambivalent moral and political issues of the modern world through a Catholic perspective. In his writing, he strongly reflected Catholic religious themes such as feeling of loneliness, disillusionment, sterility, depression, despair, frustration, rootlessness, sin and sinners, saintly sinners, evil, sin and suffering, salvation through suffering and damnation, violence in religion, psycho-analytical perspectives, religious visions, religious consciousness etc. William Golding describes him as ‘The ultimate Chronicler of 20<sup>th</sup> century man’s consciousness and anxiety.’*

*The present paper focuses on ecclesiastical intuition of modern civilization, especially of Catholic religion. It emphasizes that only religion can give us true relief. It serves as the effective means of deliverance. It is the faith in religion which in a true sense survives a believer. His lack of faith may tend him to lose his faith on God. His spiritual zeal and passion can kill the brutal forces of evil.*

### **Key words:**

Ecclesiastical intuition, faith, Catholic religion, synthesis with God, deliverance etc.

### **Introduction:**

According to Christian theology, the term ‘Ecclesiastical Intuition’ refers to religious or spiritual vision of a true believer. Especially intuition is a psychological term which designates perception of actual fact. In fact, it is a religious experience. According to the Ontologists, “Our knowledge of notions endowed with the character of necessity and universality as well as our idea of the Infinite, are possibly only through an antecedent intuition of God present in us.” (www.wikipedia.com)

Graham Greene says, “Religion is a source of guidance and consolation. Religion is not so much of the observance of traditional orthodox practices, but a source of solace in moments of crisis, a psychical experience. All cannot be martyrs, but every individual, however lowly placed, should once face the moment of truth, and confess the burden of guilt. Religion need not be always associated with the institution of the Church for basically it is a matter of man's consciousness.”



Graham Greene is one of the contemporary writers who explore new morality. He wipes out worn and traditional ideals from the society. In this universe man has been the subject of all philosophical and ecclesiastical speculation. In middle ages in Europe, Christian theology identified man's situation in the universe. Greene professed the reality of faith and unsparing self assessment through his novels. He also describes the narrow boundary between loyalty and disloyalty & between fidelity and infidelity. He advocates that failure comes in life due to the sense of treachery in the human heart and distrust. Greene reaffirms his Catholic faith by stating that death is only an end to mortal life. He proclaims, "I don't believe myself that death is everything or rather my faith tells me that death is not the end of everything."

In this modern world, human beings boast about science and technology. But they should not forget that there is the supreme power than science, it is the divine power which controls the lives of human beings. G. W. Allport rightly states that "It is up to the modern man to take up the strands of science and bind them with the values and traditions taught by religion." In of his novels, 'The Power and the Glory' (1942), he states that at the bottom of every human mind there is degraded love of success, which conceives pleasure. But ironically enough, the real pleasure receives in following the principles of religion. If true believer obeys the commandments of God, blessings (success) will run after him. Graham Greene says that in everything moral failure takes place. "Goodness has only once found a perfect incarnation in a human body and never will again, but evil can always find a home there. Human nature is not black and white but black and grey."

Human beings attempt to acquire self knowledge through an awareness of the conditions around him. Kierkegaard says, "But the man is not yet a self unless he has achieved a synthesis with God." This lack of synthesis (alienation) causes sickness and despair in man. This despair arises in his heart due to the sickness unto death. Sister Mariella Gable announces, "By incorporating the concepts of Catholic faith in English novels, Greene has expanded the boundaries of English novels." Greene holds the common thread of the conflict between good and evil and determines the spiritual devotion and intelligence of believers. He emphasizes the radical problems of the evil which creates due to frustration and despair. There is internal clash between what ought to be and what actually is. The Bible rightly asserts, "Do not only listeners but be practitioners." These believers are careless about their spirituality; rather they indulge in worldly matters. The sin lies in the flesh of their body as they ignore the path of righteousness. Greene says, "The sinful life is worldly and carnal but sin is essentially man's perverse scorn of God's will."

The basic evil sin is always in the depraved straying of man's will from the higher to the lower. Greene utters that man falls into errors when he fails to make the god the centre of his life. Christianity believes in the principle of devotion and dedication. If man fails in surrendering himself in the hands of God, he may be victim of Satan. Samuel Richardson, Jane Austen, Henry James, Evelyn Waugh, George Eliot mentions the transcendental struggle of good and evil in their works. E.M.Forster observes on the power of making right and wrong very near to evil and good. Virginia Woolf has clearly visualized the real evil of violence coming in from outside which they simply cannot guard against through her works. Bronte, Dickens, Conrad, and Kipling Yeats, Ezra Pound, D.H. Lawrence and G.B.Shaw also shared a strong sense of evil.

Graham Greene, from the point of view of Christian religion, explains the inevitability of evil in this world. He allows his characters to descend and move away from the benevolence of God because it is only when one is away from Him that one can realize the necessity of His mercy. Greene examines life by placing a person in some distress caused by a particular contemporary environment. He believes that "Distress turns an individual towards God. At a metaphysical level, good and evil cannot be isolated from each other. Human life comprises both good and evil and it is this life that is the incarnation of mystery."

Greene is obsessed with good and evil as human problems, not as Catholic problems. His characters are less of good and true Catholics and more of human beings. His sense of evil cannot be attributed to his adopted religion. His sense of evil is certainly religious because it is based on the recognition of supernatural forces. His fictions are built on despair and belief, evil and faith. In fact, the existence of the one implies the existence of the other. So he tells about the existence of heaven and hell, "One began to believe in heaven because one believed in hell."

In February 1926, Greene converted into the Catholic religion. Greene himself states that he is a catholic with an intellectual if not an emotional belief in catholic dogma. He found it difficult to harmonize his experience with Catholic myth, reality with the orthodoxy of belief. Catholicism may have given him emotional anchorage, a sense of belonging but it has not affected his creative pursuit. The new faith might have given him some spiritual assurance but he has not sacrificed experience to the tailor-made dogma of the Church. The struggle against evil, against the forces of alienation is the hallmark of the novels of the thirties. Greene belongs to this milieu and his attitude like his contemporaries is shaped by the ethos of the age. In *England Made Me* (1935), Greene shows a protest against the dehumanizing capitalist world. In his first religious novel *Brighton Rock*, he points out how human society is based on injustice. By that time Greene had come to the conclusion that sin and suffering are inevitable in this world and that every human soul should have the freedom to develop in its own way. During his Mexico travels in 1938, Greene discovered; "The world is all of a piece, of course; it is engaged everywhere in the same subterranean struggle, lying ... between the two eternities of pain and God knows the opposite of pain, not we."

His novels *Brighton Rock*, *The Power and the Glory* and *The Heart of the Matter*, together form the Catholic trilogy. *Brighton Rock* focuses on salvation and damnation. *The Power and the Glory* (1940) and *The Heart of the Matter* and *The Ministry of Fear*, is built on the sentiment of pity. Greene courageously expressed his views on sin, grace and salvation. We can see his progress as a writer from melodrama to the study of evil in its various manifestations. He reflects the social and sacramental vision as well as intrinsic humanistic and religious concerns in his novels. He deals with the themes of good and evil, of immortality and God, and the profound problems of human life and destiny. He finds that the growing feeling of mental anguish experienced in modern times is due to the decay of religious sense. This religious sense was the central concern of Greene. He has brought back to the English novel this lost dimension, the religious sense. For him the importance of the human act is linked with the importance of the religious sense, and the visible world is inseparable from the spiritual. Greene is fully agreed with the opinion of Marie - Beatrice Mesnet's idea "Only through violence and hell are we brought to faith and heaven".



Greene's conversion to Roman Catholicism created many problems. Religion was called upon to do what psychoanalysis had failed to do. And it created a highly problematic situation. It unleashed a war between experience and dogma, a conflict between reality and the religious beliefs. Catholicism provides him a sense of belonging and ultimate consolation. During inter-war decade, controversies created on the basis of science and system of beliefs. The beliefs like religious thought and faith were subjected to psychological analysis. This faith was built around the conceptions like god, soul, immortality, virtue, salvation etc. Greene has a humanitarian and religious outlook towards religion. All human beings often experience a non-rational awareness of the presence of a Supreme Being. Therefore, religion and the experience of God, depend on the state of mind in essence. Graham looked at religion from a contemporary perspective. He also considers evil as a natural part of the human heart as much as virtue is. He is against ritualistic aspect of tradition like T.S. Eliot. On the contrary, he emphasizes that religion alone can give us relief from the increasing dissatisfactions and despair and help us defend ourselves against the dehumanizing collectives and restore our true personality. Only religious faith can help us to feel at home in the universe and challenge the whole dehumanizing, de-personalizing process of the modern age.

Greene's novels carry a stamp of his religious consciousness. He provides the history of human condition with the help of the doctrines and symbols of the Catholic religion. Greene's fictional transfiguration of Catholicism is remarkable. Keshava Prasad says, "Religion has not blunted Greene's inbred radicalism; rather it has sharpened his sense of modern malaise. He did not join the Communist party, but championed people fighting against injustice and exploitation. Struggle is the main plank in the superstructure of his human ideology. His mind is untainted by religious considerations."

Greene has genuinely linked together religion and the sense of life. As R.W.B. Lewis observes: "No writer of his generation has more effectively portrayed the suffocation, the sheer hatred of the visible human world that results from certain kind of religiosity." Greene is concerned with sin and sanctity. The rigidity of rituals has not been recognized by those who have converted themselves to Catholicism during the inter-war period. Greene's Catholicism could be easily mistaken to be something like 'natural religion', based on man's intrinsic desire to repent misdeeds. In Greene's approach to Catholic Christianity, the emphasis is on the change of heart and not on the observation of rituals. In this sense, even a forlorn character can be a true Catholic if he feels the urge to think of the superior discipline of Confession, gathering enough courage to remove fear and misgivings. It is this spiritual courage which is the essence of true religion. Greene points out that man cannot get along without faith. He suggests that human beings should be spiritual and not materialistic one. He remarks that man will be left with nothing in the absence of belief in God. He urges them to have belief in God, because life without belief is meaningless. Man should remember that he is a unique and special creation of God and that separation from God leads to misery. He stresses the fact that even a sordid life under the shadow of religion is infinitely better than an atheistic and purely materialistic life in the "chromium world". Thus Greene feels that "only faith in religion can answer the riddle of life."

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ISSN 2349-638X

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