

Deprivation and Suffering in Graham *Greene's The  
Power and the Glory*

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## **Deprivation and Suffering in Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory***

This research illustrates the theme of deprivation and suffering in *The Power and Glory* by Graham Greene. The obstacles and hardworking social class systems among the characters in the novel show the most difficult steps in their way of dealing and living. The research traces the deprivation and suffering of the psychological problems of the characters as well as the difficult trip into the province of Tabasco in Southern Mexico.

Graham Greene is a Catholic fine writer and a master of suspense. His most successful themes deal with the deep internal struggles of Catholic conscience burdened with temptation, yet trying to live up to the demands of the laws of God.

*The Power and the Glory* is a good suspense story and it is worthwhile for that alone but it is also a superb psychological study and it must take its place with the most discerning and a psychological novels of our time .Inspiration for the story came from a trip which the author made in Mexico in 1938( Wikipedia Introduction).

*The Power and the Glory* is special pleading for the paradoxes of sainthood whereby God can utilize so weak a vessel for his purpose. As an example of that, the lieutenant who is one of the main characters in the novel, is the agent for sending the priest to his death(David Pryce-Jones 57).

Scobie, the priest, apparently so intemperate, defeated and wronged in God's world, reveals how they come to grips with their sense of moral responsibility. Their sense of eclipse in depravity like adultery and fornication is overcome by an unknown superhuman will in them which makes them belong to the totality of God's perspective (B. R. Nagpal 12).

The story of the novel tackles the difficult life of the priest. He carries on despite the persecution who accounts as a tragic priest. He tells us of his difficult trip into the Province of Tabasco in southern Mexico where he was glad to find " the religious apathy in Tabasco which was more apparent than real" which later leads him to discover that he is going to end it with a lot of taboo words (practices)(spark note).

The priest's fate is in fact predictable from the moment we start to learn of his character, as he turns away from Mr. Tench. We don't need the half cast to tell us, its fate. I was told by a fortune teller...a reward. It is really only the manner of his death which will provide the tragedy and perhaps the sanctity (David Pryce-Jones 57).

For the priest, life has come to an end as a terrific persecution, is raging against the Church in the town. In all the provinces the churches are closed, its bishops expelled, its priests martyred or driven out to the very last one. Yet there is one priest left, a " whiskey priest ". Finally, he was captured leaving up his martyrdom that make up the suspense part of this story.

" ... it's my duty not to be caught. You see my bishop is no longer here." ( The Power and the Glory 42)

Greene's objective was the provinces of Tabasco and Chiapas where Catholicism had been forbidden by law and the churches had been for the most part destroyed. Since the provinces were remote and communications were poor or non-existent, the physical conditions of the journey proved somewhat similar to those of Liberia (David Pryce-Jones 45).

The priest spends the night in prison, surrounded by criminals and victims of society (York 24). However, he is not an ordinary priest. On one hand, he is a slave of drink and his passions; on the other, he is a heroic soul who wants to love God, who wants to remain in that harassed country to minister the spiritual needs of the people, though he well realize that discovery means death and security lies only a few miles beyond in the neighboring province. His brain tries to tell him that he has little hope of salvation despite his heroic efforts, because he cannot confess his sins to another priest and receive absolution. In spite of this he carries on until he is captured. For all his faults, he kept the flame of faith alive in Mexico during the bitter years of Mexico's martyrdom(Wikipedia, Introduction).

"A little drink, he said, will work wonders in a cowardly man. With a little brandy, why I'd defy- the devil." (The Power and the Glory 44)

It is not that the common denominators of theological guilt apply any less to the whisky priest than to Greene's other protagonists: the priest, like the others, violates sacramental obligations, even desecrates the Host by partaking of it in a state of impurity and sin, and in the closing moments of his life suffers a crucial failure of contrition that would seem to leave him, unabsolved and impenitent, outside the boundaries of God's grace(Alan 1).

"He said , it's impossible. There is no way. I am a priest. It's out of my power." (The Power and the Glory 42)

In Green's world the sinners are catholic. Some are minor sinners, again treated mostly as object of satire such as Jose's wife , who is only interested in sex and her pension and the priest's paradox way of dealing. For this reason, he (priest) is treated badly by the police, and keeps himself away from the real personality he has to be. Even the chief of police seems mostly an ineffectual man, unaware of the enormity of what he is condoning. Real sinners, objects of interest in Greene's world because they are closer to God, are Padre Joes, the nameless half-caste, James Calver, and the whisky priest himself (Adele King 38).

The priest apologize humbly, edging back towards the door but, again he was too quick- his pocket caught against the wall and the brandy bottle chinked. Three of four faces looked at him with malicious amusement: he was a stranger and they are going to have fun. "*What's that you have got in your pocket? The red shirt asked. He was a youth not out of his teens, with gold teeth and a jesting conceited mouth.*"( The Power and the Glory 118)

Nagpal clearly shows that the hero like the priest is having apathetic sense of surrender to situations that are deterministic and the kindled consciousness of environment, cosmos with which they seek an ordered, struggling harmony (B. R. Nagpal 101).

Graham Greene is clearly showing in his novel that: In any case, even if he(Priest) could have gone south and avoided the village, it was only one more surrender. The years behind him were littered with similar surrenders- feast days and fast days and days of abstinence had been the first to go: then he had ceased to trouble more than occasionally about his bravery-and finally he had left it behind altogether at the port in one of his periodic attempts at escape. ( The Power and the Glory 64)

If God can be identified in human actions so that what the half-cast would call fate is really God's purposes, the divine comedy on this is no more than a game on a black and white board. Greene has this to say of the priest.( David Pryce-Jones, 57).Therefore, after the priest having committed fornication and given birth to illegitimate child in Brigitta is unable to reconstruct his true person, his sense of responsibility and message of priesthood (B. R. Nagpal 56).

In fact Greene's sinners are at last redeemed by the limitlessness of divine compassion. It is nonetheless true for most readers that the whisky priest has earned a far more sympathetic hearing before God than either Pinkie or Scooby, that the proportions of merit to mercy in *The Power and the Glory* strike a much closer balance than in *Brighton Rock* or *The Heart of the Matter* (Adele King 38).

The space between the fallen nature of Greene's characters and the mysterious, inscrutable grace of God was too wide a theological gap to be countenanced, and Greene's disdain for traditional expressions of Catholic faith (Mark Boscov 52).

He (priest) thought himself the devil of a fellow carrying God around at the risk of his life; one there would be a reward... he prayed in the half-light: O God, forgive me- I am a proud, lustful, greedy man. I have loved authority too much.

( *The Power and the Glory* 98)

Greene's expectation is moral rather than political; more precisely, it was religious, with an underpinning of psychology. The absence of force in the fiction of our time-its simple lack of life, and hence the appearance of what, in harsh and refreshing words. However, both the lieutenant and the priest were suffering because they were morally captured by the sins they have committed. The lieutenant wanted him to follow the traditions and law of the town by not committed any moral mistakes but in the same time he himself was suffering too as he does not really want to put the priest in prison (R. W. B. Lewis 61).

There was a sense of abandonment, as if he had given up every struggle from now on and lay there a victim of some power....the priest had only to step over his legs and push the door – it opened outwards. (The Power and the Glory 99)

The chance meeting between the priest and the dentist, Tench, that opens the novel only takes place after the priest has misunderstood the other's mild blasphemy, " My God " at the sight of a pretty girl, to be the watchword of a fellow communicant. Tench's misidentification of the priest as a physician, a proffered disguise which the priest, his spiritual ministry no longer valued in a skeptical world, does not accept without bitterly intimating that his practice is quackery; and the stained-glass Madonna, a symbolic vestige for both men of their lost pasts, though to Tench it represents only the familiar



unexpected remembrance of the God now banished from Tabasco, a land he had once offered the saving hope of piety and faith ( Alan 2).

Nagpal supports the idea of the priest being disguised as he expresses deep disgust with his situation and in the process of flight from it is able to discern the likeness of God's suffering with that of the human suffering of-sick and the needy (B. R. Nagpal 104).

The priest gives his name to a stranger for the first time in ten years because he was tired and there seemed no object in going on living. (The power and the Glory 159)

When the priest has returned to Tabasco, he has at last satisfies his long-repressed hunger for communication and self-revelation. This enabled him to make a clear justification not in his own defense but on behalf of the master in whose service has been vanquished.(Alan 3)

The priest said doubtfully, It is kind ... The two glasses were already filled. He remembered the last drink he had had, sitting on the bed in the dark, listening to the chief of police, and seeing, as the light went on, the last wine drain away... The memory was like a hand, pulling away the cast,

exposing him. The smell of brandy dried his mouth. He thought: what a play-actor I am. I have no business here, among good people. He turned the glass in his hand, and all the other glasses turned too: he remembers the dentist talking of his children and Maria unearthing the bottle of spirits she had kept for him- the whisky priest.  
(The Power and the Glory 170)

The whiskey priest is the "*sinner at the heart of Christianity*," who realizes that Christ is intimately linked with every sinner: "*It was for this world that Christ died; the more evil you saw and heard about you, the greater glory lay around the death.*" ... It was too easy to die for what was good ... it needed a God to die for the half-hearted and the corrupt (Mark Bosco 61).

It is clearly proved as Nagpal shows that Greene's characters like Scobie, Sara, the priest are funneling themselves for a new direction in their lives and in the trauma of domination – resurgence motif in their psych rediscover the truth of myths and miracles (B. R. Nagpal 12).

Greene's religious imagination is also centered on the tension between belief and unbelief, mirroring through his novels the epistemological and existential dilemmas of his century. In this way he is in part a product of the Enlightenment and liberal establishment, privileging doubt as the premiere virtue of

humanity, claiming that, *"doubt like the conscience is inherent in human nature . . . perhaps they are the same thing"*. It could be clearly stated when the priest claimed to be as a religious man in front of others (lieutenant) in spite of his ugly deeds when he committed the sine of drinking the brandy ( Mark Bosco 58).

The voice said with contempt, You believers are all the same. Christianity makes you cowards. Yes. Perhaps you are right. You see I am a bad priest and a bad man. To die in a state of mortal sin- he gave an uneasy chuckle- it makes you think. ( The Power and the Glory 128)

Greene claimed in a late interview that he understood faith and belief as two different realms: *"What I distinguish is between faith and belief. One may have less belief as one grows older but one's faith can say, 'Yes, but you are wrong.' Belief is rational, faith is irrational and one can still continue to have an irrational faith when one's belief weakens"*( Mark Bosco 59).

The whisky priest's reflection in interior monologue clearly depicts the complexities of his moral struggle: He didn't sleep again: he was striking yet another bargain with God. This time, if he escaped from the prison, he would escape altogether. He would go north, over the border. His escape was so improbable that, if it happened, it couldn't be anything else but a sign—an indication that he was doing more harm by his example than

good by his occasional confessions. He anyway is escaping from his reality and his long life prison of his moral sins (Gianina Daniela Sabău 440).

For the priest is so overcome at a crucial meeting with Brigitta that he prays, *"Oh my God, give me any kind of death- without contrition, in a state of sin only save this child"* (David Pryce Jones 53).

As compared to the lieutenant, the whisky priest is a coward, always on the run from the authorities, trying constantly to evade his responsibilities. He has a very bad opinion about himself, he is self-critical and driven by powerful guilt feelings (Gianina Daniela Sabău 440).

"The priest said, There's no need for anyone to inform on me. That would be a sin." (The Power and the Glory 128)

Finally, it is not arbitrary to say that the deprivation and suffering of Greene's characters in, *The Power and the Glory*, especially the men, are mainly because of their psychological problems which lead them to committed sins, it is also somehow related to their inhabitation by their childhood.

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