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Robert A. Dallen Prize

**Sin, Sacrifice and Sanctity: The Biblical Pursuit of Salvation in *The Power and the Glory***

Gerald O'Collins, in his *Christology*, concludes that “evil can be cast in terms of (1) deficient or even ruptured relationships, (2) loss or even annihilation of being, and (3) absence of meaning and truth.”<sup>1</sup> Used as a standard against which to measure the mortal state of an entity, Greene's vision of Mexico in 1938 is the very epitome of damnation. Scorching under the Mexican sun everything is emptied of significance, and the omnipresent vultures are a constant *memento mori*. If the churches stand, they are desolate: God is unwelcome, rendered an expatriate under the Marxist government; the clergy are hunted, executed if they are found. It is into this den that “whiskey priest” is thrown, like Daniel to the lions, but he is no brave tamer: cowardly and an alcoholic the unlikely protagonist is only caught in this web because his foolish pride would not allow him to condescend to fear, and escape. So he travels, a fugitive, from one village to the next: here meets Maria, the mother of his illegitimate child, there, a pious woman whose son, Luis, admires the persecutor, the lieutenant, whose devotion to a ruthless, secular socialism has flung the world into disorder and chaos.

He even meets Judas, a greedy mestizo who hungers after the reward, the thirty pieces of silver, for turning the priest in; never mind the mortal sin. Yet, it is the acts of these mean creatures that reveal the nature of Christ in the whiskey priest, in a way no fear could have inspired. From the mestizo he learns of God's ineffable love for his corrupt creation, in a prison cell he learns that because man is created in God's image, the State will never succeed in its attempt to eradicate God from within its borders, unless it hopes to expurgate all its citizens in the process. Without the comfort of a church the priest can no longer rely on “the trite religious word [upon] his tongue”<sup>2</sup> to ease his way. Now, he must learn the hard truths of the Bible. Ultimately, the priest's experiences allow him to carry out the pre-eminent teaching of the Gospels: the act of self-emptying sacrifice inspired by love for

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<sup>1</sup> Gerald O'Collins, SJ, “Redeemer,” in *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 298.

<sup>2</sup> Graham Greene, *The Power and the Glory* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 22. All subsequent citations will be to this edition and will be made parenthetically in the text.

the sinner, modelled after Christ. He fulfils his priestly ministry, he becomes the *alter Christus*, and though he does not redeem the entire State from the bane of the totalitarian government, he alleviates the suffering and sin of at least one soul by his example of love: the boy Luis.

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The scoreboard of the opening pages of *The Power and the Glory* shows the triumphant Mexican State (at least in the state of Tabasco where the action is supposed to happen)<sup>3</sup> glorying in its program of eschatological decay. For Greene the derelict, useless churches that dominate the Mexican landscape are the source of a very visceral deterioration of meaning and purpose. In speaking with his father, for example, Luis discovers that the church once meant “music, lights, a place where you could sit out of this heat” (51). Exposure to blistering Mexican sun is, in particular, a powerful theme that conveys both a bodily and spiritual desiccation. The dentist Tench, for example, whom the whiskey priest meets early on, is unable to recall his purpose in visiting the port as “memory drained out of him in this heat” (8). This scene, and character, is directly transposed from *The Lawless Roads*, Greene’s Mexican travel narrative, in which the effects of the Mexican heat are even more debilitating. It bears detailed exploration because of the way in which Greene unequivocally identifies the origin of Tabasco’s decay:

Nothing in a tropical town can fill the place of a church for the most mundane use; a church is the one spot of coolness out of the vertical sun, a place to sit, a place where the senses can rest a little from ugliness; it offers the poor man what a rich man may get in a theatre – though not in Tabasco. Now in Villahermosa, in the blinding heat and the mosquito-noisy air, there is no escape at all for anyone. Garrido did his job well: he knew that the stones cry out, and he didn’t leave any stones...In northern Chiapas the churches

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<sup>3</sup> The action of *The Power and the Glory* is based on Greene’s travels to Mexico in 1938, recorded in his travelogue *The Lawless Roads*. The landscapes of *The Power and the Glory* largely echo his time spent Tabasco as recorded in *The Lawless Roads*.

still stand, shuttered and ruined and empty, but they fester – the whole village festers away.<sup>4</sup>

In the “The Godless State” Greene represents this ‘festering away’ as a loss of signification that affects everything under Tabasco’s influence. For example, after only a night in Villahermosa Greene’s watch loses three hours so that he presents himself too early to an acquaintance. After a few days have passed the problem is exacerbated such that “time goes so slowly: a few days were like months at home.”<sup>5</sup> Slowly, the inter-textual companions that Greene brings with him, precisely to remind him of home and anchor him to it, suffer from a similar degeneration of meaning: first, pages of *Dr Thorne* go missing leaving Greene unable to identify the ingredients essential to Mary Thorne’s movement from “misery to happiness.”<sup>6</sup> As Greene finishes *Dr Thorne*, and he is extracted from its imagined world, he is left curiously vulnerable to a physical assault by Mexico: “*this* was real – the high empty room and the tiles and swarming floor and the heat and the sour river smell.”<sup>7</sup> It recalls an earlier moment when the sweltering heat of Villahermosa literally dissolves Greene’s own authorial abilities: “the indelible pencil melted on my hand,”<sup>8</sup> immediately followed by Greene’s concession that “even the most dismal place [can] seem like home.”<sup>9</sup> The author’s perspective of ‘home’, and his relation to it, becomes unhinged. There is, therefore, not so much an insinuation as an explicit correlation, in Greene’s mind, between the disestablishment of the Church and the corruption of the human condition.

As Greene’s sojourn through Tabasco protracts, the Tabascan spell intensifies and he registers its clout with increasing anxiety. It becomes apparent to Greene, already disturbed by the prospect of their being ethnically native ‘Grahams’ and ‘Greens’ in Mexico, that were he to remain in Tabasco

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<sup>4</sup> Graham Greene, *The Lawless Roads* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 119-20.

<sup>5</sup> Greene, *The Lawless Roads*, 115.

<sup>6</sup> Greene, *The Lawless Roads*, 124.

<sup>7</sup> Greene, *The Lawless Roads*, 126.

<sup>8</sup> Greene, *The Lawless Roads*, 114.

<sup>9</sup> Greene, *The Lawless Roads*, 114.

he would be assimilated into the lethargy and decay as entirely as other travellers: from the Scotsman, Dr Fitzpatrick, who has been “absorbed nearly as completely as the Grahams and the Greens”<sup>10</sup> to the sick American dentist (from whom Tench is drawn) who becomes trapped in a repetitive and stagnant exchange with Greene, significantly, about the best routes *out* of Tabasco. It is perhaps only a coincidence, though an insightful and insidious one nonetheless, that the dentist continually suggests other Tabascan cities to Greene, that is, Frontera and Zapata, whereas Greene insists on leaving the state altogether for others, that is, Jalisco (Salto) or Chiapas (Palenque; Las Casas). On O’Collins’ scale, then, the reader is left in no doubt as to the state of perilous sin that Mexico has been plunged into by the Marxist-socialist ideology of the totalitarian government: Greene’s relationship with ‘home’ is ruptured, his very identity is threatened, and there is very little truthful signification to be found within the borders of Tabasco.

This pungent sense of decay is imported into the narrative world of *The Power and the Glory*. Weary from the hunt and resting in a small village, the priest takes a moment to preside over Mass for the villagers in recompense for their provision of (begrudging) safe harbour. While there, however, he is caught up to the by the police and the anxiety of the villagers rapidly deflates the Mass of its sense of holy respect: “He was aware of faith dying out between the bed and the door – the Mass would soon mean no more to anyone than a black cat crossing the path” (79). After safely extricating himself the priest leaves at the urgent behest of the villagers, only to arrive in the capital city where he witnesses young men and women performing a strange ritual which “was like a religious ceremony which had lost all meaning, but at which they still wore their best clothes” (103). Everywhere he turns the priest is faced with a Mexico that is unable to recognise God and in which its energies are either sapped by a solar lethargy or else wasted on meaningless endeavours.

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<sup>10</sup> Greene, *The Lawless Roads*, 114.

The irony of the novel, then, is that the titular ‘power and glory’, a phrase which forms part of the doxology included in certain traditions of the Lord’s Prayer,<sup>11</sup> is nowhere to be found on the ground in Mexico.<sup>12</sup> In many ways the whiskey priest, himself, is emblematic of this malaise: just as the State’s concerted campaign of closing and burning churches has left them derelict, so the hunt for the clergy has left the priest haggard and giving the impression of “unstable hilarity” (9); and just as the landscape is divested of evidence of the Church so too is the priest bereft of the primary symbols of his station. Holy books, icons and crucifixes are forbidden (and criminal) possessions; the religious guilds are replaced by the socialist Syndicate for Workers and Peasants; and the ubiquitous stained glass depictions of saints and martyrs are grotesquely parodied by “big bold clever murals – of one priest caressing a woman in the confessional, another tipping on the sacramental wine” (55) (two offences, notably, that the whiskey priest is guilty of: alcoholism and fathering a child, though not under the circumstances portrayed). Similarly, the priest must jettison all those conspicuous symbols of his faith: his vestments, breviary, chalice and altar stone.<sup>13</sup>

However, it was not only the narrative world of *The Power and the Glory* that suffered a crisis of identity when the Churches and God were outlawed. Jean Meyer argues that the famed Cristeros fought because they felt threatened by removal of the stabilising, and comforting, tradition of the clergy:

The church...was the centre of local life because it guaranteed entertainment, information, and education, and the priest was the head, the counsellor, the ‘natural’ leader, at the crossroads of the scarce networks of co-operation existing in the rural world. The

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<sup>11</sup> 9: “Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. <sup>10</sup>‘Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup>‘Give us this day our daily bread. <sup>12</sup>‘And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. <sup>13</sup>‘And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. *For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*” Earl D. Radmacher, ed. *New King James Version Study Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), Matthew 6: 9-13.

<sup>12</sup> Christopher A. Link, “Bad Priests and the Valor of Pity: Shusaku Endo and Graham Greene on the Paradoxes of Christian Virtue,” *Logos* 15 (2012): 82.

<sup>13</sup> Link further perceives the loss of these objects as symptomatic of the whiskey priest’s “escalating transgressions in matters of religious observation and his growing moral bankruptcy.” Link, “Bad Priests and the Valor of Pity,” 83.

Government's antagonistic attitude towards him was an attack on the keystone or rural society...The priest had originated in the peasantry, and he was the symbol and pride of that peasantry, while those who drove him out [the military] came precisely, from outside, from Mexico City...threatening the position of the priest within the community, and indeed the community itself.<sup>14</sup>

The lieutenant, a disillusioned Catholic, is baffled by such a reaction because the Church, for him, is the source of "everything which had made him miserable, all that was poor, superstitious and corrupt" (58). Were it up to him, the desolation of the Mexican state, the malady so devastating to the human soul, would be his gift to the next generation of Mexicans: "He wanted to begin the world again with them, in a desert" (58).<sup>15</sup> Yet, the lieutenant is not an immoral or a corrupt man. Indeed, in many respects he is more worthy than the whiskey priest. Greene asks the reader to observe, for example, "something of a priest in his intent observant walk – a theologian going back over the errors of the past to destroy them again" (24); or, the attitude of there being "something disinterested in his ambition: a kind of *virtue* in his desire to catch the sleek respected guest of the first communion party [the whiskey priest]" (emphasis added; 23). By contrast, the whiskey priest, in the early days before the persecution began, seemingly embodied the corruption and corpulence that the lieutenant accuses him – and the wider Church – of. Even excusing his alcoholism and fornication, the priest, reflecting on an old photograph, recalls a "fat youngish priest who stood with one plump hand splayed authoritatively out while the tongue played pleasantly with the word 'Governor'" (93). He revels in political matters, is possessed of an ambition and pride to enlarge his parish, and, above all, privileges the philosophy that "an energetic priest was always known by his debts" (93). Not so the lieutenant, his dwelling is ascetic: "as comfortless as a prison or a monastic cell" (24). Were the reader, then, to pass judgement on these men based solely on these preliminary

<sup>14</sup> Jean A. Meyer, "Culture and Religion, Faith and Ideology," in *The Cristero Rebellion: The Mexican People Between Church and State 1926-1929*, trans. Richard Southern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 187.

<sup>15</sup> This echoes Numbers 32: 13 "And the LORD'S anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation, that had done evil in the sight of the LORD, was consumed." Contrarily, the lieutenant wishes to cast the *next* generation into the desert.

insights, one would have to conclude that the lieutenant, more diligent to his creed than the priest could ever hope to be to his, is the better man.

The lieutenant's hollow ideology, however, is less satisfactory to the reader. He formulates his philosophy around the experience of "vacancy – a complete certainty in the existence of a dying, cooling world, of human beings who had evolved from animals for no purpose at all. He knew" (24-5). Pivotal to the success of either the lieutenant's Marxist-socialism or the Church's ministry are the hearts of the next generation of Mexicans. Perhaps not so coincidentally, the key to heaven is also to become like little children.<sup>16</sup> They form a metaphorical battleground upon which these two representatives vie for recruits. It is here that the lieutenant's doctrine falters. For example, ringed by a group of children, the lieutenant only feels that "he was surrounded by an insecure happiness" (58). Likewise, when the lieutenant attempts to reach out to Luis in "a gesture of affection – a touch," he discovers that "he didn't know what to do with it". The lieutenant fumbles an opportunity to forge solidarity between the government and the children. Instead, he pinches the boy's ear, inflicting the very pain upon him that he so desperately hopes to protect all children from, and the children "scattered from home like birds and he went on alone...a little dapper figure of hate carrying his secret of love" (58). Contrarily, the priest engages in a very successful encounter with Coral Fellows, who undertakes, not only to protect the priest from the lieutenant, but from anyone threatening him harm. Though it is true that he cannot get his ill-begotten daughter to love him, still the lieutenant's appreciation of her is the more facile: "this child is worth more than the Pope in Rome" (74) he says of the priest's daughter. The sentiment rings hollow, of course, because like everything tainted by the Mexican state it is devoid of any meaning: the Pope is, surely, worth nothing at all to the lieutenant and, therefore, evaluating the child against him is valueless.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> As in Matthew 18: 3 "And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

<sup>17</sup> K.C. Joseph Kurismmootil, S.J., "The Power and the Glory," in *Heaven and Hell on Earth: An Appreciation of Five Novels of Graham Greene* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1982), 66.

The argument could similarly be extended to the lieutenant's opposition to God. In imagining the village of his birth, Carmen, the whiskey priest's recalls the zeal with which government supporters had desecrated religious icons in the graveyard, such that "one image of the Mother of God had lost ears and arms and stood like a pagan Venus over the grave of some rich forgotten timber merchant" (101-2). Again, the reader notes the alarming way in which the destruction of a façade causes the intrinsic meaning of the statute to be profaned: once a holy image of the Mother of God, foremost intercessor, it has been metamorphosed into the heretical Venus; she stands, too, only over some *forgotten* timber merchant. But it is the enthusiasm for this sacrilege itself which the priest fails to understand:

It was odd – this fury to deface, because, of course, you could never deface enough. If God had been like a toad, you could have rid the globe of toads, but when God was like yourself, it was no good being content with stone figures – you had to kill yourself among the graves (102).

In this moment the whiskey priest comes to his first realisation of the nature of God's love, that it is unconditional and ineradicable because man was created in God's image, and that the attempt to obliterate it, therefore, is futile and self-destructive.<sup>18</sup> It is a revelation expounded upon by the priest's interactions with the mestizo and the prisoners. Demeaned by the threat of danger that he inflicts on those who associate with him and his own sense of unworthiness, the priest is brought into propinquity with the lowest of society. The mestizo, he knows, is a conniving, profiteering Judas and, yet, he cannot bring himself to abandon even this lowly creature. As the mestizo spews forth his sins and sexual perversions, the priest is struck by the mestizo's sense of "immense self-importance; he was unable to imagine a world of which he was only a typical part – a world of

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<sup>18</sup> Genesis 1: 26-7. "<sup>26</sup>Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."<sup>27</sup>God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.



treachery, violence, and lust in which his shame was altogether insignificant” (97). The priest’s encounter with mestizo, reminding him of the sheer corruption prevailing upon the world, brings him to the same theodicean revelation as St Paul:

It was for this world that Christ had 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 or beautiful, for home or children or a civilization—it needed a God to die for the half-hearted and the corrupt (97).<sup>19</sup>

This newly gleaned knowledge comes to a head, powerfully, in the prison scene. Arrested for possessing whiskey (contraband) the priest is brought to a cell to spend a night. Within, he discovers that the cell “was very like the world: overcrowded with lust and crime and unhappy love, it stank to heaven” (125). Every manner of person can be found within from a pious woman to an atheist to hardened criminals and, perhaps, in some dark corner, a Judas. Suddenly, the priest hears the pleasurable whimpers of two lovers in the corner, to which the pious woman reacts angrily: “Stop them. It’s a scandal,” (131) she demands of the priest. Instead, the priest rebukes her gently: “We’re all fellow prisoners. I want a drink at this moment more than anything, more than God. That’s a sin too” (131). The pious woman, unwilling to be disabused of her haughty opinions, instead turns them upon the priest, wishing him dead and evoking Maria’s parting shot: “It’s people like you who make people mock – at real religion” (131). Therein, however, lies the beauty of the priest’s epiphany, that though religion may make claims to know God’s will and mind, the priest “[doesn’t] know a thing about the mercy of God; I don’t know how awful the human heart looks to

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<sup>19</sup> Here the whiskey priest’s theodicy draws heavily from the words of St Paul in Romans 5: 6-10. “<sup>6</sup> You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. <sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup> Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. <sup>10</sup> For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” This correlation was aptly highlighted by Link, “Bad Priests and the Valor of Pity,” 87.

him” (200). In this prison cell the priest has finally come to learn the value of the sinner, that he himself “was just one criminal among a herd of criminals” (128) and that, therefore, neither he nor the pious woman are entitled to sit in judgment over these others.<sup>20</sup> It is the priest’s tragic irony that “in his innocence, he had felt no love for anyone; now in his corruption he had learnt...” (139).

What he has learnt is enacted in substance in the remainder of the novel,<sup>21</sup> but, in brief, he has discovered that God loves all men, despite their corruption; “that after all it was possible to find peace” even in a dirty, overcrowded prison cell. It provokes the priest to adopt the Christ-form and to live out his ministry more profoundly than he could have anticipated those few, short months ago when the reader was first introduced to him.<sup>22</sup> Of course, the parallels to Christ have been there throughout: just as Christ was crucified in the company of criminals, so the whiskey priest’s picture is pinned up alongside that of the American gangster, Calver;<sup>23</sup> and just as Christ was denied by Peter after the cock crew thrice, here the cock crows twice, threatening a third, as the villagers decide whether to give the priest up. Ultimately they do not and it stays silent on the third crow. Maria and the villagers nonetheless disown him, expelling him from the village and requesting that he not return. It is his decision to knowingly and voluntarily sacrifice himself, however, to hear the confession of the wounded Calver and, hopefully, redeem his soul that brings the priest into the closest concordance with Christ. In the process he hopes to reconcile his ill-begotten child, Brigitta, to God: “O God, help her. Damn me, I deserve it, but let her live for ever” (208), which, surely, echoes the very essence of Christ’s mission.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Kurismmootil, “The Power and the Glory,” 80.

<sup>21</sup> Mark Bosco, “Seeing the Glory: Graham Greene’s *The Power and the Glory* through the Lens of Hans Urs von Balthasar’s Theological Aesthetics,” *Logos* 4 (2001): 48

<sup>22</sup> Bosco, “Seeing the Glory,” 51..

<sup>23</sup> R.W.B. Lewis sees significance in the name Calver which “echoes two syllables of the Mount on which Christ was crucified.” Quoted in Kurismmootil, “The Power and the Glory,” 88.

<sup>24</sup> Kurismmootil identifies a further range of Christic similarities, though some seem tenuous. Examples of the strong parallels include: the correlation between the Holy Mass as a commemoration of the Last Supper and the Mass the priest gives in Maria’s hut potentially being his last and, later, that Luis’ mother is assured of the priest’s sanctity after his execution, though she doubts him beforehand, just as the centurion standing before the Cross declares, after Christ has died, “in truth this man was a son of God.” Mark 15: 39. One of the more uncertain connections includes the similarity between the priest trying to quench his thirst in the Indian cemetery by sucking at his trousers and Christ being offered a vinegar soaked sponge to quench his. Kurismmootil, “The Power and the Glory,” 88-91.

The aftermath of his decision and execution bring the priest the highest praise he has ever known. Walking home after the execution, for example, the lieutenant is described as having “something brisk and stubborn about his walk, as if he were saying at every step, ‘I have done what I have done’” (220). As KC Joseph Kurismmootil perceptively notes:

But this is straight from the Roman Consul, Pontius Pilate. Asked to rephrase Jesus’s charge and title, he had retorted to the high priests and Pharisees: “Scripsi quod scripsi,” what I have written, I have written. The lieutenant’s identification of himself with Pilate who gave Jesus away to death clinches the parallel with particular force.<sup>25</sup>

The parallels do not end there, however, for the whiskey priest’s death has an important coda: firstly, in that the boy Luis is converted from admiration of the lieutenant’s Marxist-Socialism and, secondly, in that the chasm left by the death of the final remaining clergyman in the state opens a space for rebirth, or resurrection, which is filled by the second anonymous priest who closes the novel. Looking back on the whiskey priest’s life the reader is now in a position to appreciate the kenotic undercurrent of its latter half; its similarity to Christ’s own love. Writing of the redemptive power of Christ’s story, and humanity’s involvement in it, Graham Ward observes that:

It is a participation made possible through the incarnation of Christ, the revelation of the true image of God possessed by all. We are saved and deified through the economy of love. The distinctive nature of love is to give, a continual act of self-abandonment; and it is this abandonment which characterises kenosis...<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Kurismmootil, “The Power and the Glory,” 90.

<sup>26</sup> Graham Ward, “Kenosis and Naming: Beyond Analogy and Towards *Allegoria Amoris*,” in *Religion, Modernity and Postmodernity*, ed. Paul Heelas (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 241

Not that crucifixion...is the end of the kenotic story. There is resurrection, a renaming and a re-empowerment to speak. We [move], with Christ, towards and then beyond death...Only *post-mortem* are we re-empowered to speak.<sup>27</sup>

Revisiting the Mexican state of the lieutenant's imagining, then, it is apparent that it fails to move beyond the point of death. Instead, it putrefies and stagnates as the myriad vultures await their feast, a superabundance of insect life uselessly and repeatedly 'detonates' itself, an oppressive heat tyrannises the economy of movement and an acidifying, malodorous environment assaults the senses; it is, in short, a wasteland. It is under these auspices that Luis is born and introduced to God, and it is only the whiskey priest, who humbly felt "only an immense disappointment because he had to go to God empty-handed, with nothing done at all," (210) who is capable of rescuing Luis. Through love he has come to know the nature of the sinner, and through love he has become his salvation.

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Love is, undoubtedly, a central preoccupation of Greene's in *The Power and the Glory*. He draws a stark contrast between the priest and the pious: "as much as politicians, they fed on illusion" (127) the whiskey priest remarks of the pious. He, too, once fed on illusion: that saving souls "was as easy as saving money: now it was a mystery" (82). But brought into contact with the awful and the grotesque, the priest realises that God's image is, nonetheless, imprinted in it all. It is a uniquely Biblical lesson that he learns, for surrounded by comfort as a priest, he could not have learnt such a thing. Now that the churches have been desecrated and he is tempted by his own sin, afflicted with his own unworthiness, he comes into a true fellowship with man, even those who number themselves among his enemies. Possessed of the same love that compelled God to send his only Son into the world, the whiskey priest adopts the mantle of self-abandoning sacrifice. Though he may have gone to his death convinced of his damnation, the reader is left in no doubt of his sanctity.

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<sup>27</sup> Ward, "Kenosis and Naming," 239.

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