
by

Charles M. Lynes

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INTRODUCTION

The Catholic priest in fiction as well as in real life has always had about him a distinct appeal and interest for many people. His life of celibacy has also made him, as a class, an extraordinary clergyman. As a character of general interest, he has been introduced into many and various novels, plays, and short stories, but nowhere do we find a more interesting study of the Catholic priest than we see in Graham Greene's The Power and the Glory.

Some years ago when The Power and the Glory was dramatized on television, the public reaction was, to say the least, muddled. Clergymen themselves found something unsavory about the portrayal of the tragic little priest. And yet there was something extremely wholesome about the way Greene's miserable little martyr was brought into sharp focus on the television screen.

From its publication the story of the whiskey priest has had a history of controversy. Edward Skillin, writing in Commonweal, described the novel as one which portrays "subnormal humanity under unusual conditions."¹ In A Mirror of the Ministry Horton Davies described the central character as "undisciplined, weak, shifty, a seducer, and morally

an outcast..." In the introduction to the 1958 Compass Edition of the novel, Greene himself tells us that his favorite novel was not an overnight success:

The book gives me more satisfaction than any other I have written. This is not saying much, but it is a saddening thought all the same when I realize it was written more than 22 years ago. It waited nearly 10 years for success.

With success, says Greene, came danger. The novel was twice denounced to Rome by French bishops. Greene subsequently received a letter from the Holy Office which condemned the novel because it was "'paradoxical' and dealt with extraordinary circumstances." When Greene refused to revise the book, there was no public condemnation; and, as he concludes, "the affair was allowed to drop into the peaceful oblivion which the Church wisely reserves for unimportant issues."

The source of this reaction seems to lie in two elements of the book. First of all, Catholics are not accustomed to seeing their clergy portrayed as weak, drinking men. Second, the whiskey priest's story is the story of martyrdom, and within the context of what is called Catholic literature martyrdom has received a much different treatment from that which Greene gives it in The Power and the Glory.

It is here admitted that Greene's novel is first and foremost a work of art. There is a danger in discussing it in terms of its function

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4 Ibid., p. 5.
as an antidote to the pious kind of writing that has earned for much of Catholic literature the scorn of contemporary students of literature. And yet in the introduction quoted from above Greene says that The Power and the Glory is the only novel he has "written to a thesis." This, it would seem, would allow the student of literature scope to examine the book as something more than a work of art.

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5Ibid., p. 3.
CHAPTER I

THE MARTYRROLOGY AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

In *The Power and the Glory* Graham Greene has created one of the most memorable Catholic priests in all of literature. He has also created the most human of Catholic martyrs on record. The little whiskey priest, pursued by Providence and an idealistic police lieutenant, in the end dies the traditional martyr's death before the firing squad. On the surface this priest should qualify for all the accolades usually given by the Church to such victims of persecution. If his story had been treated in the traditional manner, he would make a fit subject for one of the pious books Greene parodies in the "Juan Story" to her children, pressed by her not so pious son, is forced to admit that the little priest "may be one of the saints."  

But Greene's martyr is different. The difference lies not in the facts of the case, but in the manner in which his story is recorded. Greene's psychological insights, his bold realism, his compassionate characterization depict a priest who is a sharp contrast to the stereotyped martyr.

It is the thesis of this paper that there exists a formula for martyrdom as it is recorded in what is called Catholic literature. formula is here used in the broad sense to include not only a set of

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incidents and facts but also a stereotyped characterization of the martyr. This formula has tended to make the popular modern accounts of martyrdom cold, externalized, simplistic, and unbelievable. Graham Greene was aware of this formula; and in The Power and the Glory he attempted to depict a single individual's path to martyrdom, but with this difference. Greene's account internalizes and individualizes the martyr and takes into account the complexities of a man's relationship to his God. Greene does this without abandoning the basic orthodox position of the Church with regard to martyrdom. The whiskey priest is a martyr. It is appropriate, then, to examine first the martyr story itself.

What is a martyr? Etymologically the word comes from the Greek word for witness. The early martyr's death was a witness to the truths of Christianity. The term has come to mean more generally sufferer. A Christian martyr, then, is one who chooses to suffer and die rather than compromise the basic principles of his religion. The whiskey priest of The Power and the Glory is a martyr in the sense that his suffering and death result from his being a Catholic priest in a remote state of Mexico where that religion is proscribed by the state. The voluntary aspect of his martyrdom can be seen in his refusal to abandon his role of minister of the Church.

The martyr story can be traced back to the early Church's martyrologies. These simple lists of facts are characterized by the sparseness of detail. But already in these early, abbreviated listings of victims, one can see developing the tendency to formula, or what Greene calls "routine." A few excerpts from The Roman Martyrology of Ibi, p. 294.
598 A.D. will serve to exemplify this basic tendency to formula:

At Rome, the commemoration of many holy martyrs, who despising the edict of Emperor Diocletian, which ordered that the sacred books should be delivered up, preferred to offer their bodies to the executioners rather than to give holy things to dogs. . .

At Cagliari in Sardinia, St. Ephesus, martyr, who, in the persecution of Diocletian and under the judge Flavian, having, by the assistance of God, overcome many torments, was beheaded and ascended into heaven. . .

At Valencia in Spain, while the wicked Docian was governor, St. Vincent, deacon and martyr, who, after suffering imprisonment, hunger, the rack, and disjoining of his limbs, was burned with plates of heated metal and on the gridiron, and tormented in other ways, then took his flight to heaven, there to receive the reward of martyrdom. . .

At Philippi in Macedonia, St. Parmenas, one of the first seven deacons who by the grace of God faithfully discharged the office of preaching committed to him and obtained the glory of martyrdom in the time of Trajan.

At Antioch, the passion of the blessed Hippolytus, a priest, who for a short time deceived by the Novatian schism, was converted by the grace of Christ, for which and in which he afterwards underwent a glorious martyrdom. Being asked by the schismatics which was the better side, he said that he detested the doctrine of Novatus, and that the faith which the chair of Peter taught ought to be professed, after which he was beheaded. . .

With these excerpts some of the martyr story characteristics that have persisted to this day in Catholic hagiography can be isolated.

Perhaps the most salient characteristic of the martyr story to be found in these early accounts is the formulistic structure of the entries. Each item begins with a statement of time and place. Then there follows the name and rank of the martyr. Finally the item ends with a few, often gruesome, details of the gloriously triumphant death. This tendency to formula from the beginning then has been a source of the similarity that

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exists among all such accounts down to the present day. It is this formula, this predictability, that so bores the boy Luis in *The Power and the Glory*. At various points in the novel, Greene shifts the scene to that of a pious woman reading a typical martyr story to her three children. The girls relish every pious detail, but the boy, Luis, leans unhappily against the wall hoping for an end to the book:

The boy squashed a beetle with his bare foot and thought gloomily that after all everything had an end—some day they would reach the last chapter and young Juan would die against a wall, shouting: "Viva el Cristo Rey." But then, he supposed, there would be another book: they were smuggled in every month from Mexico City: if only the customs men had known where to look.

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The boy, in fact, is so familiar with the usual cliches of the martyr story that he is able to anticipate specific incidents as his mother reads the book.10

A second characteristic is the simplistic portrayal of the persecutor as the embodiment of evil on the one hand and the victim on the other hand as unequivocally innocent and righteous. If there is any hint of human weakness in the martyr, as in the case of Hippolytus above, this lapse is quickly passed over as virtually involuntary and almost incidental.

From the beginning, then, the official martyr of the written records was a stereotype. This abbreviated account blossomed into the book-length "lives" that crowd the shelves of Catholic libraries today.

In Tudor Books of Saints and Martyrs, Helen Constance White gives a very

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9 Greene, *The Power and the Glory*, p. 35.
10 Ibid., p. 67.
detailed account of the many intricate stages through which the martyr legend has passed. At the very beginning of her book Helen White warns the reader that the martyr presents one of the most striking paradoxes of Christianity. She freely admits that there is a great contrast between the "usually painful and often sordid and horrifying circumstances of the martyr's last earthly appearance... and the magnificence of the form which its commemoration has assumed in the veneration of later times." She points out that at virtually every stage in the development of the martyr legend the chief concern of the biographer has been the spiritual significance and moral lesson rather than historical and psychological fact.

The first literary force that helped shape the martyr legend into what it is today is the function of the martyr legend as a tool of propaganda. "From the beginning the saint's or martyr's legend was an instrument of propaganda for convert-making, designed to convey the wonder and excitement of conversion and the subsequent missionary zeal of the convert." This function has caused the hagiographer to expand and delete material according to his purposes. Anything that might detract from the idealized character of the martyr is removed or glossed over. Material that will enhance his spiritual qualities is emphasized. The

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12 Ibid., p. 3.
13 Ibid., pp. 13, 17, 20, 21, and 24.
14 Ibid., p. 21.
tone of the work as a whole is very dogmatic and precludes any doubts about the righteousness of the martyr and his religion.

Out of this role as a tool of propaganda and edification there developed what Helen White calls "the principle of logical probabilities." The principle is stated in these terms: "Such a man was sure to have had such and such qualities; indeed, one might be sure that one possessed of such grace as the martyr's would possess all virtues."¹⁵ And so it is that the hagiographer often indulges in profuse speculation about the inner life of his subject, and he fills in the historical gaps with pious anecdotes without the slightest documentation. Such phrases as "We may well assume . . ." are freely sprinkled throughout these works.

From the days of the early martyrologies the martyr story has passed through various and complicated stages until it has evolved into the modern popular martyr biography of today. At first the martyr story consisted of an abbreviated set of facts. These sets of facts, in the form of martyrologies, were used in the main for liturgical and monastic purposes. As the Church grew, so did the martyrologies and their functions. During the Dark Ages, a time of great confusion and change, the hagiographer had recourse more and more to the standardization and borrowing of detail. Helen White justifies this open plagiarism on the grounds that "the very repetition of established hagiographic detail would give welcome reassurance of the unchanging dependability of the heavenly realm."¹⁶ During its entire development the martyr story has

¹⁵Ibid., p. 17.
¹⁶Ibid., p. 18.
tended to take on the characteristics of the current literary fashions of
the different periods. Some read like Saxon epics, others like Medieval
romances. The specific martyr story, then, must be studied in the
context of its own literary period. In the thirteenth century the martyr
story underwent a further development. It became a tool for popular
education. These books, says Helen White, were "designed for preachers
to use as a source book to illustrate the points urged in their sermons,
or for pious readers, particularly laymen and laywomen, to read for
private devotion." The martyr story, then, has traveled through the
centuries and in the course of the travel has been shaped and molded by
many influences. The predominant characteristics, noted above, have
remained and have resulted in the type of book that will be examined
next, the popular modern martyr story.

To sum up, then, the following generalization can be made. In the
popular martyr story of today there is a marked pattern. This pattern
has developed because of the function of the martyr story as religious
propaganda, which has brought along with it such unhistorical practices
as the "principle of logical probabilities." The result is that there is
a clear similarity about all such books. It may well be that this
sameness provoked Graham Greene into creating his decidedly different
whiskey priest.

17 Ibid., p. 21.
18 Ibid., p. 24.
CHAPTER II

COMPARISON OF THE POWER AND THE GLORY WITH A TYPICAL MODERN MARTYR STORY

It is a major part of the thesis of this paper that in The Power and the Glory Graham Greene has presented a kind of counterpoint treatment of the standard popular martyr story. An examination of a biography of Father Miguel Pro, S.J., will show how Greene's martyr story contrasts with the standard treatment while keeping within the bounds of the formula. Many books could be used for this purpose, but God's Jester by Mrs. George Norman seems particularly suited for a number of reasons. The hero, Father Pro, is historically contemporary to Greene's whiskey priest. The setting for both stories is persecuted Mexico. And in The Lawless Roads, Greene's account of his trip to Mexico in which can be found most of the major characters of The Power and the Glory, Greene includes a brief but complete summary of Father Pro's activities and martyrdom.

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This is not to say that the whiskey priest is in any sense Father Pro. In the introduction to The Power and the Glory (pp. 2-3) Greene himself says that his principal character grew out of stories he heard about the last priest in the southern state of Tobasco:

It was in Villahermosa that I came on traces of my principal character, though I did not recognize him at the time . . . An inhabitant told me of the last priest in the state who had baptized his son, giving him a girl's name by accident, for he was so drunk he could hardly stand for the ceremony, let alone remember a name. Afterward he had disappeared into the mountains on the borders of Chiapas—perhaps he was
God's Jester exemplifies the "pious life" genre in three ways. The hero, Father Pro, possesses all the standard qualities and personality traits usually attributed to the martyrs. The narrative of his life includes certain predictable stages and incidents. And, finally, Mrs. Norman's narrative technique is characteristic of the idealized treatment of such material.

Some of the "set" qualities attributed to the conventional martyr will first be examined and compared with Graham Greene's whiskey priest. The first point that the biographer makes about Father Pro is that he is completely normal. Non-Catholics, and many Catholics, often have a suspicion that the priesthood has within it the seeds of abnormality. The acceptance of celibacy as a way of life indicates to them that these men are abnormal. The biographer, therefore, very early in the book takes pains to assert the normality of her subject. In the forward of her book Mrs. Norman says of Father Pro: "He was just the ordinary type of normal American . . . He does represent all that is best in the youth and manhood of Latin American republics." The use of the word manhood here indicates this attempt to identify her hero with ordinary people. Typically, although she says he was "normal" he is nevertheless "the best."

killed by the Red Shirts, perhaps he had escaped to easier conditions.
It may have been the contrast between the successful and publicly acclaimed Father Pro and this abandoned priest that prompted Greene to create his fictional whiskey priest.

To give evidence of this normality she points out the fact that her hero was guilty of some minor shortcomings. "Miguel was hard put to attending to anything so dull as first lessons. How infinitely pleasanter to have bestridden the burros—the mountain donkeys—or even wickedly to run after and tease them." The hero is even ordinary enough to engage in an occasional altercation with one or the other of his companions. "There were fights—a good many. Victories. Defeats." These boyish pranks, then, constitute the extent of Miguel Pro's sinfulness. The characterization amounts to a simple attempt to show him as "all boy."

The contrast to Greene's weak, sinful priest is obvious. The only reference to the whiskey priest's childhood is to a "happy childhood" in which "he had been afraid of too many things." The earliest picture that Greene gives of his priest as a young man is of him sitting among the women at a First Communion Breakfast. You could imagine him petted with small delicacies, preserved for their use in the stifling atmosphere of intimacy and respect. . . He sat there, plump, with protuberant eyes, bubbling with harmless feminine jokes.

His manhood is challenged throughout the novel. The atheistic police lieutenant, comparing the First Communion photograph with the "wanted" poster of James Calver, the American gangster, says of Calver, "He is a man at any rate." The priest's bastard child, Brigida, passes on

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21 Ibid., p. 2.  
22 Ibid., p. 4.  
24 Ibid., p. 29.  
to him the children's gossip that he isn't "any good for women." He is rejected, too, even by the mother of his child:

'Now perhaps you'll go—go away altogether. You're no good any more to anyone,' she said fiercely. 'Do you think God wants you to stay and die—a whiskey priest like you? . . . What kind of a martyr do you think you'll make? It's enough to make people mock.'

Greene's priest, then, is a sinner, a weak man pushed and buffeted by life. He has a weakness for brandy. He has fathered an illegitimate child, and he is rejected by those closest to him. His weaknesses and faults make him a much more realistic and believable human being.

Mrs. Norman makes a special point of this. "Gaiety was frequently a characteristic of the saints but Miguelito appeared to have the happy gift in excelsis: he made it infectious, radiated joy." Gaiety does not seem out of place in Mrs. Norman's Mexico, which she describes as "one of the most beautiful countries in the world." And in all of his trials she portrays Father Pro as one who is somehow under the personal loving protection of God:

"Needless to say, he was nearly caught on many occasions. But he had, to count on, his own brilliant ingenuity and—Providence who would not suffer him to be "taken" a moment before that appointed one for which, in his heart he hungered."

This gaiety, as we have said, is a veneer which covers a serious interior:

For that gaiety of his that seemed almost the essence of himself, was, in the opinion of Superiors who really knew him, nothing of the kind. He had, in fact, a substratum of natural melancholy,

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26 Ibid., p. 110.  
27 Ibid., p. 107.  
28 Ibid., p. 182.  
29 Ibid., p. 12.  
30 Ibid., p. 147.
a sensitive reaction to the pain of the world, to suffering of any kind. It was the last thing which habitually showed in him.\textsuperscript{31}

There is nothing of gaiety in Graham Greene's little priest, just an occasional "odd nervous hilarity" that is expressed in a giggle,\textsuperscript{32} for he lives in a state of isolation completely cut off from even the slightest comfort or support. In explaining his miserable condition to Coral, the banana grower's daughter, he reminisces about his former happiness:

He said: "I try to remember how happy I was once." A firefly lit his face like a torch and then went out—a tramp's face: what could ever have made it happy? He said: "In Mexico City now they are saying Benediction. The bishop's there... Do you imagine he ever thinks...? They don't even know I'm alive."\textsuperscript{33}

This sense of isolation and abandonment is increased by the geographical isolation of the poor state in which the whiskey priest operates. The grim abandonment of the tropical state of Tobasco is symbolized by the abandoned crosses on the desolate plateau where the Indian mother leaves her dead child:

At sunset on the second day they came onto a wide plateau covered with short grass: an odd grove of crosses stood up blackly against the sky, leaning at different angles—some as high as twenty feet, some not much more than eight. They were like trees that had been left to seed. The priest stopped and stared at them: they were the first Christian symbols he had seen for more than five years publicly exposed—if you could call this empty plateau in the mountains a public place. No priest could have been concerned with the rough group; it was the work of Indians and had nothing in common with the tidy vestments of the Mass and the elaborately worked out symbols of the liturgy. It was like a short cut to the dark and magical heart of the faith—to the night when the graves opened and the dead walked.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid., p. 67.
\textsuperscript{32}Greene, The Power and the Glory, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{33}Ibid., p. 33.
\textsuperscript{34}Ibid., p. 208.
The whiskey priest's world, then, has very little in common with the "tidy" setting of God's Jester. His ministry is a harsh shortcut to the "heart of the faith." What joy can there be for him when he comes to the realization that he is a liability to everyone he tries to help? When he returns to his former parish, the first wish of his parishioners is that he leave as soon as possible. "One of the men asked: 'Will you be here long, father'? . . . One of the other men said: 'Couldn't you go a bit farther north, father, to Pueblita'?"35 And in answer to his questions about this lack of welcome they explain to him that the police are taking hostages:

They are taking hostages now—from all the villages where they think you've been. And if people don't tell . . . somebody is shot . . . and then they take another hostage.36

The lack of joy characterizes his sermon to his parishioners. In his short talk he explains heaven, not as a place of glory and bliss, but as a place where the constant sorrows and dangers of this life cease to be:

He cried out stubbornly in a voice of authority: "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. Perhaps without them—who can tell? you wouldn't enjoy heaven so much. Heaven would not be complete."37

For the whiskey priest there is no gaiety and joy. He is pressed too closely by the realities of pain and suffering all around him. The sermon quoted above is interrupted by the advance of the police.

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35 Ibid., p. 86. 36 Ibid., p. 87. 37 Ibid., pp. 94-95.
"It was not easy to concentrate: the police were not far away." The abstract concepts of religion are crowded out of his mind by these grim realities:

Literary phrases from what seemed now to be another life altogether—the strict quiet life of the seminary—became confused on his tongue: the names of precious stones: Jerusalem the golden. But these people had never seen gold.59

The whiskey priest too has a sensitivity to pain and all forms of human suffering, but this sensitivity does not seem to be some innate quality of his personality. Rather he has acquired it during eight years of suffering and self-deprecation. He has gone through a change from the time the First Communion picture was taken, the time when according to Greene, he was characterized by the "trite religious word upon the tongue, the joke to ease the way, the ready acceptance of other people's homage ... a happy man."40 Now he is a member of the human race sharing its guilt and suffering. "It was as if he had descended by means of his sin into the human struggle to learn other things besides despair and love, that a man can be unwelcome even in his own home."41

The final characteristic of the stereotyped martyr that Mrs. Norman attributes to her hero is unwavering faith. Father Pro never suffers the slightest doubt or internal trial about things spiritual. This immunity from all moral danger is unbelievable and seems to make Pro an angel rather than a man. "Of the ordinary temptations of young vigorous manhood he made light: almost, he implied that he rather liked them!"42 The implication is that there was never any real struggle or

38 Ibid., p. 95. 39 Ibid., p. 95. 40 Ibid., p. 29.
41 Ibid., p. 85 42 Norman, p. 79.
doubt about the outcome of his life. He would be a martyr:

It is difficult to know precisely when it was that Miguel had first felt a longing for a like martyrdom, or any form of martyrdom. But a companion of his at El Llano in some unpublished notes "on the life of Father Pro during the Carracista epoch" asserts quite simply, and as it were absent-mindedly, that the news of their fellow Jesuits' sufferings quickened in Miguel Pro "that ardent wish which he felt to suffer persecution for justice's sake." This "ardent wish" never subsequently left him.43

Mrs. Norman even speculates upon the internal disposition of her hero to the point that Father Pro seems to be always assured of salvation:

There was always in him . . . a certain unity which makes even for human happiness: a great simplicity, a direct looking towards God, towards his own single and unchanging end--sacrifice of self and apostleship of souls. No complications of doubt or mental stress.44

This confidence is restated in terms of his light-hearted escapes from the pursuing police.45 And finally, of course, he is portrayed as perfectly calm and happy during the final scene, the act of martyrdom itself.46

It is on this point that Greene makes the strongest departure from the typical martyr story, for the little priest is saturated with doubts and overwhelmed by the complexities of salvation. Asked by the police lieutenant why he stayed, he says, "The fact is a man isn't presented suddenly with two courses to follow. One good and one bad."47 He finds his situation as a fugitive priest, hunted by the police and

43 Ibid., p. 36. 44 Ibid., p. 79.
45 Ibid., p. 132. 46 Ibid., pp. 202-06
47 Greene, The Power and the Glory, p. 263.
unwelcome to his people, "appallingly complicated." This is not to say
that he does not possess faith. His faith in God, in the Sacraments he
administers, and in his Church is constant and deep. But it is in the
relationship of the finite individual and the infinite deity that he runs
aground. Shortly before his execution he holds a long conversation with
the lieutenant, and in this talk he makes an informal confession of faith
to his persecutor: "I can put God into a man's mouth . . . and I can
give him God's pardon. It wouldn't make any difference to that if every
priest in the Church was like me." But when it comes to a definite
judgment about a particular individual, the priest finds himself
increasingly less able to make a simple, pat judgment. During the whiskey
priest's brief respite across the border in the comparatively free state
of Chiapas, he is befriended by a cantina owner. Immediately the priest
recognizes him for what he is, a Catholic by convenience, who does not
let his religion interfere with the down-to-earth practicalities of life.
In a word, he is a hypocrite, and the priest recognizes him for what he is.
But the next morning at Mass, when the priest looks out over the
congregation and sees this man kneeling with his plump face in his hands,
praying the rosary, the priest doubts his own ability to make any moral
judgment. "He looked a good man: perhaps, the priest thought, I have
lost the faculty of judging--perhaps that woman in prison was the best
person there." This uncertainty about the spiritual status of others
is just as applicable to his own soul. Still talking to the lieutenant
after his capture, he admits that he is unable to fathom the mystery of

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48 Ibid., p. 175. 49 Ibid., p. 263. 50 Ibid., p. 238.
God's relationship with man:

I don't know a thing about the mercy of God: I don't know how awful the human heart looks to Him. But I do know this—that if there's ever been a single man in this state damned, then I'll be damned too... I wouldn't want it to be any different. I just want justice, that's all.51

Mrs. Norman's Father Pro, on the other hand, possesses a certitude that borders on presumption. He seems to have some direct knowledge of the heart of God:

To one of his collaborators... he said: 'In the open heart of Jesus Christ one sees His heart burning with love for you, for me, for all men... But one sees it surrounded with thorns and in their center the Cross. This fire of love must light up our poor hearts, too, so that it can communicate itself to others...'.52

The picture of Father Pro that Mrs. Norman presents is that of an idealized superman who moves through the trials of life sheltered by his immense piety. He is good, too good. The result is that the reader finds himself unable to identify with Father Pro, and ironically enough it is for this reason that such books, for the modern Catholic at least, fail in their avowed purpose of edification. Luis's revulsion for the "Juan Story" in The Power and the Glory is an expression of the failure of such accounts according to Greene. It is worth noting that Luis's salvation comes not from the pious stories his mother continually foists upon him, but from personal contact with the haggard little fugitive priest who "smelt funny."53

Thus far the focus has been on the personal qualities of the martyr. The stages in the life of the martyr will be studied next. In

51Ibid., p. 269. 52Norman, p. 183.
53Greene, The Power and the Glory, p. 36.
the typical martyr life there are certain set predictable stages. Most martyrs seem to move through a fairly constant pattern of development until they reach their glorious death for Christ. These stages might be listed as follows: the happy childhood, the call, the fruitful ministry, the martyrdom, and the final glory. Mrs. Norman's Father Pro passes through stages, as does the whiskey priest, but here again the two men are in sharp contrast with each other.

The first stage has been called "the happy childhood." Here the prospective martyr enjoys a few short years in the warm environment of a good Catholic home:

Life was dignified, patriarchal; all amusements were enjoyed in common by a family, but amusement was very far from being the end of existence. A beautiful gravity distinguished the parents; a joyous gaiety their children.54

And so Miguel's early years were passed in innocent and happy activity within the sheltering confines of his good Catholic family full of security and peace:

Business and life went swinging along; he was immersed in both. There were still the family prayers at night; the rosary; the Angelus bells pealing from old twin towers three times daily; Mass in the great romanesque cathedral, but piety played no great part in his scheme of things. It was impossible to be gayer the family—even the office at times--rocked at his sallies. His guitar, his mandolin, echoed by day in the patios, under the oleanders in the moonlight by night, usually to the brightest sounds; popular tags--Mexican jarabes; fandangos; rags-times. But sometimes the old songs of Castille, serenades, cantinelas--a stealing melancholy to the brightly-ribboned guitar.55

54 Norman, p. 6.
55 Ibid., pp. 7-8.
Greene says very little about the childhood of his hero. He was born in Carmen, the son of a storekeeper. And of his childhood the whiskey priest recalls that though it had been happy, it had been filled with fears, especially the fear of poverty. "It had been a happy childhood, except that he had been afraid of too many things, and had hated poverty, like a crime . . ." These early years filled with insecurity seem to lend credence to the whiskey priest's later problems, if one accepts the dictum that the child is father to the man.

For a few years, at least, the typical martyr is allowed to be "all boy." But then he must pass into the second stage which will be designated simply as "the call."

The call is a coming together of various forces and influences at a point in time that prompt a young man to renounce the world and enter the religious life. It is a kind of conversion, and few pious authors can resist the impulse to attach to it, implicitly or explicitly, miraculous overtones. Mrs. Norman is no exception. According to her, Miguel Pro was highly incensed at his sisters' decision to enter the convent. He showed his anger by castigating the Jesuits who had influenced his sisters' decisions. After a period of rebellion in which he goes off into the desert by himself for a number of days, his mother convinces him that he should make a retreat. When he returns from this religious exercise, he is completely changed.

It was therefore with no unbounded surprise, that Miguel Pro's father and mother received him back into the family circle from his retreat a changed being.

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56 Greene, p. 30.
57 Ibid., p. 92.
He had left in anger, in scarcely suppressed revolt at the religious vocation of his sisters; he returned announcing his own. He was going to be a priest. Most amazing of all, he was going to be a Jesuit... He had been caught like Saul on the road to Damascus—almost he would have "held the clothes" of those who would have stoned the Jesuits, now he was going to enter their famous Society. He had thought of "looking after" the miners, now he was to do more—devote his life to the salvation of their souls, of all souls. That was his dream. 58

In The Power and the Glory the reader first meets the priest some eighteen years after his ordination. Greene gives the impression that the whiskey priest's "call" came not so much from the high ideals of the ministry, the salvation of souls, as from the more worldly attractions of the priesthood, "the respect of his contemporaries, a safe livelihood." 59

In fact, the whiskey priest himself believes that his vocation grew more out of his fear of poverty than from his love of God. He says that "he believed that when he was a priest he would be rich and proud—that was called having a vocation." 60

But for the whiskey priest also there seems to be a legitimate "call," a point in time at which he too makes a decision to devote his life to the salvation of souls. And again in contrast to Pro, this call does not come when he is surrounded by the quiet recollection of the religious life; rather, it comes when he is being most closely pursued by the police after returning to his former parish and saying Mass for his unwilling parishioners. The soldiers arrive and collect all the people in the town square. After pleading with the villagers to betray the priest

58 Norman, p. 13.
59 Greene, The Power and the Glory, p. 29.
60 Ibid., p. 92.
to him, the lieutenant takes a hostage, whose name incidentally is Miguel. It may be that it is at this moment that the whiskey priest receives his "call," makes his decision. He steps forward and offers himself in place of the boy. This act of the will coupled with the physical act of stepping forward would appear to be the real moment of acceptance of the priestly vocation. In the ordination rite of the Catholic Church those who are to be ordained are asked to take a step forward to indicate their willingness to accept the rights and responsibilities of the order which is being conferred. If the whiskey priest's original motive for entering the priesthood had arisen out of a desire to live a life of respect and ease, this self-immolation marks the point at which he becomes what the ideals of the priesthood call for, a servant of the servants of Christ.

There is a second consideration worth noting about the passage referred to here. The sentence that immediately follows the priest's "Take me" quite curiously deals with an incidental herd of pigs. "A rout of pigs came running round the corner of a hut, taking no notice of anybody." This seems to be an allusion to a Biblical incident in which Christ drives a number of devils out of a man and allows them to enter a herd of swine. It does not seem far-fetched to interpret the reference to the rout of pigs as symbolic of the purgation which the priest has just experienced by his offer of himself.

61 Ibid., p. 105.
62 Ibid., p. 105.
63 Mt. VIII, 30 ff., Lk. VIII, 32 ff., Mk. V, 11 ff.
It is from this point that the priest begins to act more and more like a dedicated minister of the Church. Finding that the woman has destroyed his wine, he resolves to go to the capitol to get more because without it he cannot say Mass. Immediately after the departure of the lieutenant and his troops, the villagers try to convince him to flee the state:

'It's a fine state over the border,' a woman said. 'They've still got churches there... A cousin of mine went over the mountains to Las Casas once and heard Mass—in a house, with a proper altar, and the priest all dressed up like in the old days. You'd be happy there, father.'

The whiskey priest decides not to flee across the border. Instead he turns his mule south, following in the actual steps of the police. The love for his child is spread to all men, and he turns his mule south:

A man said: 'Better go north, father,' and stood waving his hand. One mustn't let human affections—or rather one must love every soul as if it were one's own child. The passion to protect must extend itself over a world—but he felt it tethered to the tree trunk. He turned his mule south.

This episode marks the beginning of the whiskey priest's rejection of the "safe livelihood" and his acceptance of the real ministry of the priesthood.

Greene's silence about the whiskey priest's childhood and youth may be significant for two reasons. First Greene's character is so caught up in the cruel realities of his present condition that his previous life, "the old days," has virtually ceased to exist for him. This break with the past is not limited to the character of the whiskey priest. The

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64 Greene, The Power and the Glory, p. 106.
65 Ibid., p. 112.
dentist, Mr. Tench, realizes that he no longer can remember the faces of his own children in England.66 The whiskey priest himself, meditating upon the progression of his despair, realizes that "the routine of his life like a dam was cracked and forgetfulness came dribbling in, wiping out this and that."67

For Father Pro there is no such break with the past. There is only a continuous flow of events that seems to lead directly to the glory of his martyrdom. After his ordination and pilgrimage to Lourdes, he sets sail for Mexico once again:

So gaily, ardently, he sailed back West, like his remote Spanish predecessors, the great missionaries of the great days; they went to an uncertain fate, he to an almost certain one ... And all the time ... he looked straight ahead. Beyond the lovely blue of those summer seas, where the sun sank in gold and crimson, were the blood-stained shores of his homeland; there alone, unhelped, forsaken it seemed by God and man, the Church of Mexico struggled with the powers of hell made manifest. He, since he was now an ordained priest, was quite simply and undramatically going back to take his place in the ranks.68

There is about Pro's life a certain stability that is lacking in the whiskey priest's. Even though Mexico is in a state of chaos, Pro's taking his place "in the ranks" denotes at least a subjective order and stability.

The second reason for the omission of any real emphasis upon the priest's formative years may well lie in Greene's rejection of the "old days" as a time when the priest was not really alive to the world around him. In the flashback to the anniversary dinner the picture is of a priest who is out of contact with his fellow man.69 He rejects the

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66 Ibid., p. 19.  
67 Ibid., pp. 82-83.  
68 Norman, p. 115.  
request of Montez for a charitable organization to see to the needs of
the poor and listens instead to the complaint of a pious woman about the
bad books that are being smuggled in from the capitol. The contrast to
the fallen priest in the prison cell scene is obvious. In the prison
cell he comes alive and realizes that the world is in reality like that
cell, "overcrowded with lust and crime and unhappy love." His fall
brings with it compassion and awareness. In his sermon to his
parishioners after his fall, he experiences a certain satisfaction because
he has become one of them: "For a matter of seconds he felt an immense
satisfaction that he could talk of suffering to them now without
hypocrisy--it is hard for the sleek and well-fed priest to praise
poverty." Life, then, for the whiskey priest begins with his fall.

After his happy childhood and call, the typical martyr moves on to
the third stage, the fruitful ministry. Here he appears to have special
powers that bring him unbounded success with souls. Mrs. Norman quotes
one of Father Pro's letters to his Superior:

> Of my other work I have almost lost count, for the sick were my
> favorite occupation; Viaticum, Extreme Unction, baptisms and
> marriages simply ran riot especially in the working-classes
> ... Many, many First Communions ... In the outlying quarters
> it seemed I was in my element; I talked, I shouted, I bleated,
> before my shirtless audience; they came in hundreds to our
> conferences, without fear of the police or gendarmes. Poor lads!
> one can do such a lot of good amongst them.

Mrs. Norman pictures Father Pro shored up by such successes and aided by
various Catholic organizations. There is depicted a religious vitality
in Mexico City that is completely lacking in the state of Tobasco. The

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70 Ibid., p. 169.  71 Ibid., p. 97.  72 Norman, p. 154.
contrast to the whiskey priest's field of operations is sharp. In the opening chapter of the novel, the priest expresses the futility of his endeavors:

'You know nothing,' the stranger said fiercely. 'That is what everyone all the time says—you do not good.' The brandy had affected him. He said with monstrous bitterness: 'I can hear them saying it all over the world.'

The contrast between the ministries of Father Pro and Greene's whiskey priest lies in the word abandonment. Greene's priest is abandoned. Throughout the novel we are continually presented with the symbol of this abandonment: the buzzards that watch the human misery "with shabby indifference," the backward state of Tobasco cut off from the rest of Mexico by the rains, and the little priest abandoned by all the comforting institutions of his religion. In the prison cell, when the pious woman threatens to report him to his bishop, the priest says wistfully, "Ah, he's a very long way off." The Church with all her consolations and comforts is out of reach. He is alone. He is abandoned even by his own people.

This sense of abandonment is magnified by his feelings of complete futility. Where Father Pro is consoled by unparalleled success, the whiskey priest is tortured by failure. After his capture he confesses this futility to the police lieutenant:

'I wasn't any use, but I stayed. At least, not much use. I'd got so that I didn't have a hundred communicants a month. If I'd gone I'd have given God to twelve times that number. It's a

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73 Greene, The Power and the Glory, p. 22.
74 Ibid., p. 9.
75 Ibid., p. 177.
mistake to think just because a thing is difficult or
dangerous..." He made a flapping motion with his hands.76

And finally just before he is to be executed he is shown wracked with
this enormous sense of failure. Where Father Pro had seen hundreds and
hundreds brought to God through his ministry, the whiskey priest cannot
see one soul that has been influenced by his work. The terrible
realization that when he is dead there will not be a trace of him left
seems to crush him in his final hours before his execution:

He was confused, his mind was on other things: it was not the
good death for which one always prayed. He caught sight of
his own shadow on the cell wall: it had a look of surprise and
grotesque unimportance... What an impossible fellow I am,
he thought, and how useless. I have done nothing for anybody,
I might just as well have never lived. His parents were dead—
soon he wouldn't even be a memory... He felt only an immense
disappointment because he had to go to God empty-handed, with
nothing done at all.77

This is the picture of the whiskey priest awaiting his martyrdom. Father
Pro, on the other hand, continues to reap success up to the last as he
leads the other prisoners in the rosary and gives absolution to them from
afar. Mrs. Norman compares this prison ministry to the always glorious
prison scenes of the early Christian martyrs. The contrast to Greene's
confused and abandoned little whiskey priest is acute.

Their cells gave on to a central apartment and faced each other,
so that they could communicate at least by signs. Often Father
Pro said the Rosary aloud for all the Catholics; he gave them
absolution from afar; they said prayers at night in common. It
was singularly reminiscent of the prisons of the early Christian
martyrs.78

76 Ibid., p. 264.
77 Ibid., p. 283.
78 Norman, p. 193.
And so there are two very different ministries: one filled with the consolations of success and companionship and religion, the other stripped bare of all comfort and reward. It is obvious that the demands for courage and dedication are very much greater for Greene's whiskey priest.

The next clear-cut stage in the martyr story is the martyrdom itself. It has been noted above that from the time of the early martyrologies this final earthly act has been portrayed as filled with glory and triumph. Helen White says that the traditional martyr story tends to exaggerate the physical tortures of these scenes. The thinking of the hagiographer has been that the greater the suffering, the greater the saint.

Later imagination was to refine the physical tortures to the point that any historical sense must protest. Even twentieth-century man, for whom there can be few surprises in the darker regions of human nature, may well doubt if some of those brews of horror can have happened very often. But, as she goes on to point out, the real tortures of the martyrs may lie in the degradation and gradual deterioration of the individual faced by his impending death. And here is a description of the miserable condition of Greene's whiskey priest when it comes time for him to face the firing squad:

But conversely there was much less blowing of trumpets and majesty of procession to those final scenes than memory suggests. Not the least of the sufferings of the martyrs was in affronts to human dignity and the wasting-away of the basic physical resources. Many a man must have felt that he had lost whatever human grace he had ever possessed when he was finally dragged out to that last noisy, confused, often squalid, scene.

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79 White, p. 7.
80 Ibid., p. 7
One has only to put himself in the place of the condemned man for a moment to experience some of the normal psychological reactions that imminent death must create in every man. Any man who has ever averted his eyes from the drills and needles in a dentist’s office can feel a certain kinship with the whiskey priest when after his capture he turned his eyes away as they passed the cemetery. “He wouldn’t look at the cemetery as they went by—there was the wall where the prisoners were shot.”

In Mrs. Norman’s unbelievable account nowhere is there any concern on Father Pro’s part for the pain he is about to undergo.

It is in the description of the actual execution that the possibility that Graham Greene knew Mrs. Norman’s book presents itself quite forcibly. The similarity between the "Juan Story" of The Power and the Glory and Mrs. Norman’s account of Father Pro’s death is startling. Their contrast with the death of the whiskey priest will be shown later.

Both accounts of the executions open with a rather formal announcement. Mrs. Norman begins with "There could be no more doubt that the hour he had hoped for had come." The "Juan Story" begins with "And now... the great testing day had come..." Mrs. Norman says that Father Pro was "perfectly calm." Juan "was quite calm and happy, and smiling at the Chief of Police."

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82 Norman, p. 203.


84 Norman, p. 203.

Pro was handcuffed or tied. Both men prayed publicly for their enemies.

The final act is worth presenting here at some length, for both Juan and Father Pro are described as experiencing some sort of vision during their final moments. The sign of this vision is a look of exultation and happiness that comes over their faces just before the crack of the rifles:

...Miguel Pro was left standing alone, unbound and unblinded, against the stockade.

"But," says Captain McCullagh, "there was no sense of loneliness and abandonment in the last look he gave at the world: on the contrary a strange exultation shone in his face as if he already felt himself shaded by the mighty wings of his patron, San Miguel, the Archangel of Death, as if he saw in the sky towards which his raised eyes were raised, the figure of Christ the King, crowned, throned...triumphant."

Greene's "Juan Story" has a simpler but similar vision:

In that moment a smile of complete adoration and happiness passed over Juan's face. It was as if he could see the arms of God open to receive him.

And then comes the final gesture, the famous last words of the martyrs. Mrs. Norman has Father Pro spreading his arms to the bullets and saying his final words:

As the five rifles were leveled at him he opened his arms in the form of a cross. Very distinctly, but as I have been told, in a voice no louder than that he used at Mass at the consecration of the Host he said: "Hail, Christ the King."

Juan's death is almost identical:

"... and Juan, raising both arms above his head, called out in a strong voice to the soldiers and the leveled rifles: 'Hail Christ the King!'"

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86 Norman, p. 205.

87 Greene, The Power and the Glory, p. 296.

88 Norman, p. 205.

89 Greene, The Power and the Glory, p. 296.
The deaths of Father Pro and Juan are so similar that one is tempted to believe that Greene had Mrs. Norman's book before him when he wrote the "Juan Story." Greene's parody seems a summary of all the cliches of the conventional martyr story. 90

The possibility that Greene may have read Mrs. Norman's book is reinforced by the presence in God's Jester of the death of the boy Tirado. Three other prisoners were executed along with Father Pro. All four victims were accused of involvement in a plot to kill a public official.

The first to die after Pro was Luis Segura Vilchis. His death is described in briefer but similar terms to that of Pro:

First came Luis Segura Vilchis, a splendidly handsome young man... who went to the shambles "unfalteringly, more like a young athlete who goes to receive his prize or a young king who goes to mount his throne than a condemned man who goes to his death... Addressing the firing party he said in a quiet conversational tone: 'I am ready, gentlemen.' 91

The next man to be executed is Father Pro's brother, Humberto:

Then it was Humberto's turn to die; 'superbly cool and self-possessed,' he took out a medal and in looking at it, as he passed his brother's body stumbled against it--"he did not even change color."

'Where shall I stand?' he asked the Major and was shown a spot soaked in blood beside the two dead bodies. On his face

90 There are additional indications that the "Juan Story" is related to Mrs. Norman's book. Both Pro and Juan are noted for their "play acting" as children. The reference to Saul in Pro's awakening to his vocation is echoed in Juan's martyrdom where he prays that God would enlighten their ignorance, and bring them at last--as Saul the persecutor was brought--into his eternal kingdom."(296) Both men possess the conventional martyr characteristics. Whether Greene read God's Jester or not does not seem particularly important, since most martyr stories of this calibre have this marked similarity.

91 Norman, p. 206.
as on that of Father Pro and Segura Vilchis was a look of terrible agony when the bullets pierced his breast, and then he too, had joined the great company of martyrs.92

It is in Mrs. Norman's account of the death of the fourth and final victim, Tirado, that one can see a technique of understatement that is akin to Greene's powerful treatment of the death of the whiskey priest. The heartless destruction of this miserable boy has about it the simplicity and pathos that is so gripping in Greene's account of the whiskey priest's death:

The fourth and last victim was the poor boy Tirado against whom there was no sort of evidence, not even the perjured report of the police. He was so ill with pneumonia as to be unable to stand upright and was shot huddled and trembling with fever. To the usual question, "Any last requests?" he had said he would like to see his mother. No one paid any attention and the firing order was given.93

If the accounts of the deaths of Father Pro, Segura Vilchis, and Humberto bear a marked similarity to the death of Juan, so also there is a definite similarity between the death of Tirado and that of the whiskey priest:

They paddled him across to the opposite wall: an officer tied a handkerchief round his eyes... Everything went very quickly like routine. The officer stepped aside, the rifles went up, and the little man suddenly made jerky movements with his arms. He was trying to say something... nothing came out except a word that sounded like 'Excuse.' The crash of the rifles and the little man was a routine heap beside the wall...94

Both Tirado and the whiskey priest are executed quickly and without fanfare. Their final attempts to communicate with their fellow man go unheeded. There is, as Helen White has said, "much less blowing of

92 _Ibid._, p. 206.
93 _Ibid._, pp. 206-07.
trumpets and majesty of procession." This is martyrdom in its simplest and most powerful terms.

In the conventional martyr story the writer gives a close-up of the martyr right up until his entry into heaven. There is no room left to doubt or question the final disposition of the martyr's soul. Greene, on the other hand, pulls his reader away from his martyr and allows him to die his own death. The question of his salvation is left to God.

This respect for the privacy of a man's final hour begins, with Greene, during the night before the execution of the whiskey priest. "There was an odd silence everywhere, even in the other cells: it was as if the whole world had tactfully turned its back to avoid seeing him die." 95

The reader's last entry into the priest's mind is in the cell shortly before his hour of execution. His final thoughts seem to end on a positive, if not hopeful, note. Disappointed by the seeming futility of his sacrifice, the priest nevertheless comments on the possibility of sainthood:

It seemed to him at that moment that it would have been quite easy to have been a saint. It would only have needed a little self-restraint and a little courage. He felt like someone who has missed happiness by seconds at an appointed place. He knew now that at the end there was only one thing that counted—to be a saint. 96

Whether he was able to muster that self-restraint and courage at the last moment is not revealed to the reader. Greene says only that "he was doing his best" 97 when he was led forth to die. His final agony is kept secret from the reader, and he is seen only through the distant view of

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95 Ibid., p. 281. 96 Ibid., p. 284. 97 Ibid., p. 294.
the startled dentist, Mr. Tench. And yet even here the little priest does not come off as badly as one might at first feel.

Greene's technique of changing the point of view to that of Mr. Tench is significant. This silence about the final workings of the priest's mind constitutes a negative statement on the part of the novelist with regard to the relationship of a man and his God. This relationship is highly personal and individual and must take into account all the unique components of an individual's spiritual life. Greene seems to be saying in this shift in point of view that there is a point where human analysis breaks down and each man must be left alone with his God. Salvation and damnation are so complex that the formulas of the Church never really fit.

It is this tendency to generalize about salvation that forms the basis for the objection to the conventional treatment of the martyr story. If each man is unique, it follows that his relationship to God must be unique. The aggregation of cliches that make up the standard martyr story, the trite formula of martyrdom, cover up this individuality, and the martyr loses his personality and his story loses its vitality. The fact that Greene does not wrap his martyr story up neatly, as do the conventional martyr biographers, preserves this quality of individuality for the reader. One never loses sight of the man.

To many people also, the Catholic Church seems to function entirely on this level of formula. The Sacraments and the legalistic distinctions of moral theology seem to sort every man into categories of the damned and the saved. Such a view of the Church tends to make one lose sight of the fact that the Church is made up of unique individuals, each one possessing a unique relationship with God. This "automatic" religion seems to be part of the target in Greene's attack on the formula of
In Why Do I Write Greene says explicitly that "literature presents a personal moral, and the personal morality of an individual is seldom identical with the morality of the group to which he belongs." By "personal moral" Greene seems to be saying that an individual's guilt or innocence, his salvation or damnation, cannot be measured by the set yardstick of any religion. The characters in his fiction each possess this personal moral and cannot be judged by any group morality. It is for this reason, then, that Greene allows his whiskey priest to die alone.

In Greene's account of the death of the whiskey priest he uses the word routine three times. This repetition certainly suggests that Greene is working consciously with the formula of martyrdom that has been discussed above. The routine consists of the set of conventions that have been used in the recounting of the deaths of the martyrs:

Everything went quickly like a routine. The officer stepped aside, the rifles went up, and the little man suddenly made jerky movements with his arms. He was trying to say something: what was the phrase they were always supposed to use? That was routine too, but perhaps his mouth was too dry, because nothing came out except a word that sounded more like "Excuse."
The crash of rifles shook Mr. Tench. . . Then there was a single shot . . . and the little man was a routine heap beside the wall. . .

The routine phrase is "Hail Christ the King" which both Father Pro and Juan are said to have uttered just before the crash of the rifles.

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100 Ibid., p. 297; Norman, p. 205.
The whiskey priest's death, then, is routine in the sense that it is accomplished swiftly and without fanfare. It is not routine, however, in the sense that his hero does not follow the traditional script of martyrdom. Greene, therefore, seems to be deliberately contrasting the whiskey priest's death with the martyr formula.

The final stage in the martyr formula is the post mortem triumph of the martyr, the victory of good over evil, the happy ending. The funeral of Father Pro was a "triumphal march." More than twenty thousand, defying the anger of the persecutors, and opening for themselves a way between the bayonets, rushed out to acclaim Christ the King and the new martyrs. Mrs. Norman then goes on to give an account of the miracles that follow as public divine testimony to the sanctity of the martyr. "Already, from Mexico and elsewhere, there are accounts of startling favors received through the intercession of Miguel Augustin Pro--miracles one would call them, but that to use the word might be to forestall the judgment of the Church." The disposal of the remains of the whiskey priest, on the other hand, is brief and without ceremony. "Two knock-kneed men approached quickly." And when Tench looks back, "everything had been tidied away: a man was throwing sand out of a spade as if he were filling a grave. But there was no grave: there was nobody there..." There is no worldly triumph, no cult, just an end.

102 Ibid., pp. 210-11.
103 Ibid., p. 217.
And so both Father Pro and the whiskey priest pass through the four stages in the martyr formula, but the contrast between them at each point is striking and quite possibly deliberate.

Mrs. Norman has in *God's Jester* written an almost classic example of the modern popular martyr story. There are no real surprises in the book. Father Pro's personality fits the martyr mold perfectly. Each stage in his progression to martyrdom is predictable. There are no doubts, no decisions, just a working through the standard phases of the martyr story. The whiskey priest too moves through a similar chronological series, but Greene's treatment of each stage is in sharp contrast to the conventional martyr story, and at each step of the way the reader penetrates the stereotype to discover a man, a fellow human being caught up in all the overwhelming complexities of the human condition. It has been said at the outset that *God's Jester* exemplifies the standard martyr story in its treatment of the personality and the life of the martyr. Father Pro is presented to the reader as a plaster of Paris saint bereft of individuality. He moved through his life to martyrdom on a straight, unswerving, predictable course.

Greene's novel point for point is a counterpoint treatment of the martyr story. But what about the whiskey priest as a martyr of the Church?
CHAPTER III

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE WHISKEY PRIEST

If, as has been said, the story of the whiskey priest is a reworking of the martyr story, it becomes necessary to show that the whiskey priest is himself a martyr. A martyr is "one who chooses to suffer and die rather than compromise the basic principles of his religion." But to many Catholics martyrdom involves much more than the simple act of dying for one's faith. There is a certain broadening of the requirements for martyrdom to include a set of spiritual standards which a person must meet before he can be truly considered a martyr of the Church. The final chapter of this paper will attempt to show that the whiskey priest does indeed possess these essentials.

In the eyes of Catholics, to be a martyr is to be a saint, and to be a saint is to be perfect. This is to say, a martyr must have attained that degree of spiritual perfection that would merit eternal salvation for him. Because the Church, through her established, legalistic procedures of beatification and canonization, has selected only a comparatively few outstanding examples of sanctity, and because writers like Mrs. Norman have insisted upon depicting these men as absolute paragons of all virtues, many of the ordinary faithful have become convinced that martyrdom and sainthood lie beyond the realm of their own spirituality. It appears that part of Greene's motivation in creating the

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105 See page 5.
character of the whiskey priest was to give his readers a realistic example of relative perfection that has meaning for the common Christian. In short, a more realistic portrayal of the lives of the saints and martyrs, Greene seems to imply, will produce better Christians.

It is necessary first to show that the perfection demanded of the individual is relative. The question of Christian perfection is the proper study of a branch of theology called ascetical theology. Adolphe Tanquerey, whose book, The Spiritual Life, is used as a basic text in many Catholic seminaries, says on the very first page of his treatise on ascetical theology that absolute perfection is possible only in heaven. "Here on earth, however, the perfection we can reach is only relative." He goes on to say that in the appraisal of the individual it is necessary to apply the principles and general rules to each person in particular. In this account must be taken of the individual's temperament, character, sex and age, social standing, duties of state, as well as the supernatural attractions of grace. The Bible, too, sets forth this principle of relativity through the "Parable of the Talents," which says in effect that the return expected of each man is proportionate to the resources, or talents, that have been entrusted to him. The previous chapter has tried to show the stark contrast between Father Pro and the whiskey priest. It does not take much looking to see that the talents and resources of the two men were unequal. Father Pro,

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107 Ibid., p. 3.

108 Mt. XXV, 14-30.
according to Mrs. Norman at least, seems to have been blessed with all the natural and supernatural virtues in abundance. He seems to be perfect martyr material. The whiskey priest is an almost perfect foil. He is a weak man where Father Pro is strong. He is beset with doubts and fears. He takes refuge from his fears in brandy. He has fathered a child. He is what the people call "a bad priest." The whiskey priest himself proclaims the difference between himself and the standard martyrs: "Martyrs are not like me," he says to the police lieutenant. "They don't think all the time!" The typical martyr never questions, never thinks; he just moves smoothly through life toward his glorious goal of martyrdom. The whiskey priest's life had been filled with doubts, fears, uncertainties, and choices. Martyrs are not like him.

The spirituality of a man must also be judged in light of the conditions under which he lives that life. Here again Pro and the whiskey priest differ greatly. Father Pro had constant contact with his superiors and fellow priests and laity. The whiskey priest is alone, cut off from all advice and comfort. He is rejected even by his own people because his presence brings with it the danger of police reprisals. And so when an evaluation of the spirituality of the whiskey priest is attempted, one must make this evaluation in light of the whiskey priest's unique and forlorn situation. And as the whiskey priest himself says, one must "trust God to make allowances."

The question of the priest's sin, his fathering of a child, comes to the fore, of course, in any consideration of his spirituality. The

110 Ibid., p. 265.
111 Ibid., p. 265.
basic requirements for mortal sin according to Tanquerey are full knowl-
edge and full consent of the will. In recalling the incident, the
priest says, "They spent no love in her conception: just fear
and despair and half of a bottle of brandy and the sense of loneliness
had driven him to an act which horrified him." The drink, the loneliness,
and the despair are all circumstances which any moral theologian would
consider mitigating. So it may be that even this act with its enormous
consequences for the priest was not really a mortal sin. Greene does not
make a judgment. He shows the reader only the tortured soul. The
judgment of that soul is left to God.

If it was a sin, the priest did penance enough for it. "He alone
carried the wound, as if a whole world had ended." While he has
difficulty feeling the emotion of sorrow for his sin because of the lapse
of time and his great love for the child, he admits the gravity of his
act and does ample penance.

There are, too, numerous other failings that have earned for the
whiskey priest the title of "bad priest." The priest calls them his
"surrenders":

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 breviary--and finally he had left it behind altogether
at the port in one of his periodic attempts to escape. Then the
altar stone went--too dangerous to carry with him. He had no
business to say Mass without it: he was probably liable to

112 Tanquerey, p. 342.
113 Greene, The Power and the Glory, p. 90.
114 Ibid., p. 94.
suspension, but penalties of the ecclesiastical kind began to seem unreal in a state where the only penalty was the civil one of death.\textsuperscript{115}

If these "surrenders" are examined closely, it will be noted that they deal with the nonessentials of religion. Abstinence, feast-days, fast-days, the obligation of the breviary, and the regulations for the proper celebration of Mass are all questions of the discipline of the Church. Any one of these duties could and would be dispensed with quite easily if the proper ecclesiastical authorities were available. As has been said before, the priest's ministry in the abandoned state of Tobasco becomes a shortcut to the heart of his religion. He remains faithful to all the essentials of the priesthood.

While the condition of the whiskey priest's soul with regard to individual acts is left in doubt by Greene, it is possible to arrive at some fairly sound conclusions about the whiskey priest's spirituality in general. According to the standard doctrine of the Church, there are three theological virtues which constitute the essential elements of Christian life.\textsuperscript{116} These three are faith, hope, and charity. These virtues must be possessed by anyone before he can be deemed worthy of salvation. Faith, according to Tanquerey's definition, is the yielding of "firm assent to the revealed truths, because of the authority of God."\textsuperscript{117} Hope is a "firm confidence in eternal bliss and the means of attaining it because of God's goodness and power."\textsuperscript{118} Charity is the

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., p. 82.
\textsuperscript{116} Tanquerey, p. 549.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., p. 551.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., p. 560.
"love of God above all... and... love of neighbor for God's sake."  

The whiskey priest possesses these essential virtues in his own imperfect way. 

Scarcely anyone can challenge the faith of the whiskey priest. His human weakness only serves to emphasize this deep faith in God and His Church. His faith is so strong that in spite of his obvious human frailty he cannot take the path of compromise like the married priest Father Jose. When Coral asks him why he does not renounce his faith, he answers simply, "It's impossible. There's no way. I'm a priest. It's out of my power." 

His sincere confession of faith in the priesthood and the Sacraments has already been noted above. 

The whiskey priest's faith in God and His Church is real. It does not contain any of the overtones of superstition so often associated with religion in Latin America. In rebuking the mestizo who had betrayed him, the priest displays his acceptance of the omniscience of God: 

"You are so superstitious," the priest said. "You think my blessing will be like a blinker over God's eyes. I can't stop Him knowing all about it. Much better go home and pray. Then if He gives you grace to feel sorry, give away the money." 

This faith persists until the end. The priest's final thought is in itself a confession of faith. "He knew now that at the end there was only one thing that counted— to be a saint." 

But faith is not merely an assent of the intellect. It demands action. This action is shown in the whiskey priest's conformity to the

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119 Ibid., p. 568.  
120 Greene, The Power and the Glory, p. 54.  
121 Ibid., p. 266.  
122 Ibid., p. 69.
will of God. Perhaps the clearest and greatest assent to faith comes when the priest reads the scribbled note of the dying American gangster. The certitude that he is needed is clear expression of faith. "But it was a fact that the American was there, dying...There was no question at all that he was needed."[123] And so he goes back across the border to certain death because he believes.

The second essential virtue, the virtue of hope, is much less clearly a part of the whiskey priest's spiritual make-up. The question of the priest's despair arises. Once again it must be emphasized that there is a basic relativity to the spiritual life. The hope, then, that the whiskey priest possesses is imperfect because his situation is so hopeless. His years of spiritual isolation have taken their toll:

The simple ideas of hell and heaven moved in his brain: life without books, without contact with educated men, had peeled away from his memory everything but the simplest outline of the mystery.[124]

His hope, such as it is, is voiced from time to time throughout the novel in his desire to flee north to the relatively normal life of the bordering state of Chiapas. He believes that he can find comfort and salvation there.

He thought: if I go, I shall meet other priests: I shall go to confession: I shall feel contrition and be forgiven: eternal life will begin for me all over again.[125]

Hope has been defined above by Tanquerey as a "firm confidence in eternal bliss and the means of attaining it because of God's goodness and power." It is no wonder that the whiskey priest's hope is so imperfect when there is nothing in the entire novel that would in any way inspire such confidence. His every effort meets with failure. He is

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[123] Ibid., pp. 242-43.  
[124] Ibid., p. 89.  
[125] Ibid., p. 88.
without even the most meager means of leading a Christian life. Certainly he has none of the reassurances that Father Pro apparently had. To answer the question as to whether or not he does indeed possess this virtue, one must turn again to that final thought: "He knew now that at the end there was only one thing that counted—to be a saint." Enigmatic as this sentence may be, it does contain a note of hope.

The third virtue, charity is much more patently a part of the whiskey priest's spirituality. But here too it must be stated that his charity is not the "textbook" charity one reads about in treatises like Tanqueray's. The definition of the virtue of charity calls for the love of God for His own sake and of one's neighbor for God's sake. Theoretically charity as a virtue begins with God. In the whiskey priest's case his charity begins with his illegitimate daughter, Brigida. This love of the priest for his child merits a close examination.

The begetting of this child, even though it may be construed as a sin, is the beginning of his salvation. Up to that point in his life he had been a proud, vain man. Through his fall he learns to love:

What an unbearable creature he must have been in those days—and yet in those days he had been comparatively innocent... in his innocence, he had felt no love for anyone: now in his corruption he had learnt. The love that he feels for this child is selfless. He does not reap any of the normal rewards from this natural affection. This love for his child has a spiritual quality to it in that his concern is not so much with her physical well-being as with the salvation of her soul. It is for her soul that he utters his most sincere prayer: "O God, give me

126 Ibid., p. 284.
127 Ibid., p. 187.
any kind of death—without contrition, in a state of sin—only save this child.\textsuperscript{128}

This love for his child generates his love for all men. Even though he admits that he cannot transfer the full emotional content of this love to all men, his actions toward his fellow human beings adequately demonstrate his profound fraternal charity:

This is what I should feel all the time for everyone, and he tried to turn his brain away towards the halfcaste, the lieutenant, even a dentist he had once sat with for a few minutes, the child at the banana station, calling up a long succession of faces, pushing at his attention as if it were a heavy door which wouldn't budge. For those were all in danger too. He prayed: "God help them," but in the moment of prayer he switched back to his child beside the rubbish-dump, and he knew it was only for her that he prayed.\textsuperscript{129}

Notwithstanding this emotional focus on the child, he continually expresses his love for others by his acts of charity. Turning his back on escape, he answers the summons of the pious woman. He returns to certain death in order to minister to the dying gangster. He puts the fever-ridden mestizo on the back of his mule and sees him safely to the edge of the city of Carmen. And finally his love for his fellow men is shown most clearly in his compassion for the prisoners in the prison cell scene. Perhaps the most poignant expression of this love is found in his suffering cramps in his legs rather than disturb the old man:

The old man seemed to be uneasily asleep: his head lay sideways against the priest's shoulder, and he muttered angrily. God knows, it had never been easy to move in this place, but the difficulty seemed to increase as the night wore on and limbs stiffened. He couldn't twitch his shoulder now without waking the old man to another night of suffering... He sat silent and rigid against the damp wall, with his dead feet like leprosy under his haunches.\textsuperscript{130}

\textsuperscript{128}Ibid., p. 111. \textsuperscript{129}Ibid., pp. 280-81. \textsuperscript{130}Ibid., p. 174.
The priest's love of God is much more abstract, and therefore much harder to demonstrate. It is easily expressed in the formula of a prayer, but such formulas have lost their meaning for the whiskey priest. However, the priest himself gives the key to this love in his advice to one of his penitents: "Loving God isn't any different from loving a man—or a child. It's wanting to be with Him, to be near Him... It's wanting to protect Him from yourself." The priest's love for God is expressed in like terms. He wants to be near God when he yearns for the confessional and more intimate contact with his religion. His desire to protect God from himself is seen in his self-deprecation and profound humility and his refusal to see himself as a martyr. The whiskey priest seems to say here that if a person truly loves, it is not important what the immediate object of that love is. If it is real charity, it somehow has its roots in the love of God, for the love of man and the love of God are fundamentally indistinguishable.

The whiskey priest, then, does possess the essential virtues in his own unique way. Greene has shown his little priest to be so complex that it is virtually impossible to speculate about the degree of his guilt or innocence. That is a matter that Greene wisely leaves to God. The whiskey priest does, however, seem to remain within the orthodox bounds of the Catholic moral teaching, and as such, he qualifies as a martyr of the Church. His story then is a martyr story, however different it may seem.

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Ibid., p. 233.
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The foregoing paper has tried to examine the whiskey priest's story as a possible reworking of the conventional martyr story. The story of the little whiskey priest, when analyzed, appears to be the story of an atypical martyr, but martyr he is.

It has been implied in this paper that Greene was consciously reworking the formula of martyrdom. While there is often a danger in speculating about the intentions of an author, it seems reasonable to see in The Power and the Glory a deliberate attack on the pious kind of writing found in such books as God's Jester. The "Juan Story" and the constant attacks on the pious and uncharitable Christians in the novel make it logical to assume that it is Greene speaking in the novel when he writes:

He had always been worried by the fate of pious women: as much as politicians, they fed on illusion: he was frightened for them. They came to death so often in a state of invincible complacency full of uncharity. It was one's duty if one could, to rob them of their sentimental notions of what was good.132

Martyr stories like God's Jester may be part of the "illusion" that Greene finds so dangerous. He does not have to look far to find complacency and uncharity within the ranks of his fellow Catholics.

It is not the purpose of this paper to prove the sainthood of the book's hero. The essential point is that the story itself is anchored in the tradition of the martyr legend, a tradition that has become
I. LIST OF WORKS CITED

A. BOOKS


B. PERIODICALS


II. LIST OF WORKS CONSULTED

A. BOOKS


B. PERIODICALS
