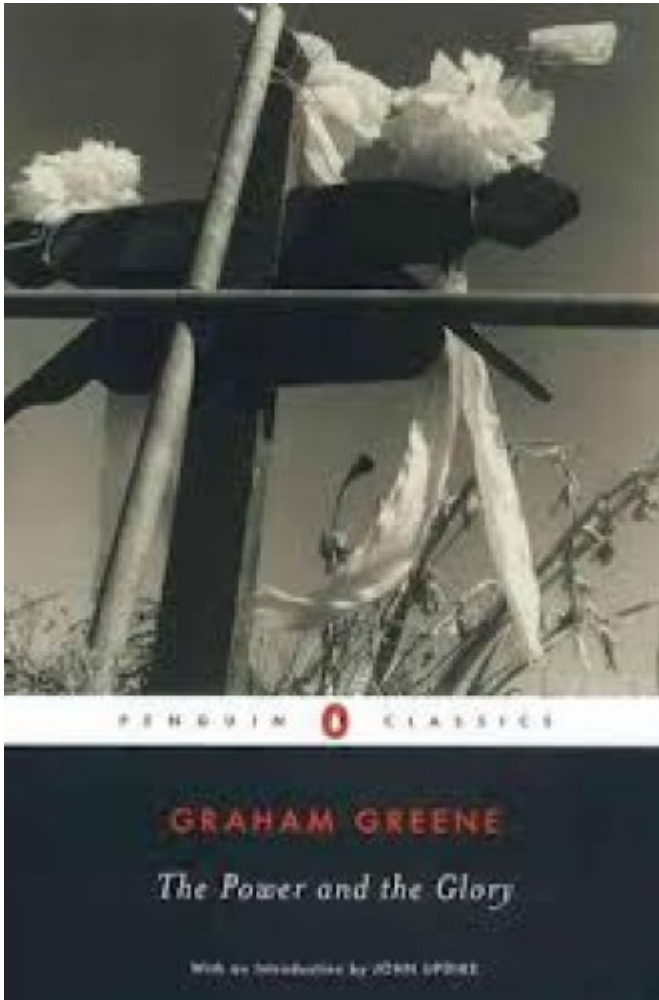


The Power and the Glory, by Graham Greene

selected by [Thomas G. Long](#) in the [April 30, 2014](#) issue

In Review



The Power and the Glory

by Graham Greene
Penguin Classics

"If you had to choose one book to help a person embarking on pastoral ministry, what would it be?" We posed that question to some pastors and professors. Here are their choices. —Ed.

In the mid-1930s, the Marxist and fanatically anticlerical Tomás Garrido Canabal governed the Mexican state of Tabasco. Possessed by a hatred for Christianity, he outlawed religious rites and sent his ruthless vigilantes marauding across the land, murdering priests and destroying Catholic churches. Against this backdrop, Graham Greene introduces the protagonist of his classic novel, the alcoholic and adulterous whiskey priest. In dark and somber prose, Graham, a convert to Catholicism, portrays this lonely figure as he struggles to perform his priestly ministry in a society gone mad and also in the face of his own moral collapse.

What emerges is a picture of ministry shorn of all romanticism, polite piety, and social support, of ministry sustained only by Christ, who died not “for what was good or beautiful, . . . [but] for the half-hearted and the corrupt.” The novel wrests priestly ministry from a naive doctrine of progress and points it toward a profound theology of hope.

Read [all reflections](#).