

Father quigley(tm)s sermon and the presentation of religion

[Family](#), [Father](#)



Look again at chapter 4 in: The lonely passion of Judith Hearne and concentrate on Father Quigley's sermon and the presentation of religion. Analysing Moore's narrative methods and themes, consider in what ways this extract reveals Moore's negative attitude to organised religion. Relate your findings to the rest of the novel. Brian Moore a successful Irish novelist who was born into a privileged middle class Roman Catholic family in Belfast, on the 25th August 1921.

Moore is one of nine children who had a strict Roman Catholic upbringing; his two brothers are doctors and his father a successful surgeon and head of Catholic hospital. Moore remembers his father as a man who would not "tolerate failure" 1. Moore went to school at Saint Malachy's College; he once described his school as a "priest factory" 2 showing his displeasure for regimented organised religion. Moore confessed to becoming within a "hair's breath of being a failure," 3 as he could not pass his maths exam to follow in his father and brothers footsteps.

He was a university drop-out and realised early in life that he was an atheist 4. He portrayed failure and his displeasure for religion and Belfast, through the characters and descriptive language used in *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*, written in (1955). He depicts Belfast as drab and shows us his hatred for Belfast bigotry for example, "drab facades of the buildings proclaiming the virtues of trade, hard dealing and Presbyterian righteousness," 5 he also describes Belfast as, "the protestant dearth of gaiety, the protestant surfeit of order, the dour Ulster burghers walking proudly among monuments to their mediocrity." 6 However it is Moore's

negative evaluation of the Catholic Church, as personified by the interpretation of Father Quigley, which truly displays his repugnance for religion and the society that shapes it. In this novel set in the 1950s Belfast, Brian Moore closely relates to the recurrent theme of religion, he shows his distaste through the despair and escalating loss of faith suffered by the lonely spinster Judith Hearne, (who secretly turns to alcohol to appease her). Judith's cherished possessions and religious influences are the picture of her Aunt Darcy and the painting of The Sacred Heart.

They are watchfully set out wherever she lives and instil authority, security and judge her life. Moore very skilfully uses omniscient narration and also invades Judith's stream of consciousness to give us insight to her inner thoughts and to the other characters of this novel. He reveals through the dual voice of the characters his sympathies for Judith; also Father Quigley's stern approaches and his hatred for a religious society that he left behind. However this is particularly more evident in the role that the Catholic Church played, in forming his negative attitude towards organised religion.

Moore continuously reveals religion of all descriptions very negatively, for example according to Donoghue he hates Belfast " such is his bitterness that the bitterness applies to all aspects of religion; the personal and institutional" 7 and also quoted by Sullivan, " my bitterness against the Catholic Church, my bitterness against the bigotry in Northern Ireland, my feelings about the narrowness of life there. " 8 this reveals that Moore is not eager to live in Belfastcultureagain and hates everything its represents.

The themes of loneliness and despair have been introduced by the beginning of chapter four, Belfast, its society and surroundings have been revealed in belittling terms. Religion is a constant theme within the novel and Moore sets the scene as Judith gets ready for Sunday Mass, the best part of the week. " She sets loneliness aside on a Sunday morning," 9 Judith approaches Sunday as a social occasion to see her friends the O'Neil's and also a day out to meet other Catholics who conformed and attended Mass.

Judith never really joined any good causes within the church she followed in her Aunt Darcy's footsteps, " Church affairs tend to put one in contact with all sorts of people whom one would prefer not to know socially. " 10 Moore reveals that religion is a comfort to Judith, a social interaction and a routine. " Gods ways were not our ways," 11 this reveals to the reader the negative attitude Moore has on the teachings of the Catholic Church. This view is further backed up with Madden and his unrighteous thoughts of lust for Mary the night before.

Madden is more concerned with keeping his trousers clean from the dusty boards in church, and receiving absolution for his sins, than he is with worshipping god. Moore presents Catholicism in a very negative light; he depicts Maddens character to show us that many Roman Catholics see religion as insurance and a way to get forgiveness to enter heaven. Moore uses the regimented way in which father Quigley criticises his congregation to reveal, according to Donoghue " the whole catholic system whose failings one man is made to embody. 12 Moore describes Father Quigley as " shuffling" 13 and " peering" 14 as he makes a hasty entrance to the altar.

The haste of his arrival is portrayed by the altar boys who "scuttled" 15 to keep up with his swift entrance. He is further described as a tall and terribly stern man with accusing "long spatulate fingers." 16 Moore uses repetitiveness and the priest's patronising narrative tone to demonstrate his misgivings of the Catholic Church. The sermon itself emphasised regimented routine, not the worship of god, as father Quigley rushed through and "mumbled the opening prayers," 17 showing no respect.

The parishioners also had the same sense of haste and lack of respect, "latecomers jostled, whispered and shuffled" 18 revealing the diverse absence of secularism amidst the "noise and confusion." 19 It would appear that Moore's use of pathetic fallacy heightens the mood, as the weather darkens the room "the priest's white and gold vestments shone brightly out of the murk above his congregation." 20 Moore felt this is "Like many attitudes of Irish priests, he takes the best seat in the room and considers everything to be in his due". 21.

Stood like a "watchdog" 22 and "his nostrils flare like a horse." 23 To the reader this reveals he is like an owl seeking his prey, in for the kill, as he hurled abuse at his parishioners, shouting repetitively. "I mean you people up there.. , I mean coming in late.. , I mean young boys and girls dirtying up the seats.. , I mean the shocking attitude of the parishioners.. ," 24 it sounds like he is threatening the parishioners with eternal damnation "if you don't have time for god he will have no time for you." 25 Mass is supposed to be a celebration to God.

Moore reveals the paradox of Father Quigley's angry outburst as a contradiction, " if not a caricature, and a combination of all the worst defects observed imaginable in a Roman Catholic Priest. " 26 Moore further subjects the reader to the belief that the Roman Catholic religion is controlling; he once again uses Father Quigley's embittered tone, as he tells the congregation they have " plenty of money! Plenty of time! Plenty of time. " 27 He roars out " drinking the pubs dry.. Football matches.. Naked.. and foreign dances.. instead of ceildhes. 28 Moore reveals the priest is more interested in telling the congregation off for doing worldly activities, instead of putting their money in the collection plate.

This seems to show preaching the word of God is secondary, the relief he offers from these immoral sins are an empty church and " sodality meeting for men and Children of Mary devotions for women" 29. Moore may also be trying to emphasize the social control of the church on the faithful. Father Quigley tries to threaten his parishioners with " everlasting fire that was prepared for the devil and his angels. " 30 He further accuses his parishioners of leaving the " House of God empty. 31 According to Roman Catholic faith god is supposed to live in the gate behind the " tabernacle door. " 32 In the final chapters of the novel we recall Judith's crisis almost like a nervous breakdown, when she tells the reader " what good of anything unless it's more than bread. " 33 Moore presents us with Judith's loss of faith as she attacks the tabernacle; this may indeed support his own atheist approach to " the world is indeed secular and empty that the world can hold

its void. " 34 Moore uses Judith actions to reveal his lack of belief, also Father Quigley's inability to help Judith in her time of crisis.

The only thing the priest can say is " you should be on your bended knee, praying for forgiveness. A terrible terrible thing! " 35 and even Father Quigley rejects her cry for help. " He heaps on penitence and guilt where forgiveness and grace are needed. " 36 Moore reveals he was helpless " Shepherd, he looked at his sheep. What ails here? Priest, he could not communicate with his parishioner. No Father Quigley said, " I don't know what you are talking about," 37 revealing that he could not grasp the situation. He can not understand her loss of faith and he can not deal with it, even as another sympathetic human being.

He was more worried about the protestant taxi driver seeing Judith out of control and in a state of drunkenness. Moore's attitude to religion throughout *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* relentlessly reveals to the reader that he is not a religious person. He denounces all forms of Belfast bigotry its society and religion, almost like he is biased against Catholicism, to be critical of this it is only his side of the story. His bitterness and religious themes also applies to other novels he has written, such as *Black Robe*³⁸ and *Cold Heaven*. 9 Moore reveals his negative feelings for organised religion both Roman Catholic and Protestant, suggesting 1950s religion was a frightening experience. Part of the reasons for these hatreds may have evolved from, As Patricia Craig tartly observes, " the fact that the family happened to live bang opposite the local Orange Order headquarters, topped by a statue of King Billy brandishing his sword," 'probably helped to keep their sectarian

instincts up to the mark. " It may also have been the strict catholic upbringing in which Brian had to endure and also simply the troubles and life at that time.