

CHAPTER IV

Celestial Bliss in *The End of the Affair*

He knew now that at the end there was only one thing that counted - to be a saint.

- Greene, *The Power and the Glory*, 210

Graham Greene's novel, *The End of the Affair* explores the theme of sin and salvation. It leads the readers into the heights of sublime level and the experience of celestial joy. The real theme of the novel is the working of Divine grace. It is set in war time and just after World War II and was first published in 1951 in England. If *The Heart of the Matter* is the last of the 'Catholic trilogy' of Greene, *The End of the Affair* marks the end of his Catholic series. The novel is a pathos-laden analysis of a three-way conflict between love of self, love of man and love of God. De Vitis in *Graham Greene*, quotes Greene's own words from the *Time* in its 29 October 1951 issue, saying,

"I wrote a novel about a man who goes to hell - *Brighton Rock* - another about a man who goes to heaven - *The Power and the Glory*. Now I've simply written one about a man who goes to purgatory (*The Heart of the Matter*)" . . . Yet *The End of the Affair* may well be a novel about a woman who goes to heaven, for Greene is consciously, perhaps even self-consciously, working within the anatomy of sainthood. *The End of the Affair* may in fact be the most Catholic of his novels in the narrowest sense

of the definition. (93)

Greene explores the nature of sainthood and the possibility of the heroine's salvation in his novel, *The End of the Affair*. His contemporaries could relate to the setting of the story, as the war was fresh in their memories and they were living in the same postwar period as the characters. Within this setting, Greene explores the themes of love, hate, faithfulness and the presence of divinity in human lives. Critics have been generally positive in their reviews and analyses of the novel, and readers have embraced it for more than fifty years. Greene dedicated the novel describing that affair in *The End of the Affair*, "To C. with love" (C. for 'Catherine'), and shows Greene's own affair with Catherine. For *The End of the Affair*, which, he has written to Catherine Walston, Greene was awarded in New York the Catholic Authors' award for fiction. Robert Gorham Davis gives a brief sketch of the settings of Greene's novel, *The End of the Affair*: "London is bomb-damaged; it rains all the time; the heroine has a bad cough; the meals are indigestible and made to sound so; the people are boring or nerve-racking; love is described largely in physical terms, and those repellent ones. The characters turn to the Church because they find life intolerable" (60). The novel reflects Greene's childhood conviction of love and despair and his vision of the world has been as of a place of sin and suffering.

The novel, *The End of the Affair*, appears to be a confessional work of Greene. Being a Catholic convert, Greene himself violates the seventh commandment of Christ: "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Mark. 10.19). During 1940s and 1950s,

even in his sinful relationship with Catherine Walston, Greene believed that God might bless their adulterous relationship. From Greene's letter to Catherine, Norman Sherry writes an extract in his biography: "I have certainly been to the Sacraments far more often in our five years than in the previous eight. So with me – as far as you are concerned – there's no real conflict, and sometimes I hate the conflict I cause in you" (Life Vol. II, 502). A reading of *The End of the Affair* will convince the reader of the inner conflict experienced by the author. Although Greene was observing some of the religious practices of a Catholic believer, he used to deny and doubt the most central doctrine of the faith. Several times he denies his Catholic belief and in his old age, his belief is almost completely weakened by skepticism and doubt. At the end of his life, just three years before his death, in 1988, Greene said: "I say my prayers. I go to Mass. I never believed in hell. There's a big question mark over heaven. I'm not an atheist, which is a form of dogma and I'm against dogma. I'm agnostic" (*Sunday Telegraph Magazine*, 18).

Graham Greene is obsessed with the theme of human alienation in his novel, *The End of the Affair* and the emotions in the novel appear human. According to Frank Kermode, this novel is Greene's "masterpiece, his fullest and most completely realized book" (186). David Pryce-Jones says that in *The Heart of the Matter* and *The End of the Affair* Greene "expresses with a simple optimism the forlorn gropings of Scobie, Bendrix and Sarah" (89). The setting of the story develops in war-torn London, where the heroine Sarah Miles initiates an adulterous affair with the writer Maurice Bendrix, but suddenly leaves him without explanation. Later, Bendrix befriends Sarah's dull husband Henry. When Henry confides his suspicion that his

wife

is

cheating on him, the jealous Bendrix hires a private detective to discover why Sarah left him and who has taken his place. Tracking Sarah to a mysterious meeting with another man and gaining access to her diary, Bendrix finds that his rival is not human beings but God. Bendrix is shocked at the spiritual awakening in Sarah's life, and later on gets himself converted at the series of miracles that impact the lives of the other characters in the novel. When Sarah abandons him, for her new lover God, Bendrix takes God to be his ultimate rival, and his love turns to hatred, for Sarah and for God. Gradually, he comes to realize that his hatred is really fear of the leap into faith in God; and by the end of the novel his love for Sarah has grown beyond lust into an awareness of life after death and of the existence of God. Though it is a short novel, Greene is able to explore in it some considerable depth not only of the complexities of human emotions but also of philosophical issues relating to faith and existence of God. De Vitis also observes thus: "The central conflict of the novel is a religious one, yet the reader sees it from various angles. The devices - flashback, diary, reverie, letters - all throw light on a spiritual struggle" (98).

This story has conspicuously semi-autobiographical overtones. Greene, a Catholic who pondered the relationship between adultery and religious belief, wrote a series of novels concerning God, faith, and human and divine love. This one is the climax of that series, where God takes an active role in people's lives. It has also been assumed that the illicit affair between Bendrix and Sarah was reproduced after one of Greene's own wartime love affairs. There are some interesting assumptions about the nature of love and hate in the novel. The story is told by Bendrix, the hero himself.

The affair between himself and Sarah abruptly ends leaving Bendrix alone. He feels jealous and unhappy. After a lapse of two years Bendrix meets Henry, who has been betrayed by Sarah. Bendrix is torn between love and hate. Sarah's personality is a conflicting blend of saintliness and indifference.

This short book seems to continue beyond the logical ending point, and one may be impelled to be interested in the story ending than in the end of the affair itself in order to find the real faith and the nature of God. The passion that begins their love affair is later replaced by pure divine love. She is painfully aware of the conflict between the flesh and the spirit. Sarah soon realizes the trials and torments of the life she has chosen, but by choosing it she has turned away from the hollowness and transience of human, sexual, love in great and superior preference to divine love. She is so much troubled and goes to a church where she has been enlightened and motivated that she cannot have both God and Bendrix. Finally she submits herself to God. Dr. Padmaker Mishra observes how Sarah offers her life to God: "She comes to understand God's love, which had taken away her disbelief and hate. She is also able to understand God's mercy . . ." (143) Cedric Watts stamps this novel as the one "which boldly recruited God as a miracle-working character" (52). He also evaluates the novel:

The novel's suggestion that adultery may lead, via a bargain with God, to sainthood . . . But never before had Greene written a novel in which God intervened so directly and manifestly in the arrangement of events. Even a believer . . . depend on supernatural intervention. Bendrix's life saved by Sarah's wager with God, Smythe's strawberry-mark cured by her kiss,

Bendrix rescued by the dead Sarah from fornication with Sylvia Black, Parkis' boy healed by Sarah's ministry: it's a long list, and the supernatural aura is strengthened by a number of dreams by which Sarah appears to be communicating consolingly from heaven to earth. (60-62)

Greene later realizes the absurdity he has incorporated in the novel about the series of miracles in her life and after her death and tries to convey the insignificance of the miracles through the explanations of Bendrix, "I've read somewhere that urticaria is hysterical in origin" (EA. 158). The Divine intervention and working of Divine grace in the characters of *The End of the Affair* is reflected in the words of Frank Kermode, "The unwilling sanctification of Sarah is a difficult theme . . . God's perversity and skill are remembered even by Sarah, who takes the deforming strawberry mark as His image, and remembers how unfairly He used Bendrix to His own ends" (186).

This chapter attempts the character analysis of Sarah and the anonymous 'sinful woman' in the Bible, with a parallel study on the theme of suffering and sanctity. We find the 'sinful woman' in the Holy Bible, enjoying inner peace and joy at the feet of Jesus, while washing Jesus' feet with her tears. The story of this 'sinful woman' is taken from the Gospel according to St. Luke (Chapter 7. 36-50). Jesus is invited for dinner by Simon, one of the Pharisees, in order to honour Him as He is the famous rabbi. The 'sinful woman' has heard that Jesus will be there, and brings an alabaster jar of perfume. She stands behind him weeping, then kneels down and begins to wet his feet with her tears. She wipes his feet with her hair, kisses them and pours perfume on them. Next, she begins to kiss his feet. Jesus turns the object from love to

forgiveness and declares that her many sins are forgiven for she loves much. But, the woman's sins are actually forgiven even before she comes to Simon's house, and she comes with perfume, weeps, and kisses Jesus' feet, because she has already been forgiven and has acquired real faith in God. She comes again because she knows well that she is forgiven; and wants to express her gratitude. Peter Milward's observation on good and evil from his book, *Christian Themes in English Literature*, is very relevant to this chapter: "For without evil there would be no occasion for the practice of certain virtues, such as patience and forgiveness; and it is against its dark background that the light of goodness shines out with more splendour" (45).

Isn't this Biblical episode a love story, pure and simple, where the readers may presume a love much deeper and heart-felt than the one infused with physical desire? It should be noted that the passage we are studying in Luke chapter 7, is similar to other episodes of Jesus being anointed by a woman, depicted in Matthew chapter 26, Mark chapter 14 and John chapter 12 and are often confused with the selected incident. So if we are to understand the story of Jesus anointed by a 'sinful woman', we need to separate it from the story of Jesus' anointing at Bethany near the end of his ministry. The two events are confused easily enough because of several similarities: Jesus is anointed with expensive perfume; He is anointed by a woman; and the anointing takes place in the house of a man named Simon.

But the differences between the stories show that our Gospel passage in Luke. 7.36-50 is really a different incident from that of Matthew 26.6-13; Mark. 14.1-11 and John. 12.1-10. 'The anointing at Bethany' differs in various ways: It takes place at the home of Simon the Leper, not Simon the Pharisee; The woman doing the anointing at

Bethany is not spoken of as sinful, but actually appears to be Mary, Lazarus' sister. The meaning of the anointing at Bethany is to prefigure Jesus' burial; The anointing is on the head in Matthew and Mark, and the feet in John. As a result of the confusion, Mary the sister of Lazarus is thought to be the 'sinful woman', but that is not at all how she is depicted in the other Gospels. As we study Jesus' anointing by the 'sinful woman' in Luke, we reach a story of contrasts: the self-righteous Pharisee and a 'sinful woman'; formal hospitality and overflowing love; self-worth through righteous living and self-worth through forgiveness. The criticism by disciples, especially Judas, is over the value of the perfume that is 'wasted', rather than as the criticism of the morals of the woman doing the anointing.

Jesus is invited for dinner by one of the Pharisees, though presumably it is in Galilee where other events in this section take place. Invitation to dinner certainly implies respect for Jesus, the new teacher and healer. Simon wanted to learn more about Jesus, but we can't consider him as a believer, rather as a skeptic, and he wanted to have the honor of hosting this famous rabbi. We can assume that Simon is well-to-do as most of the Pharisees seemed to be. Hospitality is a very strong value in the Near East, with much fuss made over guests. For example, a basin would be provided so that guests could wash the dust of the road from their feet. Scented olive oil was sometimes offered to anoint a guest's hair as in Psalm 23.5b - "thou anointest my head with oil"; and in Ps. 92.10 - "I shall be anointed with fresh oil". And the beloved guests would be kissed when they were greeted, as mentioned in 2 Samuel 15.5 - "he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him"; 2 Samuel 19.39 - "And when the

King was come over, the King kissed Bar-zil'la-i, and blessed him"; and in Matthew 26.49 - "he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master; and kissed him". We observe that Simon offers none of these symbols of a sociable host. Even without receiving any formal hospitality, Jesus accepts the dinner invitation. And instead of Simon, the 'sinful woman' washed the feet of Jesus with her tears, poured perfume on his feet and kissed them.

One may find the real sense of sinner-saint paradox, through the mysterious life of Sarah Miles, the heroine of *The End of the Affair*. Ever since her prayer is answered and Bendrix recovers, Sarah is in a mental conflict in her attempt to resist her lover. At last, she gives herself to God and believes. God reaches out to Sarah in her sinful state and she surrenders herself to God. Bendrix realizes that Sarah breaks off her love-affair with him and avoids him for the sake of her private vow with God. Instead, she feels a sublime love for Bendrix. The affair ends on Bendrix's realization that Sarah's lover was God and it is exposed only after her death through a series of miracles establishing her sainthood. Bendrix begins to believe in God and get an awareness of God's existence.

As Sarah renounces the worldly pleasures once and forever, the sinful woman also enjoys Celestial joy at the feet of God, after undergoing the process of sanctification at the end of her life. The central character of the novel is a married woman, Sarah Miles, the wife of a civil servant, Henry Miles. She has an adulterous love affair with a middle-aged novelist Maurice Bendrix. The lovers meet at a party thrown by Sarah's dreary civil-servant husband, and proceed to liberate each other from boredom and routine unhappiness. From the very beginning of the affair itself,

Bendrix has foreboding fears that their affair will end one day: "I had come into this affair with my eyes open, knowing that one day this must end . . ." (EA. 44). Bendrix hates Henry, her husband as his rival and even hates Sarah for her capacity for ending the affair. Indeed, the affair goes on unchecked for several years until, during an afternoon meeting, Bendrix goes downstairs to look for intruders in his basement and a bomb falls on the building. Sarah rushes down to find him lying under a fallen door, and immediately makes a promise with God, whom she has never particularly cared for: "I love him and I'll do anything if you'll make him alive . . . I'll give him up forever, only let him be alive with a chance . . . People can love without seeing each other, can't they, they love You all their lives without seeing You" (EA. 76). She loves Bendrix passionately but when he is knocked out by a bomb-blast, she is ready to give up her physical lust for Bendrix, if God brings him back to life. Her prayer is answered and Bendrix recovers.

Ever since, Sarah is in a mental conflict in her attempt to resist her lover. She leaves for another place to forget him. She even consoles herself that the oath is not valid, for it has been made to a God, who does not exist after all. At last she goes to an atheist preacher, Richard Smythe for a rational explanation. Smythe, in turn, falls in love with her. Realizing that both Henry and Bendrix are losing Sarah, Bendrix employs a private detective, Mr. Parkis. Bendrix is agitated over Sarah's going out of his life and so he assumes the existence of another lover. With the war and the affair over, Maurice Bendrix seeks an explanation of why his lover, Sarah Miles, broke off their relationship so abruptly. When he sees her again after two years he becomes

obsessed with jealousy and a strong desire to be with her again. He hires a private detective to follow Sarah because he believes that she is having an affair with another man. But she is in great mental anguish, for she is unable to make a strong decision. Graham Greene does a great job of describing Sarah's anguish as she goes through a crisis of conscience in search of God and the selfishness of Maurice who only cares for himself. This is a story of love under difficult circumstances. According to Paul O' Prey, Sarah's capacity to love God proceeds from her love of Bendrix. Greene believes that the experience of physical love leads one to salvation, as observed in the case of Pinkie in *Brighton Rock*. In *The End of the Affair*, as Paul O' Prey comments, "it becomes one of the main themes. It is through human, carnal love that Sarah comes to experience Divine love, which is why Sarah can only believe in a physical, material God, who is portrayed as a divine lover, as Bendrix's rival for Sarah's heart" (92).

As Bendrix arranges a private spy on Sarah he comes into possession of her diary, from where he learns that she still loves him. In her diary Sarah had recorded the inner conflict that was being undergone by her, ever since the unpleasant episode. She had written about the incident when during an air-raid, he was knocked down unconscious and Sarah had presumed him dead. Having believed him killed in the war-time bombing, she had prayed and promised to God to save his life at the very cost of her love for him. In *The End of the Affair* one can find the exalted nature of self-sacrifice of Sarah, a sinful woman and the nature of mercy of God and the miraculous Divine intervention. In the entry dated 17 June 1944, Sarah had written thus:

I knelt down on the floor: I was mad to do such a thing: I never even had to

do it as a child - my parents never believed in prayer, any more than I do. I hadn't any idea what to say. Maurice was dead. Extinct . . . I knelt and put my head on the bed and wished I could believe. Dear God, I said - why dear, why dear? - make me believe . . . I can't do anything myself. . . . I love him and I'll do anything if You'll make him alive, I said very slowly, I'll give him up forever, only let him be alive with a chance (EA. 76)

At last, she gives herself up to God and believes. God reaches out to Sarah in her lust and she immediately surrenders herself to God. In the same way, the sinful woman in the Holy Bible gives herself up to Jesus as she kneels down at the feet of Jesus. William Barclay, one of the famous Bible critics has certain observations regarding the sinful woman's action of kneeling down at the feet of Jesus:

It was the custom that when a Rabbi was at a meal in such a house, all kinds of people came in - they were quite free to do so - to listen to the pearls of wisdom which fell from his lips . . . In the east the guests did not sit, but reclined, at table. They lay on low couches, resting on the left elbow, leaving the right arm free, with the feet stretched out behind and during the meal the sandals were taken off. That explains how the woman was standing beside Jesus' feet. (94)

Simon does not seem shocked that such a woman is in his house, and Jesus doesn't identify what kind of woman she is. In their culture, it seems that anyone was free to attend and listen to the dinner conversation. This sinful woman is not late to the dinner

party. She has heard that Jesus will be there, and gets to the house even before his arrival. She wants to see Jesus again. And so, she is waiting with the others when he comes. “. . . brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment” (Luke. 7.37-38). Early in the meal there is no focus on the woman. Simon may feel uncomfortable about her being there, but he does not exclude her from his home. That would have caused an ugly scene. So he allows her to remain. But the focus is clearly on Jesus and his words as he shares the meal. William Barclay also observes thus:

The woman was a . . . prostitute. No doubt she had listened to Jesus . . . had glimpsed in him the hand which could lift her from the mire of her ways. Round her neck she wore, like all Jewish women, a little phial of concentrated perfume; they were called alabasters; and they were very costly. She wished to pour it on his feet, for it was all she had to offer. But as she saw him, the tears came and fell upon his feet. For a Jewish woman to appear with hair unbound was an act of the gravest immodesty. On her wedding day a girl bound up her hair and never would she appear with it unbound again. The fact that this woman loosed her long hair in public showed how she had forgotten everyone except Jesus. (95)

The woman is standing behind Jesus, and we read that her tears fall upon Jesus’ feet. How long this goes on we are not told. Each drop makes a brown wet mark in the dust on his feet, until his feet are wet with her tears. She loosens her hair and begins to wipe his feet with her hair. To go about in public with her hair down was considered a

shameful thing to do, yet she is not frightened. Next, she begins to kiss his feet and pours scented oil on his feet.

Sarah, in *The End of the Affair*, is sitting in the corner of the Church, enjoying the blissful presence of Jesus, and thus experiences inner peace and joy. At present, she is at the feet of Jesus, pouring out all her sinful past before him, renewing the vow she has once taken by renouncing worldly pleasures once and forever. Bendrix had been searching for her for the past two years. To his surprise, Bendrix's most recent rival is not Smythe but the invisible God, into whose trap, Sarah has fallen. Bendrix realizes that Sarah had struck a sort of bargain with God for his sake. She breaks off her love-affair with Bendrix and avoids him for the sake of her private vow and shrinks from all men. She feels a sublime love for all of them. Bendrix experiences more jealousy than her husband. Even Greene cannot imagine how such a sinful woman falls in love with God. Padmaker Mishra, in his evaluation on Greene as a philosopher and thriller-writer states that, "In *The End of the Affair*, Greene's concern is to show the possibility of a person's redemption through love and suffering. Sarah Miles is led from sexuality through renunciation to sanctification" (30).

Likewise, the 'sinful woman' in the Holy Bible, is also led from her sinful ways to Jesus' blissful presence at Simon's house. It is sure that once the bottle of perfume is opened, immediately it is noticed by everyone in the house. While Jesus has been the centre of focus up to now, all eyes turn to the woman, kneeling at Jesus' feet, weeping, wiping, caressing his feet with her long black hair, kissing his feet with her lips, and pouring perfume upon them. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw

this, he said to himself, “This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman *this is* that toucheth him; for she is a sinner” (Luke. 7.39). Simon acknowledges Jesus as a teacher, but he doubts whether He is a prophet as some people claim. He judges both the sinful woman and Jesus, and is wrong in both his judgments. It is interesting that he does not condemn the action of touching, but only Jesus’ lack of discernment of the one who was touching him and her sinful history. As Simon the Pharisee doubts whether Jesus is a prophet and worries about His capacity to discern the character of the woman, *The New Interpreter’s Bible: Vol. IX* asserts, “Jesus’ response shows that he knows both Simon’s thoughts and the character of the woman. His response, therefore, confirms that he is a prophet; but when he forgives the woman’s sins, he is greater than a prophet” (169).

But Jesus does not let Simon’s judgment go unchallenged, even his silent judgment. Jesus is probably seated at the place of honour to the right of the host, so Jesus turns to Simon at his left and begins to tell a parable, to clarify his doubts regarding Jesus’ actions:

There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that *he*, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. (Luke. 7.41-43)

Simon has been trapped by Jesus. Instead of judging the woman, Jesus lets Simon make the judgement himself. Then he said to Simon:

I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she

hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. (Luke. 7.44-46)

Jesus compares Simon's acts as a host to the sinful woman's acts of love. Simon's actions have shown little love, while the sinful woman has lavished love upon Jesus. With the narrative effect of the parable, Jesus judges Simon's actions and transforms the sinner into a saint through forgiveness and love. "Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, *the same loveth little*" (Luke. 7.47).

On the contrary, one finds Sarah's renunciation of Bendrix as an expression of her love for him rather than of her belief in God. Her diary expresses her love and raises doubts against God in terms of both human and spiritual love. Thus it is suggested that the nature of Sarah's commitment is not the result of true love towards God, but because Bendrix's life seems to depend on her word. Maria Couta is of the view that Sarah partially believes in God as she experiences the miraculous intervention of God in the life of Bendrix: "The intensity of Sarah's love and her passionate struggle to protect Bendrix by depriving herself of the comfort of his love evoke the religious sense. It is relevant to ask why Sarah should take her vow so seriously when she is not a specifically religious person" (83). Sarah undergoes spiritual conflict and it is obvious as she expresses the uniqueness of the divine love: "We can love with our minds, but can we love only with our minds? Love extends

itself all the time . . . Could anybody love God or hate him if he hadn't got a body?" (EA. 88-89).

Unlike Sarah's love and commitment, the sinful woman has an ardent desire to be with Jesus and experience the forgiving love and mercy of Jesus. To make Simon and the others understand her actions, Jesus first tells a story about forgiveness, and then uses the story to interpret the woman's devotion in terms of forgiveness of sin. But Simon is quite indifferent to the situation. Why should he need forgiveness anyway? He isn't a sinner! "And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meal with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace" (Luke. 7.48-50). It is observed and acknowledged that the woman's sins are actually forgiven even before she comes to Simon's house, and at this point Jesus only pronounces them forgiven. I believe, she comes with perfume, and weeps, and kisses Jesus' feet, because she has already been forgiven and reached out in real faith in God that he offers in his teaching. She comes again because she knows well that she is forgiven and wants to express her gratitude and love. That conforms well to Jesus' explanation of her actions. The guests, however, do not understand. They think that he is absolving her sins then and there and that troubles them because only God could forgive sins.

But Jesus looking directly at the woman acknowledges that her faith in his promise has brought her salvation. And he offers her the blessing that Jews offer one another in parting, 'Shalom', which means not only inner peace that has flooded this prostitute's soul, but also prosperity, goodness and the divine blessing. Jesus has welcomed her back into the fellowship and salvation of God's chosen people. She

then

appears to be exultant and elated. The tears are still flowing, but flowing through the beauty and glory of the countenance of the one forever changed, totally transformed and loved. She is often reminded of the Divine master's promising words: "Your faith has saved you; go in peace" (Luke. 7.50). It is significant to note the study of William Barclay on this context:

The story demonstrates a contrast between two attitudes of mind and heart. Firstly, Simon was conscious of no need and therefore felt no love, and so received no forgiveness. Simon's impression of himself was that he was a good man in the sight of men and of God. Secondly, the woman was . . . overwhelmed with love for him who could supply it, and so received forgiveness. (95)

One finds the miraculous intervention of the divine presence in the life of a sinner to bring about total transformation in her sinful life. Since this divine experience of forgiveness, she has become another individual and takes up a decision to follow Jesus, the Savior of her life. Here, it is seen that the fictional character Sarah Miles realizes that God is so compassionate and capable of saving Bendrix even in his sinfulness.

Being convinced of a miracle that Bendrix's recovery of his senses soon after her prayer, Sarah fulfils her promise given to God, and moves towards a firmer belief in God. Sarah's promise makes her start on the ascent to sanctity. Thus says De Vitis regarding Sarah's belief in God: "In the early stages of her spiritual awareness Sarah feels that she doesn't believe in God. But she does believe . . . Sarah knows that God

exists . . . The alternating spasms of love and hatred that she feels for both God and Bendrix eventually bring her to an understanding of spiritual love” (102). Sarah confesses that her love for Bendrix was only an introduction to the glorious love she feels for God: “Did I ever love Maurice as much before I loved You? Or was it really You I loved all the time? Did I touch You when I touched him? . . . ” (EA. 99). In Morris L. West’s *The Devil’s Advocate*, Sarah’s belief in the presence of God in their relationship is described clearly: “God seems to have been an unseen presence, the third Man, in their lives. Sarah feels that in loving Bendrix she has loved God all the time and that the act of love has always implied an act of faith” (274).

Bendrix is a non-believer, and tries to persuade Sarah to return to him. She is compelled to go out into the rain to avoid Bendrix. She was already keeping poor health and the strain and exposure prove too much for her. Still torn between human love and her supernatural commitment, she develops pneumonia. Two years of her extreme mental anguish end up in this short illness, which she refuses to treat, and she dies soon. The affair ends on Bendrix’s realization that Sarah’s lover was no human but God. It is interesting to note Sarah’s progression to sainthood. Sarah takes much effort to express her divine love. At the end of her life, somehow she triumphs over her human weaknesses. She renounces her human love and tries to grow in the love of God by accepting sacrifices and sufferings. Kulshrestha comments, “as a consequence of her vow, Sarah’s is being lacerated by the conflict between ordinary corrupt human love and faith which she has caught like a disease. It is the conflict between the flesh and the spirit which is experienced by those who renounce one for the other” (120). Very much like St. John of the Cross, Sarah undergoes her spiritual journey through

the
night

dark
as it

is described by St. John in *The Ascent of Mt. Carmel*:

Through the life of faith, hope and charity the soul uproots every ungodly thing and unites itself to God, all of which would be wholly impossible without these virtues . . . the beginner must also live by faith in the active night of the senses, and in fact, that part dealing with the journey in faith has many references relating to the active purification of the senses (53).

Sarah is fully aware of the desert experience she has to undergo after the renunciation of the worldly love. She begins to experience the journey of the soul through the dark night, where she sees herself alone in the dark desert and feels terrible insecurity.

According to Marie-Beatrice Mesnet, Greene is convinced that the fundamental paradox of Christianity lies in the co-existence of good and evil: “The temptation in the wilderness has a Sacramental value for man . . . Sarah Miles herself in *The End of the Affair* would meet with her God in the desert which she vainly tried to fill with her love for Bendrix. Thus God breaks the heart of man; for the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit” (98). Here Sarah is determined to fulfill her vow with the only hope that God will fill the empty desert and she expresses her belief in God’s love in spite of the desert experience. In *The Dark Night of the Soul*, Book II, Chap. 6. 4, St. John speaks of the soul entering a period of purgation: “for the sensory part is purified by aridity, the faculties by the void of their apprehensions and the spirit by thick darkness” (CW. 339). Here one finds the same inner struggle between human love and Divine love, that Sarah undergoes herself as part of purification. St. Augustine in *The Confessions*,

speaks of the struggle between “the chaste dignity of Continnence and the toys of toys and vanities of vanities . . . those ancient favourites of mine” (214-15).

The real version is exposed only after Sarah’s death, through a series of miracles: The private detective Parkis’ little son, who uses Sarah’s school books, gets miraculously cured of his appendicitis. Smythe’s strawberry patch on his cheek has disappeared. Bendrix begins to believe in God and gets an awareness of God’s existence. Thus God, like a triumphant conqueror, works through Sarah. These amazing healings, taken with Mrs. Bertram’s disclosure at Sarah’s funeral that Sarah had been baptized a Catholic at the age of two, gives a hint at Sarah’s sanctity: “ Sarah was just over two . . . I left Sarah by the door and went to find the priest . . . Baptized her a Catholic” (EA. 135-6). Greene claims to have such a story of salvation only because of Sarah’s Baptism as a child, unknown even to herself.

Critics consider *The End of the Affair* as the last in Greene’s Catholic novels. In the first three books of the four, *Brighton Rock*, *The Power and the Glory*, and *The Heart of the Matter*, Greene depicts God as a source of grace in people’s spiritual lives, but in *The End of the Affair*, Greene presents a more active, involved God who is a force in people’s earthly lives performing miracles through Sarah. All four novels address the ideas of mortal sin and redemption. To many critics, *The End of the Affair* is the most obviously Catholic of Greene’s novels, due to the apparent sainthood of the heroine, whose death is followed by a series of miracles. According to S. K. Sharma, Greene does not aim at the sanctification of Sarah and he has written thus in his book, *Graham Greene: The Search for Belief*: “Greene certainly does not aim at edification because he leaves the question of Sarah’s sainthood wide open and seems

to be

wondering with Bendrix whether God played a role in Sarah's leap to faith" (127). K.

S. Subramaniam is strong in his conviction:

In *The End of the Affair*, passion struggles with faith. Sarah, who writes, "I have caught belief like a disease", is drawn to God against her will . . . The world is evil, but God's grace operates in strange and mysterious ways to draw people away from evil. It thrusts martyrdom upon a mean and cowardly whisky-priest and draws even a passionate woman like Sarah Miles towards God against her will. (34)

According to Maurice Bendrix the novel is a record of hate far more than of love and it is a strange hate indeed that forces him to put aside the fair account of his adulterous affair with Sarah Miles. At the beginning of the affair, Bendrix believes that he hates Sarah and her husband, Henry. By the end of the book, Bendrix's hatred has shifted to God, who has broken his life but whose existence he has at last come to recognize. De Vitis here unravels Bendrix's hatred towards God:

Bendrix discovers that the third corner of the spiritual triangle is God; he had been the silent witness to all their acts of sex and had intervened to claim Sarah for his own. God had accepted her promise and had taken Sarah at her word . . . Once Bendrix learns of Sarah's love for God, he transfers to him the hatred he has felt for Sarah. But he had hated her only because he loved her. Now, with all the strength of his love, he hates God, his rival. (102)

Bendrix has clearly expressed his view on Sarah's sanctity in the novel. He is irritated

by Father Crompton's complacent assertion that Sarah was a good woman. After the death of Sarah, Bendrix expresses his hatred towards God: "You've taken her, but You haven't got me yet. I know Your cunning. It's You who take us up to a high place and offer us the whole universe. You're a devil, God, tempting us to leap. But I don't want Your peace and I don't want your love . . . I hate You, God, I hate You as though You existed" (EA. 159). Thus Greene depicts Bendrix's reaction to Sarah's leap and his irritation to her sainthood. Similarly, in the Bible, one may observe certain unbreakable traditions of the Jews and their reaction when it is broken by Jesus especially, in the case of this sinful woman.

The gentle approach of Jesus to the sinner is nowhere more beautiful than when he meets this immoral woman. We have seen that the Jewish male still to this day gives thanks to God that he did not make him a gentile, a slave or a woman. The woman has to content herself with the more humble prayer of thanks that God has made her according to his will. A devout Jew was even forbidden to speak in the street to his own wife, nor could he be alone in an inn with a strange woman or even his own daughter. In the case of divorce, only the man was allowed to write a bill of separation to his wife.

In this episode, readers may raise certain speculative doubts like, how is the expression on Simon the Pharisee's face when he notices the woman touching Jesus' feet? What is the sinful woman's motive for coming to see Jesus? Why does Jesus let her continue, since by all appearances her action is scandalous? Is your love for the Lord more like the sinful woman's or Simon's? It is quite interesting to note how Jesus encounters a sinful woman. There is something revolutionary in the way Jesus

acted.

The

Pharisees and teachers of the law say; 'This man welcomes sinners', and others call him; 'the guest of a sinner'. He is even called 'a friend of sinners'. It is true that the learned Jews often direct the sinners for their repentance, but both Pharisees and teachers of the law avoid all social contact with them. Jesus, on the other hand, puts himself alongside the sinners. Donald Senior comments: "The taboos of ritual purity in the Jewish Law for touching a woman in public or associating with one who is sick further isolated them. Several times in Luke, Jesus cuts through this thicket, often provoking the anger of the guardians of the boundaries" (26).

The actions of the sinful woman are described as enabling the invisible to become visible, for the humanity to understand the true nature of its Savior; because the eye of man cannot see Him as God. The feet which she bathes with her tears are the symbol of his incarnation and the relationship established between her and Jesus through this very human action gives her proof that He is truly man. The mixture of human need and divine gift is brought out vividly here as His human body was washed by her tears and was refreshed, his divinity granted redemption for the price of her tears. The woman's faith, love and regret are often the focus in this text. The emphasis on her mourning for sin shows her grieving contrition with the involvement of her heart, and the quality of the emotion she experiences, which brings her back to God. Her outpouring of tears is described, as abundant tears pouring from her heart revealing the never ending regret in her soul.

As Bendrix is not dead, but merely unconscious, Sarah must keep her promise. According to K. S. Subramaniam, "At the end of Sarah's prayer Bendrix comes to her

alive. But Sarah has to desert him for God and bear the pangs of separation from her lover. This leads her towards faith in God and her sanctification later on” (36). She breaks off the relationship without giving a reason, leaving Bendrix mystified and angry. The only explanation he can think of is that she has left him for another man. It is not so until years later, when he hires a private detective to ascertain the truth, that he learns of her impassioned vow for the sake of himself. Sarah herself comes to understand her move through a strange excuse. Dr. Padmaker Mishra is of the view that Sarah has undergone a prolonged atonement: “Like Scobie and the whisky priest, she is always seized with a deep sense of human affliction. In the beginning, there is indeed nothing saintly about her. But her suffering, inner conflict and self-sacrifice confer beatitude on her” (144).

Writing to God in her journal, Sarah says: “You willed our separation, but he willed it too. He worked for it with his anger and his jealousy, and he worked for it with his love. For he gave me so much love, and I gave him so much love that soon there wasn’t anything left, when we’d finished, but You” (EA.. 99). It is as though the pull towards faith were inevitable, if mysterious - perhaps as punishment for her sin of adultery. In her final years, Sarah’s faith only deepens, even as she remains haunted by the bombing and the power of her own attraction to God. Gangeshwar Rai, in his book, *Graham Greene: An Existential Approach*, states thus: “Gripped with the absurd dread of the unknown and the feeling of loneliness, emptiness and desolation, Sarah longs to believe in some kind of a God . . . something vague, amorphous, cosmic . . . stretching out of the vague into the concrete human life, like a powerful vapour” (109).

Abandoning his art and being unable to respond to other women, Bendrix becomes obsessed with the desire to hurt Sarah and wreck her marriage with the dull but needy Henry. Right after World War II, Henry's declaration that his wife may be having a second affair excites Bendrix because it finally provides both the reason for her withdrawal and a chance to enact his hatred. But it turns out that Sarah's latest lover is God, who apparently raised Bendrix from the dead during an air raid after Sarah promised to renounce the romance. This miracle has deepened and revealed Sarah's secret spirituality and, even as her own health deteriorates due to pneumonia, she starts to display a saint's ability to heal others. The atheistic Bendrix becomes totally confused. How do you compete with a rival in whose existence you don't believe? By the time Sarah dies, Bendrix has become a better and a worse man. He has learned compassion for humanity in general and for Henry in particular. But Bendrix also has been emotionally exhausted and can only pray at the end of the story, to a God in whom he now doubtfully believes but certainly does not love, "O God, You've done enough, You've robbed me of enough. I'm too tired and old to learn to love, leave me alone for ever" (EA. 160).

Bendrix reacts against God because he believes that God has taken Sarah away from him for ever and it is none but God who brings to an end to their love-affair. According to De Vitis,

God had accepted Sarah's promise and had taken her at her word. He makes her believe, for Sarah chooses heaven as surely as Pinkie Brown in *Brighton Rock* chooses hell. Once Bendrix learns of Sarah's love for God,

he transfers to him the hatred he has felt for Sarah. But he had hated her only because he loved her. Now, with all the strength of his love, he hates God, his rival. (102)

But Sarah determines herself to fulfill the promise she has taken for the sake of Bendrix. Sarah decides to renounce her love-affair with Bendrix and to lead a life with God in atonement for her sinful life. As Sarah comes to the realization of God's love and mercy, in self-surrender she finds, like St Augustine, the "way which leadeth not only towards the discovering but also to the inhabiting of that country where alone is true blessedness" (189). Sarah becomes like the poor widow of the Bible, offers everything to God, without keeping anything for the future. She has little to offer God, but she offers all that she has:

And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had. (Luke. 21.1-4)

Sarah's love is proved selfless and sincere, that her prayer is answered by God in a miraculous way. Robert Hoskins observes the nature of human love in the novel as the diary focuses attention on the central contrast between two kinds of human love:

Bendrix's is imperfect, marred by jealousy, mistrust, possessiveness, all signs of egotism and self-love; Sarah's approaches perfection, through her

complete unselfishness. She values his happiness more than her own; her prayer for him long after their separation . . . performs the imitation of Christ through the self-sacrifice of love, and in so doing reveals Sarah's progress toward the saintliness the novel will attribute to her. (151)

Sarah's conversion to saintliness is explicit from her initial leap of faith, as she calls upon God for the rebirth of Bendrix, promising herself to God in return. And her prayer to God reflects her selfless love for Bendrix: "Give him my peace – he needs it more" (EA. 99)

In the Holy Bible, one may find 'the sinful woman' apologizing to Jesus for her offences and surrendering herself to Him. The story of the anointing reinforces the mourning for sin in the context of God's desire to reconcile humanity with Himself. The intimacy in the encounter between Jesus and the sinful woman brings out the relationship between human sin and the sufferings of Christ. In this sinful humanity, this woman is to be identified with all the people. The love expressed by her for Jesus, and his loving response, serve as the model for Christian discipleship, rather than the uprightness of the Pharisee. Jesus brings out the faith of this woman but exposes the evil thoughts of Simon with a rebuke. Jesus is a physician to her who heals the wounds of her soul. The grief which accompanies the woman's actions is used by Jesus to heal her particular wound of sin; and she, in return, offers her tears to her Physician. Jesus clears her stains by her tears; heals her wounds by her kisses; and by her ointment makes her evil name sweet as the odour of the perfume. Her body

becomes the sacrifice of “a broken and a contrite heart” (Ps. 51.17). It is the woman’s initiative which makes possible the gracious act of forgiveness; through washing she is washed, and in washing something pure, she is herself purified. In other words, the woman has within her the source of her own healing. Her insight enables her to present herself to the physician as the gift which He calls secretly. Her repentance leads her to both grief at her sins, and the confidence that she is worthy of forgiveness and that Jesus has the power to effect this renewal. The forgiveness shown to the sinful woman is thus linked with the manifestation of God’s divinity through the person of Jesus Christ. G.B. Caird, in *The Gospel of St. Luke*, pictures the woman with magnificent gesture of gratitude:

Now she came to make a magnificent gesture of gratitude; but tears came before she could get the stopper out of her bottle of perfume, and forgetting that this was something a decent woman never did in public, she let her hair down to wipe them away . . . all that he needed to know about the uninvited guest he could read in the mirror of Simon’s shocked face, and all he needed to do for the woman he could do by accepting motionless the homage of her penitent love. (114)

Jesus sends the woman on her way with a blessing. That blessing speaks of her faith that has saved her, while the story until then has spoken only of her love and of the release of her sins declared by Jesus. G.B. Caird also asserts that it “doesn’t mean that she has earned her forgiveness by her love; it was her faith, not her love, that saved her. Her love was not the ground of a pardon she had come to seek, but the proof of a pardon she had come to acknowledge” (115). In *The End of the Affair*, Bendrix’s life

is

regained only because of Sarah's deep faith in God. Sarah gets herself sanctified; for she confesses her belief in God and fulfills her promise by renouncing all the worldly pleasures for the sake of God. The 'sinful woman' also acknowledges her deep faith in Jesus by surrendering herself to God.

As the novel unfolds, it is assured that the explanations on Bendrix's view of Sarah and of their affair will be revealed in her diary effectively. The most shocking illustration of this involves the night in June 1944 when a bomb blast traps Bendrix underneath a door and Sarah believes him to be dead. Bendrix, in recalling the events, is unaware of the vow that she has taken to give up the relationship if he should somehow survive, and interprets her actions in a mistaken manner:

I went upstairs . . . I could see Sarah: she had got off the bed and was crouched on the floor – from fear, I supposed . . . She turned quickly and stared at me with fear. I hadn't realized that my dressing-gown was torn and dusted all over with plaster; my hair was white with it, and there was blood on my mouth and cheeks. (EA. 56-57)

Sarah's moving account of her desperate emotional state upon seeing him beneath the door, and the subsequent promise she makes to God, establishes itself as authoritative. Ironically it is Bendrix who at the time agrees to this concept like a detective story reader who is now in possession of the truth: "Now I knew the whole absurd story of the vow, now I was certain of her love, I was assured of her . . . I could have waited years now that I knew the end of story" (EA. 104). He is quite willing to reinterpret and put an end to his past feelings and suspicions and admit his mistakes in the light

of present evidence: “This is where we begin again,’ I said. ‘I’ve been a bad lover, Sarah. It was the insecurity that did it. I didn’t trust you. I didn’t know enough about you. But I’m secure now” (EA. 105). It would seem that his discovery of the diary has solved the dilemma, made whole the fragmented picture. There are two related implications that arise from this: one is that the text will subvert Bendrix’s belief that he has resolved the mystery, and expose his shallow end-expectations; as he is wearily forced to admit after Sarah’s death, “nothing in life now ever seems to end” (EA. 121).

In *An Existential Approach*, Gangeshwar Rai expresses Bendrix’s hatred for God reflecting his own tormented mind: “In spite of his combat with his rival and firm determination not to surrender himself to Him, he is afraid that his hatred may turn into belief which will be a triumph for God” (55). But he also emphasizes the fickle minded nature of Bendrix: “Bendrix’s feeling of anxiety leads him to believe in the existence of God, though he resists the ‘leap’ as it involves a denial of his autonomous existence and all interests in the here and now” (56).

The second result of the diary revelations is to replace the inaccuracies of Bendrix’s position with that of Sarah’s seemingly ingenuous perspective. After having made a desperate vow to God to spare Maurice Bendrix’s life, Sarah is torn between resentment of God and a secret desire for spiritual intimacy with her creator. Can a childhood baptism into Catholicism show spontaneous effect even after a long period of time? In writing of the tension between her love of Bendrix and that of God, she moves to sublimate the conflict into a more unified perspective:

Did I ever love Maurice as much before I loved You? Or was it really You

I loved all the time? Did I touch You when I touched him? Could I have touched You if I hadn't touched him first, touched him as I never touched Henry, anybody? And he loved me and touched me as he never did any other woman. But was it me he loved, or You? For he hated in me the things You hate. He was on Your side all the time without knowing it. (EA. 99)

Both are aware of the subtle nature of such conclusion. Bendrix confesses, after reading the letter, "what an optimist I would be if I thought that this story ended here" (EA. 121), and Sarah's attempt to balance the parts of her life collapses in the face of desire: "I'm tired and I don't want any more pain. I want Maurice. I want ordinary corrupt human love. Dear God, you know I want to want Your pain, but I don't want it now. Take it away for a while and give it me another time" (EA. 99). Still the pressure for resolution is enormous, and as each evaluates the past, their voices are marked by similar claims to an exclusive truth. Sarah's understanding of the end of the affair ardently acknowledges the theological explanation:

I don't want to live without you . . . But what's the good, Maurice? I believe the whole bag of tricks, there's nothing I don't believe . . . I'm sure. I've never been sure before about anything. When you came in at the door with the blood on your face, I became sure. Once and for all . . . Maurice, dear, don't be angry. Be sorry for me, but don't be angry. I'm a phoney and a fake, but this isn't phoney or fake. I used to think I was sure about myself and what was right and wrong, and you taught me not to be sure. You took

away all my lies and self-deceptions like they clear a road of rubble for somebody to come along it, somebody of importance, and now he's come . . . (EA. 121)

Bendrix's reading of the mystery of Sarah has reached a humiliating climax, and he rebels against the counterplot which has turned what he sees as an accidental effect - Sarah's baptism - into a strong cause of sainthood: "It's just a coincidence, I thought, a horrible coincidence that nearly brought her back at the end to You. You can't mark a two-year-old child for life with a bit of water and a prayer . . . When she slept, I was with her, not You. It was I who penetrated her, not You" (EA. 137).

The End of the Affair contains a masterly study of possessive love and sexual jealousy which reveals Greene's very deep psychological insight into the human mind. We realize at the end that the real theme of the novel is the working of divine grace rather than sexual jealousy. This novel, like Greene's other religious novels, is mainly concerned with the leap of faith and his impatience with the Church and its belief. DeVitis here tries to emphasize the contradictory nature of Sarah's love and faith in God: "Having once experienced perfect human love with Bendrix, however, Sarah renounces him for God, and nothing short of divine love will satisfy her. Unconsciously she has made provision for God in her affair . . ." (100). According to S. K. Sharma, the novel provoked different critical reactions and received a mixed reception from Catholic and non-Catholic critics alike:

The orthodox Catholics felt scandalized at the insinuation that adultery can lead to sainthood. The secular readers could not conceal their discomfort at Sarah's improbable leap into faith and the introduction of miracles into a

work of art for the purposes of religious edification. But as John Atkins points out, one cannot challenge Greene's belief in the probability of miracles, because it is a part of his religious belief . . . Some of the basic tenets of Christianity like the divinity of Christ and resurrection are much more difficult to believe than a miraculous divine intervention in human affairs. (126)

A careful reading of the novel would reveal that Greene's own attitude to miracles and about the appropriateness of their place in fiction is uncertain. He leaves the question of Sarah's sainthood wide open and seems to be wondering with Bendrix whether God played a role in Sarah's leap to faith. Now Sarah has been captivated by God.

Sarah realizes the inevitability of pain in her adulthood and links the pain and her inner conflict with the meaning of the next world. In her diary Sarah has written: "Did I ever love Maurice as much before I loved You? Or was it really You I loved all the time? . . . But You are too good to me. When I ask You for pain, You give me peace. Give it him too. Give him my peace – he needs it more" (EA. 99). Gangeshwar Rai in his *Graham Greene: An Existential Approach*, establishes Sarah's belief in God and her total surrender: "Sarah walks the narrow path of faith and gradually and painfully realizes God's love. She opens herself to God in a spirit of self-surrender and experiences the delight in spite of all her agony and realizes that her affair with Bendrix was but a figure in the tapestry of divine purpose" (56). At the initial stage, both Sarah and Bendrix are lovers living for the pleasures of the moment. Sarah, a woman of loose moral whose husband is sexually impotent, has adulterous

relationship with different kinds of men and Bendrix is only one of many men - the most favourite lover for the moment.

Being a woman without scruples, Sarah passionately offers herself to Bendrix. She loves him and believes in him as fervently and deeply as she later believes in God. Henry's pre-occupation with office work has deprived him of his humanity and love as remembered by Bendrix from the reports of Sarah herself that:

he had long ceased to feel any physical desire for her . . . His desire was simply for companionship; he felt for the first time excluded from Sarah's confidence: he was worried and despairing – he didn't know what was going on or what was going to happen. He was living in a terrible insecurity. (EA.31-32)

It was while writing his story about the civil servant and trying to understand the working of Sarah's mind, that Bendrix falls in love with her. The passion that begins their love affair is later replaced by pure human love. Both Sarah and Bendrix suffer from a terrible feeling of anxiety and despair in their romantic life. When she realizes that Bendrix has only suffered minor injuries, Sarah believes that she must fulfill what she has vowed, even though she is in doubt whether she believes in God. Sarah transforms her human love for the divine love. In the knowledge of the divine love, Sarah finds inner peace.

Sarah's prayer for the rebirth of Bendrix, "Let him be alive, and I'll believe . . . I will give him up for ever, only let him be alive" (EA. 76) is as the prayers of the whisky-priest in *The Power and the Glory*, and Scobie in *The Heart of the Matter*. Sarah, like the whisky-priest and Scobie, prays in a state of powerlessness and hence

her

prayer is answered. She herself reflects: “When you are hopeless enough . . . you can pray for miracles. They happen, don’t they, to the poor, and I was poor” (EA. 58). Now Sarah, a modern sophisticated woman, too worldly in her sensibility, is tormented by a conflict between her desires to be another self. Sarah, who is concerned with living in the present without the thought of the past and the future, and whose love for Bendrix continues as strongly as ever, has to reconcile herself to a life without Bendrix. The feelings of misery and emptiness make Sarah arrogant and upset and she questions the existence of a merciful God: “He doesn’t exist . . . He can’t exist. You can’t have a merciful God and this despair” (EA. 74). Linked with her questioning of the real existence of God and the survival of Bendrix Sarah exclaims thus: “whether you exist or whether you don’t exist, whether you gave Maurice a second chance or whether I imagined everything” (EA. 93).

Without real belief in God, Sarah tries to convince herself that her vow to a God whom she does not believe in is not and cannot be serious and she need not keep it. Gangeshwar Rai describes the inner struggle of Bendrix thus: “Like Sarah, Bendrix too suffers from a deep sense of despair resulting from the frustration of his desire. Shocked by the sudden end of his love affair with Sarah and the vision of her abandoning herself to another man, Bendrix, like Scobie, plans his suicide” (55). Bendrix imagines that Sarah, being captivated by a stranger’s influence, is in abandonment and feels insecure and disappointed: “I began quite seriously to think of suicide” (EA. 59).

A detailed examination of the miracles would be helpful to the readers to

consider those miracles as the mysterious intervention of God: “In a week or two he’ll be speaking about it on the Common and showing his healed face. It will be in the newspapers: ‘Rationalist Speaker Converted by Miraculous Cure.’ I tried to summon up all my faith in coincidence” (EA. 157). Parkis’s boy being cured by a book of Sarah, as he told the doctor, “it was Mrs. Miles who came and took away the pain - touching him on the right side of the stomach . . . and she wrote in the book for him” (EA. 149), confirms the presence of the miraculous incident in life.

All the characters in this novel are faulty, but none is unsympathetic. Greene has a great skill for getting sympathy and understanding for his characters despite their human weaknesses. This is true of the three main characters, Bendrix, Sarah and Henry. It is because the characters are sympathetically portrayed that we can believe in their spiritual journey, as not only Sarah, but also Bendrix and Smythe, are drawn reluctantly towards God.

The epigraph for *The End of the Affair* is borrowed from Leon Bloy: “Man has places in his heart which do not yet exist, and into them enters suffering in order that they may have existence” (EA. xvi). Greene here intends to show that goodness can be achieved in this world but only through suffering. Sarah Miles, in *The End of the Affair*, is as altruistic as Major Scobie in *The Heart of the Matter*. She loves to help people and wants to suffer in place of others. Sarah had sacrificed her love for Bendrix’s life. She wants to offer up excessive sacrifices for those she loves: her husband Henry Miles, her lover Maurice Bendrix, and her admirer Richard Smythe. Sarah overcomes her human weaknesses which make her aware of her own unworthiness: “I’m a bitch and a fake and I hate myself” (EA. 76). She wants to

sacrifice herself for the suffering of humanity like Christ: “Let me think of those awful spots on Richard Smythe’s cheek. Let me see Henry’s face with tears falling. Let me forget me” (EA. 96). Sarah’s total surrender to God and her selfless love and sacrifice for others is reflected in her prayer:

Dear God, I’ve tried to love and I’ve made such a hash of it. If I could love you, I’d know how to love them . . . I believe you died for us. I believe you are God. Teach me to love. I don’t mind my pain. It’s their pain I can’t stand. Let my pain go on and on, but stop theirs. Dear God, if only you could come down from your Cross for a while and let me get up there instead. If I could suffer like you, I could heal like you. (EA. 96)

Sarah trusts God most of all. Because she gradually surrenders self-will, Sarah is heaven-bound. Unable to bear her inner tension by the conflict between faith and love, she prays to God for death: “I don’t know how I am going to live in this pain and longing and I’m praying to God all the time that he won’t be hard on me, that he won’t keep me alive” (EA. 120). The more Sarah falls in love with God, the more Maurice Bendrix, her rejected lover, falls in hate. According to John Atkins, “Bendrix’s moral deterioration is pictured by Greene towards the end of the novel. After the death of Sarah, his hatred has lost its object, and so it is transferred to God. God had her now, and he should be hated as bitterly as Henry and Smythe had been - and, of course, Sarah herself” (196). Bendrix refuses and reacts to the fact revealed by Fr. Crompton that he is in pain: “You’re wrong, father. This isn’t anything subtle like pain. I’m not in pain, I’m in hate. I hate Sarah because she was a little tart, I hate

Henry because she stuck to him, and I hate you and your imaginary God because you took her away from all of us” (EA. 151).

The novel reveals Greene’s obsession with the themes of human misery, alienation, love and suffering. Bendrix recognizes the Divine intervention in his own life and Sarah’s; but in a state of uncertainty, it is impossible to differentiate for him whether to love or to hate God: “I said to her, I’m a man of hate. But I didn’t feel much hatred, I had called other people hysterical, but my own words were overcharged. I could detect their insincerity” (EA. 159). Thus, the novel presents the full scope of Greene’s revealing observations of Bendrix and Sarah concerning their attitude towards God.

In Bible also one may observe how Luke compares Simon and the woman in their attitude towards Jesus. Though Simon invited Jesus for dinner he does not welcome Jesus, whereas the woman extends it without any reservation. This is the sign of love and gratitude for forgiveness. She shows her thankfulness by expressing her love. Jesus assures her of forgiveness for all her sins. Even the guests of Simon realize that Jesus is more than a prophet with the authority to forgive sins. Jesus also admits and activates her faith to receive forgiveness and peace as faith is the basis for forgiveness, indicating a human response to divine initiative. By responding to the divine initiative, the woman is saved and she can go in peace. A strong connection between salvation and forgiveness is established here. The woman can live in peace experiencing the fullness of compassionate forgiveness. The experience of forgiveness brings to her the freedom from the severe burden of moral debt so much so that God has visited her and redeemed her. Jesus is a compassionate Saviour, whose mission is

to

seek

and to

save

the lost. A repentant sinner always hears His consoling words of forgiveness, “your sins are forgiven”. Jerome Kodell in *The Gospel According to Luke*, explains thus:

Jesus says that the woman has already been forgiven her sins; that is evident because of her love. She would not be able to show such love unless she had first accepted love (forgiveness, acceptance). The forgiveness has set her free to love. When Jesus says “your sins are forgiven,” he is confirming what is already true in her. (47)

The sinful woman is consoled by the forgiving words of Jesus and expresses her gratitude and love in this episode. She surrenders her entire life to Jesus and remains an ardent follower to Him. The divine intervention is seen in both the fictional and Biblical characters to keep their promise of surrendering themselves to God and following Him till the end of their lives.

Invariably in all the novels of Greene, one may find God’s forgiveness in the life of a sinner who repents. Real repentance inspires the sinner to turn away from the sinful ways once and for ever. John G. McKenzie says: “In a true repentance the consciousness of outraging God’s love is far more prominent than any concern of the sinner with his own fate. He may feel he is ‘hell-deserving’, but his anxiety is for restored relations with God” (162). De Vitis is so convinced of this reality in the life of Sarah and remarks:

To make her keep her promise, God sends grace in every conceivable way: an unanswered telephone keeps Sarah from talking to Bendrix; a racking

cough prevents her kissing him when she does see him; a husband's early return ties her to her home when she has decided to abandon her promise; and death, at the right moment, keeps her from losing all. Sarah succumbs to the grace of God and becomes a saint. (99)

The novel appears to be transcendent for the nature of divine love and the miracles after her death, suggest that Sarah might be a saint. What makes this novel extraordinary are the moments when the rain and misery and hate suddenly stop and at the end of the novel one finds the moments of pure love. According to De Vitis, Sarah's passionate love for Bendrix is only a shadow of the divine love.

Sarah finds in him the lover her husband has never been. When she tells Bendrix that she never loved anybody or anything as she does him, she does not realize that this 'perfect' human relationship is but a shadow of a greater love. In her complete abandonment to her lover she reckons at this point only on the gratification of her physical passions; she does not realize the emptiness of her spiritual self. . . . Sarah renounces him for God, and nothing short of divine love will satisfy her. (100)

In *The End of the Affair*, unlike other characters, God is in search of Sarah, although she attempts to flee from Him. She is very much in love with Bendrix, since her marriage to Henry is a dead, loveless one. She therefore tries to convince herself that God does not exist, believing that, if there is no God, a vow made to Him is not binding on her, and that she can continue her affair with Bendrix with a clear conscience. She befriends Richard Smythe, a militant atheist, and it is found that the more Smythe tries to persuade her the more she comes to believe in God's existence.

observes that Sarah believes in God's existence but hates Him, because she has to keep the promise she has taken regarding her love-affair: ". . . Her hatred is, paradoxically, the statement of her love - she has yet to learn to put her trust in God. And this she cannot do until she acknowledges the fact that by betraying her out of physical life, he has shown her the way to spiritual life" (102). But in a different context, De Vitis is convinced of Sarah's true love and belief:

In her love for Bendrix, Sarah finds love for God . . . In learning to love God, Sarah finds peace, which she leaves to Bendrix as her legacy . . . Again Greene echoes Eliot's "Ash Wednesday" as Sarah prays for strength and asks for peace. Sarah's suffering teaches her not only to believe in God, to love him, but to have faith in him. Her faith is her trust, and it is as firm as that of the greatest saints. (103)

Sarah loves God and enjoys heavenly peace and joy. She also wants to make Bendrix experience the same peace and joy and so she asks God: "When I ask You for pain, You give me peace. Give it him too. Give him my peace – he needs it more" (EA. 99). In the letter to Bendrix, she says, "I believe there's a God - I believe the whole bag of tricks, there's nothing I don't believe . . . I've fallen into belief like I fell in love . . . I fought belief for longer than I fought love, but I haven't any fight left" (EA. 121). Greene's description of Bendrix seeing Sarah after two years is pictured with the indifferent emotion:

How can I make a stranger see her as she stopped in the hall at the foot of the stairs and turned to us? I have never been able to describe even my

fictitious characters except by their actions . . . Now I am betrayed by my own technique, for I do not want any other woman substituted for Sarah, I want the reader to see . . . all I can convey is an indeterminate figure turning in the dripping mackintosh, saying, Yes, Henry? and then You?.
(EA. 11)

The end of the novel indeed is so complex and there is a gravitational pull towards God despite the fact that none of the characters really believes in God. The author tries to establish the existence and love of God through the transformation of the characters and the miraculous intervention of God after the death of Sarah Miles.

The diary of Sarah is the only evidence of her problem, concerned with the basic choice that she has to make. In her diary she unfolds her union with God that she leaves Bendrix for ever after his rebirth or resuscitation. She records all the details of her suffering in her diary. Only when Bendrix reads her diary, he realizes the truth of her encounter with God. B. P. Lamba comments on the information from her diary and Bendrix's reaction on account of this:

Later on when Bendrix comes to know of the truth, he realizes that God is his rival in love. This information, vital to the novel, is provided by Sarah's diary. Her diary also helps us to understand the ultimate end of the affair: Sarah loving God and agnostic Bendrix believing in the existence of God. This is done by revealing the view of Bendrix that is not only inadequate, but is also inaccurate. (88)

Greene describes the affair between Sarah and Bendrix in a way the readers can imagine everything. Though his love seems passionate and real, Sarah suddenly ends

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the day when Bendrix falls unconscious. Something intangible and spiritual happens to Sarah while Bendrix is unconscious. It also leads in an unexpected direction regarding the existence of God. Bendrix, being a skeptic, can't deal with the new situation of Sarah. By the time Sarah dies, Bendrix has become a better man; he has learned compassion for humanity in general and for Henry in particular, but he has also been emotionally worn-out and can only pray, to a deity in whom he tentatively believes but certainly does not love.

The Hound of Heaven has caught up with this nonbeliever and torn out his heart. The movement from human love to the love of God is made explicit, so that belief and faith are revealed in a realistic experience. In *The End of the Affair*, one may find strong influence of St. Augustine and St. John of the Cross. Parkis's hunt for Sarah and God's pursuit of Sarah and Bendrix may be the reflections of the hounds of Heaven. They may also have experienced the dark night of the soul with severe inner struggle. De Vitis observes Bendrix's belief in God and his spiritual dilemma: "Bendrix attempts to deny God, but God is too persistent a pursuer" (99). De Vitis tries to probe into the spiritual obsession of Greene and his interest in the spiritual conflicts of great saints and renowned literary giants:

. . . in *The End of the Affair*, he relies as heavily on "Ash Wednesday".

Greene's interest in St. John of the Cross is patent . . . Both Sarah and Bendrix, within broad outline, follow the pattern of spiritual awareness described in *La Noce Oscura*. Here John describes the individual soul

entering into a period of purgation, and he describes the battle between the spirit and the senses. (99)

It should be noted that T. S. Eliot's depiction of demon on the stair in his "Ash Wednesday", is borrowed from the Second Stanza of St. John of the Cross's *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*:

In darkness, and secure,
 By the secret ladder, disguised,
 – Ah, the sheer grace! –
 In darkness and concealment,
 My house being now all stilled; (CW. 68)).

De Vitis adds to this contribution of St. John and shows how Greene applies it in this novel:

John describes, as does Eliot, the penitent experiencing despair, rebellion, and drought in his ascent to heaven. He speaks constantly of love, the interceding factor in helping man on his way to God, and John does not minimize the influence of the senses. Like Eliot, Greene makes conscious use of this symbolism, particularly that of the stair. (99)

Sarah in her diary describes of the dream she once had, while climbing the staircase:

Two days ago I had such a sense of peace and quiet and love. Life was going to be happy again, but last night I dreamed I was walking up a long staircase to meet Maurice at the top. I was still happy . . . but it wasn't Maurice's voice that answered; it was a stranger's that boomed like a fog-horn warning lost ships, and scared me . . . and going down the stairs again

the water rose beyond my waist and the hall was thick with mist. (EA. 99)

Sarah gradually realizes the meaninglessness of love and refuses to speak of the permanence of their love when Bendrix asks her to share. Bendrix is always jealous of Sarah, for he fears that one day she will cease to love him and also believes in her capacity to end their affair.

The novel, *The End of the Affair* is a record of hate more than of love. In the words of De Vitis, “Bendrix’s hatred and jealousy flare again even though he has had no contact with Sarah for several years” (101). Once Bendrix learns of her love for God, he transfers his hatred from Sarah to God. With all the strength of his love, he begins to hate God. But, Bendrix realizes that he can’t hate God because it implies belief in God. He understands Sarah’s actions now, so he can’t hate her anymore. He realizes that Henry didn’t win her back after all, so there’s no point hating him. Finally Sarah agrees to meet with him again. But, already stricken with a cough, returning home from their luncheon in the rain she becomes quite ill, sickens and dies. Bendrix learns that she is planning on converting to Catholicism and may receive a Christian burial. In the end, inevitably, Bendrix comes to accept God and Sarah suffers and dies rather than break her oath to God and precisely the example of her faith brings him to God. De Vitis is of the opinion that “Sarah’s suffering teaches her not only to believe in God, to love him, but to have faith in him. Her faith is her trust, and it is as firm as that of the greatest saints” (103). B. P. Lamba asserts that in *The End of the Affair*,

we have a still more clear view of the mystery of God’s love turning man’s

behaviour from human lust to Divine Passion. Bendrix till the end states that he hates God. It is only in the end that he acknowledges the existence of God whom he has always considered his enemy. And Sarah believes that Bendrix loves even his enemies. (62)

Bendrix's love has become real, because the presence of God revealing through various miracles makes even Maurice Bendrix, the atheist, accept and believe in God.

In Greene's play, *The Potting Shed*, James, the son of the rationalist Henry Callifer, was found as a child hanging dead in the potting shed and was restored to life by the prayers of his uncle, Father Callifer. Father Callifer's prayers to restore James' life remind us of the prayers offered by Sarah to restore the life of Bendrix. Father Callifer offered his faith in return for James' life. Father Callifer prayed: "Let him live God . . . I will give you anything if you will let him live . . . Take away my faith, but let him live" (*Three Plays*, 138). At once his prayers were answered and James' life was saved. Greene thus refers to and ascertains the mysterious power of prayer in some of his works.

The novel gives an account of human love combined with jealousy and hatred followed by the unexpected intricacies through the intrusion of divine love. God, the unwelcome intruder, intervenes in their human relationships and transforms their affair for ever. Bendrix, as he discovers the identity of the third man in the love triangle, is too tired to challenge this villain. But Bendrix realizes that Sarah is in a bargain with God for his sake and deliberately avoids him to keep the promise she has taken for his sake. She is forced to go out into the rain to avoid him, but due to her poor health and the strain to struggle between human love and supernatural

commitment, dies of pneumonia. The critics are ready to admit and accept Sarah as a saint but all the same wonder how adultery can lead to sainthood. Sarah seems to be struggling between physical lust and divine commitment. She undergoes severe inner conflict between belief and disbelief that her tormented mind makes her body so weak that she gets pneumonia. At the end, she is forced to express how she is converted to real belief: “I believe there’s a God . . . I’ve caught belief like a disease” (EA. 121).

There are different provocative and offensive critical reactions against the novel, *The End of the Affair*. Some are scandalized at the suggestion that adultery can lead to sainthood. Some others are offended at the heroine’s incredible leap into faith and the introduction of the miracles into a fictional work immediately after her death. But some critics consider the reality that Greene’s belief is indisputable in the case of miracles in the context of his Catholic belief.

Greene’s attitude to miracles and his belief in the mysterious aspect of divine intervention in man’s life, however, are uncertain. He leaves the issues of Sarah’s leap to faith and sainthood, the miracles after her death and the belief and disbelief of Bendrix and Sarah etc., wide open to the readers to distinguish and identify. Bendrix’s disbelief is obviously expressed after the death of Sarah:

I thought, you’ve failed there, Sarah . . . I have no peace and I have no love, except for you . . . For if this God exists, I thought, and if even you - with your lusts and your adulteries and the timid lies you used to tell - can change like this, we could all be saints by leaping as you leapt, by shutting the eyes and leaping once and for all: if you are a saint, it’s not so difficult

to be a saint. It's something He can demand of any of us, leap. But I won't leap . . . You're a devil, God, tempting us to leap. But I don't want Your peace and I don't want your love . . . I hate You, God, I hate you as though you existed. (EA. 159)

Bendrix expresses his disbelief in God even after his rebirth and knowing well of Sarah's private vow for the sake of his new life. His words reflect his jealousy and hatred towards God on account of captivating Sarah for ever. He is provoked by Father Crompton's remarks about Sarah as a good woman. Sarah, on the contrary, is obliged to believe in God and so she can't break her vow. Even though she is not sure whether her private contract with God counts or not, she is convinced of the amazing reality that there is a living God who responds to the human needs. S. K. Sharma remarks, "But if the critics insist on inferring that Bendrix had died and had been miraculously restored to life in answer to Sarah's prayer, it suits Greene better" (128).

Critics wonder whether Sarah is capable of becoming a saint in spite of her past sinful life. De Vitis comments on Greene's outlook while writing *The End of the Affair*: "Greene attempts to tell the story of a saint. If the reader remembers his assertion that the greatest saints have been men with more than a normal capacity for evil, the obvious parallels of Mary Magdalene and St. Augustine come to mind" (97). Sarah's sinful past, her conversion at the end and total renunciation of the worldly pleasures for the love of God are to be compared with those great saints. Sarah's diary is the only source of convictions regarding her belief and disbelief. At times Sarah expresses her firm belief in God even when she struggles for physical love. After making a decision to follow God, Sarah puts an informal question to Bendrix, "My

dear,

my

dear.

People go on loving God, don't they, all their lives without seeing Him?" (EA. 54). She indirectly prepares his mind to love and believe in a God, who is capable of raising him from the dead. But at the same time, when she is in need of Bendrix's loving presence once again, she forgets about the seriousness of the vow she has taken at the cost of his life: "A vow's not all that important – a vow to somebody I've never known, to somebody I don't really believe in. Nobody will know that I've broken a vow, except me and Him – and He doesn't exist, does he? He can't exist. You can't have a merciful God and this despair" (EA. 74). Sarah, somehow, comes to the realization that there is a God to convert her and ultimately writes in her last letter to Bendrix: "I've fallen into belief like I fell in love" (EA. 121). Sarah, thus leaps into real faith towards the end of her life. She undergoes terrible inner struggle during the period of her conversion. In spite of her weaknesses, God helps Sarah by sending grace and strength in order to keep her promise.

According to the Catholic belief, miracles are the consequences of supernatural intervention of God in certain impossible and unbelievable circumstances of human life, which is quite unbelievable to man. Here in the novel, one may find some miracles taking place immediately after the death of Sarah. But the first miracle occurs when she is alive herself in a sinful state. This is how Greene works out the intensity of Sarah's miraculous powers. The first miracle happens, Bendrix coming back to life after the bomb blast as a result of Sarah's bargain with God and her private vow to God for his second life. The healing of the stomach pain of Parkis's boy with the

miraculous touch of Sarah's book is supposed to be the first miracle after her death. The disappearance of Smythe's strawberry mark - is the next miracle explained rationally in the novel. Bendrix creates an explanation for Smythe's cure: "I've read somewhere that urticaria is hysterical in origin. A mixture of psychiatry and radium. It sounded plausible. Perhaps after all it was truth. Another coincidence, two cars with the same number plate, and I thought with a sense of weariness, how many coincidences are there going to be?" (EA. 158). The rationalist Smythe is cured of his strawberry birth-mark after he has been kissed by Sarah. Even though coincidences are considered to be normal, readers may suspect the intention of the author. But in all, Sarah's faith is pictured as the sign of her love for God.

Sarah is convinced that her sinful life is forgiven and she is accepted by God. As a result, she begins to have faith in His miraculous power and that she loves Him and submits herself totally to the will of God, renouncing her lover Bendrix and her past sinful life for ever. Similarly, in the life of the anonymous 'sinful woman' depicted in the Bible by St. Luke, one may find the nature of Jesus' forgiving love towards the woman and her response to His love, forgiveness and acceptance in her life. Scholars are of the opinion that there is a prior experience of forgiveness for which the woman came to Jesus to express her gratitude. During the time of Jesus, it should be observed that the Jews had no word for spelling out 'thank you'. Instead, they expressed their gratitude through their actions. Some of those actions are expressed by the 'sinful woman' in this episode. And her actions symbolize the best form of thankfulness. In fact, we all need God's forgiveness, but we may be blind to our sinfulness or proud to pray for forgiveness and so we may be under the bondage of

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us away from the freedom of love.

In the novel, Sarah Miles herself is identified as an adulterous woman; where as the 'sinful woman's identity is not revealed in the Biblical passage. She is reputed to be a prostitute, but the only clues in the Biblical text given are her unbound hair and that she has with her a jar of ointment, which might have been used in the activities associated with her trade of prostitution. Nothing is said about the nature of the woman's sin in the Bible. In the book of Numbers, there is a reference regarding this tradition. "And the priest shall set the woman before the Lord, and uncover the woman's head, and put the offering of memorial in her hands" (Num. 5.18). The sinful woman knows well that letting down her hair in the public is a great scandal, but in her love and gratitude for Jesus, the woman forgets all such social practices and uses what is available to wipe Jesus' feet.

Jesus' words to the woman at the end of the parable highlight Simon's ignorance of the fact that her sins are already forgiven by Jesus. Jesus sends the woman on her way with a blessing. Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace" (Luke. 7. 50). His blessing speaks of her 'faith' that has saved her and released her of her sins. At the end of Sarah's life, she undergoes severe spiritual conflict between faith and disbelief in God and the Church. Both Sarah and the 'sinful woman' undergo a tough spiritual struggle of good and evil within their minds for the right choice. Renunciation to the worldly pleasures in order to attain the endless spiritual joy for ever, is the ultimate aim to both of them. In order to achieve this

difficult task, they are ready to suffer hard and to renounce everything they had enjoyed earlier. Both of them believe in the mighty power of God, put their trust and submit everything to Him. Their total surrender to God strengthens them to win the battle, where we find the unconditional and categorical victory of good over evil.

Once again attention may be drawn toward the last part of *The End of the Affair*, where Sarah Miles comes to the feet of God, sitting in a corner of the Church, surrendering herself to God as part of fulfilling her private vow. As she is convinced of the miraculous intervention of God in the life of Bendrix, she is filled with love and gratitude. In spite of her physical weaknesses, she is determined to remain in the Divine presence and to enjoy inner peace and heavenly joy. Similarly, at the end of her sinful life, the ‘sinful woman’ also comes to the feet of Jesus, as she is overwhelmed with love for Jesus and sorrow for her sins. She is trying to express the torrents of love for Jesus flowing from her heart. She loves Him more because she is forgiven more by Jesus. Her great love proves that her many sins are forgiven. By imparting forgiveness, Jesus uproots evil from the sinful woman’s heart, converting her to a thoroughly new individual with goodness and holiness. Forgiveness is the best form of God’s expression of compassion. Jesus is pictured as a compassionate Savior, whose mission is to seek and to save the lost. Greg W. Forbes comments, “Jesus’ habitual association with sinners and outcasts is one of the most widely accepted axioms in New Testament Scholarship” (293). Sarah Miles of *The End of the Affair*, is forgiven by God and it is proved from the miraculous re-birth of Bendrix after her prayer and private vow to God. In the words of Cedric Watts, “Sarah makes a wager with God that if He will save her lover’s life, she will abandon the adulterous affair;

and

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life is

saved; and thereafter she becomes a miracle-worker” (95). Thus it is certain that God has uprooted evil from her heart and converted her from sinner to saint. Sarah proves herself to be capable of loving God even without His presence, “People go on loving God, don’t they, all their lives without seeing Him?” (EA. 58). Both Sarah and the ‘sinful woman’ believe to the hilt, in God’s capacity to forgive sins and his power to convert them from sinfulness to saintliness.

The spiritual conflicts and the heavenly joy of the anonymous ‘sinful woman’ depicted in the Gospel according to St. Luke, are compared with that of Sarah Miles in *The End of the Affair*. The celestial bliss enjoyed by both Sarah Miles and the ‘sinful woman’ is discussed and evaluated with reference to the process of sanctification through their spiritual conflicts. In the novel, Sarah Miles renounces all the worldly pleasures forever and enjoys Celestial Bliss spending the rest of her life with God. The ‘sinful woman’ also enjoys inner peace and joy at the feet of Jesus, while washing His feet with her tears. The process of sanctification in the life of Sarah and the ‘sinful woman’ is made possible only with the help of Divine mercy and Grace.