In his novels Greene delineates the plight of man, dissolute, hunted and abandoned in a world full of violence and treachery, injustice and exploitation, squalor and ugliness. But this should not prompt us to regard Greene as a pessimist. Greene indeed endows us with a solution in terms of after-life. He denounces religious absolutism, the dogmas preached and propagated by the church and gladly welcomes humility and truly Christian humanism, characterized by compassion self-sacrifice and charity as a way towards salvation. Greene, to quote W. Allen “dares to reinterpret scriptures in terms of its original charity” (74). “Backed by a continental sense of good and evil” (115), Greene portrays human nature as a typical mixture of virtues and vices. In the words of Dr. Kulshreshtha: “For Greene man is not good or bad, but good and bad” (225).

“Greene’s books” as Ray North points out, “deal not only with man in relation to society and to himself but fundamentally with his relation to God” (391). Being inspired by his liberal education and protestant tradition Greene finds God as a source of eternal love, a being who is “the supreme good, or has all the attributes of Good in infinite intenseness” (Newman, “The Idea of a University” 62).
It is the original sin, the cause of Fall that according to Greene has tainted man's nature and leads him to the path of evil. But his protagonists are fully aware of their imperfectability and can never desist from the longing for the God's grace. As a result the redemption of these "seeming sinners" seems to be more certain than "the seeming saints".

In an interview with Philip Tonybee Greene observes: "And the things which interest me most is discovering the humility that exists in apparently inhuman characters" (12). And according to Greene religion is reduced to a mere observance of rituals – an outward show of piety – an exercise in futility if it forsakes charity and humility. But the experience of evil, the worst sins sacrilege and suicide can bring man nearer to God if he submits humbly to the divine will. To quote Kenneth Tynan: "Vice is defined as the manure in which salvation flowers" (11).

"Greene is constantly at pains to depict the dreary pieties of respectable Catholicism" (83), which makes man oblivious to the very basis of religion, a spontaneous love for the Creator as well as fellow human beings, suffering, depraved and debased. John W. Simon justly remarks:

The greatest saints are the people with more than a normal capacity for evil, and the most vicious people only escaped sanctity with the greatest difficulty. (75)
Greene's protagonist, the fallen man who seems doomed to hell, plunges headlong into the abysmal darkness of evil. But he discovers light, the subterranean flow of divine mercy, at the end of the dark tunnel, by virtue of his human love and suffering. True to the image of the Christ he suffers in a spirit of humility, undergoes spiritual transformation, commits self-immolation and thereby achieves redemption. In fact Jesus himself assures in The New Testament:

I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life. (John 8:12)

It is the Catholics who in Greene's opinion are entitled to the regeneration of soul as they are in the know of things – the existence of a life after death, salvation, damnation and the vision of eternities. So they are supposed to cherish a longing for God's grace which the non-Catholics, inspired by a sense of spurious morality, blinded by the deceptive gloss of materialism and inclined to judge every human action not in terms of good & evil but in terms of right and wrong, are deprived of.

The unfathomable depth of God's mercy leaves Greene amazed. To quote Martin-Jarrett-Kerr:

There is only one hero in every one of Greene's novels: a vague creature called Grace. (164)
Indeed, “Spies, double agents, betrayers suicides and murderers; all might be secretly justified when infinite love rather than human reason was the judge” (32). We shall discuss in this chapter how Greene explores “the appalling strangeness of the mercy of God” in some of his novels (Greene, Brighton Rock 331).

In Brighton Rock Pinkie, the young protagonist is marked by his sored egotism, giving vent to his determination to defy the all-pervasive mercy of God. Infact he is convinced of his own damnation and takes pride in it. In Chapter III we have discussed in details how devil wrestles with God for the possession of Pinkie’s soul, when he decides to kill Rose and therefore leaves Peacehaven Hotel. Forces of evil triumph over the forces of good but he prays: “Dona nobis Pacem” (230). He wants to break away from this world of fear, hatred and envy and experience “the effect of a good confession the words of absolution” (182). He seems willing to repent and feels “a faint nostalgia for the tiny dark confessional box” (110), though he is doomed to “eternal unrepentance” (182). He feels the “prowling pressure of pity” (234), but ultimately he succeeds in resisting it. So it is undeniable that Pinkie, though he seems to be the very incarnation of evil suffers from the pangs of his conscience.

The world of Pinkie and that of Ida present diametrically opposite values and ethics. The life after death does not concern Ida at all as she
nurture an acute sense of right & wrong inspired by her bourgeois values. Her sense of justice is conspicuous by its curious lack of compassion and any perception of the inner workings of human heart. And this only exposes the absence of those values which make man dearer to God in her heart. But Pinkie, though he lacks pity mercy or compassion, can discern the thin line of demarcation between the good and the evil.

Being a Catholic Pinkie can not shake off the agonising consciousness of his evil nature and can visualise another world – the invisible world of the spiritual life, "a grey darkness going on and on without end, a country that he had not seen as much as a picture post card, a place far stranger than the Grand Canyn and the Taj Mahal" (200). But as he cherishes no hope of his absolution, he stonewalls the temptations to confess and repent as a sinner seeking redemption is supposed to do according to Roman Catholicism. He withdraws into his shell of active resistance to the very idea of mercy whenever the God's angels are out to tempt him to mend his ways. He sincerely believes in his destiny as predicted by Roman Catholicism and like Ida can not rule out the excruciating consciousness of sin resulting in damnation.

But all is not lost in so far as Pinkie is concerned. Craving for the lost ideal is still there though it resurfaces occasionally. Pinkie is definitely not an embodiment of absolute darkness as the music still
releases his pent up emotions. And his longing for a deathbed repentance can not be ruled out as this jingle comes to his mind:

Between the stirrup and the ground

He mercy sought and mercy found. (91)

The demoniac hero of Brighton Rock is undoubtedly cut off from God's grace. But is this separation permanent? We, human beings are made in God's image. And nothing, not even worst sins can blur this image in human heart. The New Testament conveys this idea in the following lines:

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come.

Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8: 38-39)

So this estrangement can never lead to a permanent dissociation.

Pinkie ultimately commits suicide – the most serious crime to a Roman Catholic who believes in “hell and its fire”. Rose feels that Pinkie is damned. But the old priest tells her about the strange ways of the benign mercy. A profound knowledge, almost a love of sin – is one of the main criterion of redemption. To illustrate this he gives the example of Peguy, who lived in sin as he was unable to see anybody damned:
There was a man, a Frenchman, you wouldn’t know about him my child, who had the same idea as you. He was a good man, a holy man, and he lived in sin all through his life, because he couldn’t bear the idea that any soul could suffer damnation. This man decided that if any soul was going to be damned, he would be damned too. He never took the sacraments, he never married his wife in church. I don’t know my child, but some people think he was – well, a saint … you can’t conceive my child nor can I or any one – the … appalling … strangeness of the mercy of God. (331)

It may be suggested that Pinkie might have received God’s grace because of his love for Rose. So Pinkie is not beyond redemption. Frederick Karl also supports this view when he says:

In Greene’s world, few are past saving, even Pinkie, who has reached so far into the lower depths, can be saved because he did love at one time. (97)

But Pinkie’s “loving” message that he leaves for Rose in the phonograph record however confirms something else: “God damn you, you little bitch, why can’t you go back home forever and let me be?” (177). Infact in the novel we find no concrete evidence of Pinkie’s love for Rose. His marriage with Rose, we know, is an act of convenience and not a result of selfless love. So Pinkie definitely bears no
resemblance to Peguy who wished to court damnation for the sake of others. Greene has written the following lines about Frederick Rolfe:

He would be a priest or nothing, so nothing it had to be .... if he could not have Heaven, he would have Hell, and the last foot prints, seem to point unmistakably towards the Inferno.

*(Collected Essays 133)*

Pinkie like Rolfe seems to be destined to hell because of his feigned love.

R.O. Evans speaks about "conscious effort of the will" as a prerequisite for salvation. But, not once in the novel Pinkie is found to pray to God or confess and repent his sins. So this deliberate effort and desire are lacking in Pinkie who "finds that in the instant of death there is no time, though for him there has always been plenty of time to make an effort of will directed towards evil" (161).

But the impending death may upset all our calculations regarding the destiny of Pinkie by slackening his monstrous egoism – the origin of his determination not to bow before the Creator to save himself. And who can confirm that Pinkie, inspite of his sored egoism, his belief in "Credo in unum Satanum" has not prayed for the absolution of his sins and thereby been saved by the Divine Being during his fall from the cliff-edge to the sea?
Moreover Rose who loves Pinkie and is ready to face even damnation with him ["He was going to damn himself, but she would show them. They couldn't damn him without damning her too .... she couldn't let him go into that darkness alone" (307). "If they damn him, they have got to damn her too." (191)] may lead him to salvation. Rose reflects the spirit of early Christians whose love for suffering humanity led them to kiss the lepers, which brought about their salvation. So we may reach the conclusion that Rose may be something of a saint and can redeem Pinkie by assimilating all his evils in her infinite goodness.

Moreover God's ability to detect the latent longing for grace in human heart should not be overlooked. And God's mercy is neither conditional nor partial. So it is beyond the power of human reasoning to predict or rationalize the inscrutable ways in which the divine mercy operates or miracles come to the rescue of the sinner. Greene uses the phrase "appalling strangeness of the mercy of God" to stress this idea. Above all the very idea of being doomed to undergo perpetual suffering in hell fails to come in terms with the image of a merciful God featuring all-encompassing and boundless love. What Marie-Beatrice-Mesnet says in this context is much relevant: 

Nowhere in the scriptures is there a text that directly states that any man is consigned to the torments of Hell. What we do know with certainty is that the thief crucified with Jesus,
probably no better human material than Greene's characters, was the first to whom the joy of heaven was promised. (108)

Thus though the conventional Roman Catholicism practised by the church rules out the prospect of salvation of a diehard criminal like Pinkie, Greene definitely hints at Pinkie's marginal escape from the fire of hell and the visitation of God's grace. We can conclude with the words of Francois Mauriac glorifying boundless grace and love:

What I find most authentic in Greene's novels is Grace .... [It is the] Truth that man does not know. With his English education and Protestant tradition he sees this truth in a light altogether different from the one we, French Catholics, are familiar with .... He enables us to rediscover Christian faith, his solutions to the problems faced by grace and salvation are free from the rigid categories of our theologians and our casuists. The liberty he grants to God over mankind is at once terrifying and reassuring because at the final count, God is love and if nothing is possible to man everything is possible to Eternal Love. (qtd. in Maria Couto : 234)

The Power and the Glory traces the odyssey of the Whisky Priest from darkness to light – "the spiritual transformation of a sinner into a martyr and a saint" (Kulshreshtha 83) – how he embraces the divine grace through suffering in a spirit of truly Christian humility.
The priest, the protagonist is addicted to whisky and breaks his vow of celibacy. But as we have discussed in chapter III he is acutely conscious of his unworthiness, his terrible inadequacy as a priest. Infact “he felt his unworthiness like a weight at the back of the tongue” (69). The consciousness of his sins is thus one of the most striking features of his character.

The priest is convinced that nothing can save him and his damnation is a certainty. He therefore “felt an immense envy of all those people who had confessed to him and been absolved ... but he couldn’t believe that any one anywhere would rid him of his heavy heart” (173). He knows that “he carried Hell about with him. Sometimes at night he dreamed of it ... Evil ran like malaria in his veins” (176). When Padre Jose refuses to hear his confession on the eve of his death he confesses to himself:

I have committed fornication .... I have lain with a woman ....
I have been drunk – I don’t know how many times. There isn’t a duty I haven’t neglected. I have been guilty of pride, lack of charity. (207-08)

The priest, haunted by the lieutenant of the secular state, feels isolated. And this estrangement may be regarded as both cosmic and social. It is the absolution of his sins and reconciliation with God that he longs for. And this reminds us of the cry of the Psalmist:
Unto thee will I cry, O Lord my rock; be not silent to me: lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit. (Psalm 28:1)

And this undoubtedly is an outcome of his truly Christian humility and contrition.

The call of God bears utmost importance to the priest. He never ignores it as he associates it with his vocation as a priest. From the very beginning of the novel he carries on his priestly duties even at the risk of his life. Instead of catching the boat to Vera Cruz to escape from the secular state, he attends a dying woman to absolve her of her sins. Inspite of hardship starvation and humiliation, he displays an unflinching loyalty to his faith and carries on the work of God for the preservation of the souls. He listens to the confession, baptises children and says Mass for the villagers. Infact he does his best to relieve the weight of their sins. And this ultimately leads to his martyrdom when he willingly courts death to cater to the spiritual needs of a dying Yankee gangster.

In so far as the religious rituals, that the priest performs, are concerned we should remember that the sins of which the priest is guilty should not necessarily have an adverse effect on their outcome. E.E. Kellett justly remarks:

The Catholic Church certainly recognizes that priests can and do sin. But it is an obvious part of the Roman system
that the character of the minister can not invalidate the
efficacy of the rites which he performs, any more than the
private character of a secular judge his legal decisions. (300)

While the priest defiles the priesthood Padre Jose gives it up and
marries to please the secular authority of the state. Both of them show a
gnawing consciousness of their sins. But while Padre Jose is a victim of
the unforgivable sin, despair, the priest displays an unfaltering loyalty to
his faith. The fact that he is afraid lest he should die in mortal sin only
confirms his belief in Christianity and God.

An act of repentance on the part of the sinner is necessary for the
visitation of the divine grace, irradiating the corrupt and the sinful. So the
question arises whether the priest repents or not. If we go by the strict
sense of the word it will surely appear that the priest fails to repent as he
does not renounce his sins altogether. He for example, is unable to give
up the habit of whisky guzzling and he also loves Brigitta, the fruit of
fornication, the sin he commits. But we can not ignore the latent longing
in his heart for God's grace. Inspite of some failures the priest, suffering
from the pangs of separation, surely inches closer to the Supreme
Being. John G Mc Kenzie while illustrating the true spirit of repentance
lays emphasis on the sinner's "consciousness of out raging God's love"
which carries more importance to him than "any concern ... with his own
fate" (162). The sinner may be ready to court damnation for his
unworthiness "but his anxiety is for restored relations with God" (162). The priest's career thus exemplifies the true spirit of repentance expressed in Psalm 51 and not an outward show of repentance:

Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight ....

Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation and uphold me with thy free spirit. (4-12)

The priest broods over his sins a number of times in the novel. And this serves the author’s purpose of making us understand the difference between his present humble self and his former arrogant nature when he was “proud lustful and greedy” (95). The priest fully aware of his sin and failure is never certain of salvation. But his suffering and self-effacing love for his fellow human beings resulting in his willingness to help others even at the cost of his life, to face damnation to ensure salvation of his child ["Oh God, help her. Damn me, I deserve it, but let her live for ever". (208)] and above all his steadfast devotion to his faith make ground for his contrition and pave the way to salvation as The New Testament proclaims:

That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. (St. John 3 : 15)

Finally he comes to the end of the road when on the eve of his execution, through an interior monologue, the priest, convinced of his
failure to perform the task assigned to him, gives vent to the anguish of his soul:

I have done nothing for anybody. I might just as well have never lived .... He was not at the moment afraid of damnation – even the fear of pain was in the background. He felt only an immense disappointment because he had to go to God empty-handed, with nothing done at all. It seemed to him, at that moment, that it would have been quite easy to have been a saint. It would only have needed a little self-restraint and a little courage. He felt like someone who has missed happiness by seconds at an appointed place. He knew now that at the end there was only one thing that counted – to be a saint. (210)

The priest thus exemplifies a broken heart as he, despaired of sainthood, meekly surrenders to the will of the Supreme Being. This humble submission of the priest ensures the liberation of his soul as Psalm 34 asserts it:

The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart ; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. (18)

Greene unveils in the novel the problem of suffering in human life. He finds it essential to spiritual experience. The agonies and miseries that one undergoes contribute to his spiritual enrichment. Indeed "some
form of stimulation to produce unease and restlessness is necessary for any kind of growth and learning” (Clark 170). The New Testament therefore signifies the role of suffering in the development of spiritual personality:

My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth ....

Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

(Hebrews 12: 5-11)

Suffering may also be regarded as a trial of one’s inner strength for the attainment of spirituality. Thus the priest glorifies misery and suffering as part of the scheme of Christian providence:

That is why I tell you that heaven is here: this is a part of heaven just as pain is a part of pleasure .... Pray that you will suffer more and more and more. Never get tired of suffering .... that is all part of heaven – the preparation. Perhaps without them, who can tell, you wouldn’t enjoy heaven so much. Heaven would not be complete. (69)
This exaltation of suffering as a means of development of spiritual personality reminds us of the holy words of The New Testament:

And if children, then heirs: heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified, together.

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. (Romans 8:17-18)

The soul of the priest, once haughty and comparatively innocent but bereft of any love for anyone, is gradually sanctified by suffering. As the priest is robbed of his ecclesiastical trappings, it prepares ground for the emergence of the real man – the true Christian who, inspite of being submerged in the darkness of sin and corruption perceives God's image in every human being in a spirit of truly Christian humility:

But at the centre of his own faith there always stood the convincing mystery – that we were made in God's image. God was the parent, but he was also the policeman, the criminal, the priest, the maniac, and the judge. Something resembling God dangled from the gibbet or went into odd attitudes before the bullets in a prison yard or contorted itself like a camel in the attitude of sex. He would sit in the confessional and hear the complicated dirty ingenuites which
God's image had thought out and God's image shook now, up and down on the mule's back, with the yellow teeth sticking out over the lower lip, and God's image did its despairing act of rebellion with Maria in the hut among the rats. (101)

The suffering that the priest undergoes thoroughly humanizes him as he is now able to associate himself with the corrupt and the suffering multitude:

He had given way to despair — and out of that had emerged a human soul and love — not the best love, but love all the same. (100)

Imprisoned and surrounded by the thieves, drunkards, criminals and a couple indulging in their "cramped pleasure", the priest at this stage of his sinful career is however not bereft of the sense of fellowship and the awareness of the divine grace that irradiates suffering and squalor:

He was moved by an irrational affection for the inhabitants of this prison. A phrase came to him: 'God so loved the world....' (127)

Gone are the days of his conventional priesthood based on outward appearance of piety and performance of religious rites. The priest in his wretchedness is overwhelmed with his affection for the wretched, corrupt and degraded humanity:
Again he was touched by an extraordinary affection. He was just one criminal among a herd of criminals .... he had a sense of companionship which he had never experienced in the old days when pious people came kissing his black glove. (128)

When mestizo, a Judas like character who recognizes the priest and intends to get him captured, begins to confess his sins, knowing that no real priest can refuse to hear a confession, a deep feeling of affection is stirred in the priest as he discovers the real glory of his priesthood in serving the worst of humanity:

- He had an immense self-importance; he was unable to picture a world of which he was only a typical part – a world of treachery violence, and lust in which his shame was altogether insignificant. How often the priest had heard the same confession – Man was so limited he hadn't even the ingenuity to invent a new vice: the animals knew so much. It was for this world that Christ had died; the more evil you saw and heard about you, the greater glory lay around the death. It was too easy to die for what was good or beautiful, for home or children or a civilization – it needed a God to die for the half-hearted and the corrupt. (97)
Greene's observation denouncing not so serious variety of sins is noteworthy in this context:

... venial sins – impatience, an unimportant life, pride, a neglected opportunity – cut you off from the grace more completely than the worst sins of all. There, in his innocence, he had felt no love for anyone; now in corruption he had learnt. (139)

Sean O'Faolain supports this view when he comments:

Indeed the corruption of mankind is a sort of backhanded tribute to God; it is even a form of godliness to be corrupt; or at least to be corrupt does not deprive us of a form of godliness. (93)

The priest is confronted with a sense of isolation and vacuity. Thus in the first chapter when the priest misses General Obregon, the boat to Vera Cruz, he feels "abandoned". Infact the novel shows how the priest goes "deeper every moment into the abandoned land" and experiences a growing sense of isolation from the Supreme Being (157). And finally on the eve of his execution we find "His head drooped between his knees; he looked as if he had abandoned everything and been abandoned" (205). The novel thus marks his spiritual odyssey

Into another intensity

For a further union, a deeper communion
Through the dark cold and the empty desolation. (Eliot, “East Coker” 205-07)

In so far as symbolism is concerned both Eliot and Greene are indebted to the St. John of the Cross for much of their religious emblems. St. John also marks frustration and agony as indispensable states of mind preluding spiritual uplift. This passage in The Dark Night of the Soul aptly describes the psychic reality that the priest in despair and separation experiences:

In as much as God is now purifying the soul in its sensual and spiritual substance, its interior and exterior powers, it is necessary for it that it should be in all its relations empty, poor and abandoned, in aridity, emptiness and darkness.(91)

Indeed the death of his old conceited self opens up a new horizon of humility and charity – a perfect manifestation of a truly Christian and benevolent self.

This realization gradually dawns upon the priest that his destiny is intimately linked to that of the depraved and the suffering. And the urge to serve the suffering humanity, to relieve them of their burden of sin makes him respond to the call of duty. Inspite of being fully aware of the mestizo’s evil intention the priest steps into the trap laid for his capture only to minister to the spiritual needs of a dying Yankee gangster. And
this act of self-crucification certainly marks the zenith of charity and benevolence as The New Testament promulgates:

This is my commandment, That ye love one another as I have loved you.

Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends. (St. John 15:12-13)

By making this act of self-immolation, the priest follows the path of Christ, the Saviour as Francois Mauriac observes in Graham Greene: A collection of Critical Essays, edited by Samuel Hynes:

And as he approaches the end, we see this mediocre sinner conform slowly to the Christ until he resembles him, but that is not saying enough: until he identifies himself with his Lord and his God. Passion begins again around this victim chosen from among human derelicts, who repeats what Christ did, not as at the altar without it costing him anything, on offering the blood and the body under the species of bread and wine, but giving up his own flesh and blood as on a cross. (76-77)

This heroic and generous act makes the priest worthy of salvic grace as Jesus himself asserts:

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.
For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. (Matthew 16:24-25)

The priest's voyage from the darkness to light is not devoid of Biblical echoes foreshadowing his sanctification. In the very first chapter he fails to escape from Tobasco as he goes to cater to the spiritual needs of a sick woman. Here he has been depicted as "the king of a West-African tribe, the slave of his people, who may not even lie down incase the winds should fail" (19). The tired and the absconding priest takes shelter in a village. And when a villager urges him to absolve him of his sins by hearing his confession the priest with "His eyes closed, his lips and tongue [which] stumbled over the absolution", cries angrily "oh, let them come. Let them all come" but at the same time he admits: "I am your servant" (45). These references are somewhat analogous to the description of the sacrificial victim, the suffering servant of Isaiah. (Isaiah 53:1-12; Cf. Matthew 16:24-25)

And if the priest is a figure of Christ we have a Judas in the mestizo, the half-caste as the priest himself reflects with utmost humility:

Christ had died for this man too: how could he pretend with his pride and lust and cowardice to be anymore worthy of that death than the half-caste? This man intended to betray him for money which he needed, and he had betrayed God for what? Not even for real lust. (99)
The priest goes to hear the confession of the dying American gangster Calver. But he is unwilling to make confession, he rather offers him his gun and the knife to save himself [the priest]. This surely bears resemblance to the account of the two thieves crucified with Christ in the Gospel of St. Luke:

And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, 'If thou be Christ, save thyself and us'. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, 'Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.' And he said unto Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.' (St. Luke 23:39-42)

We come to the conclusion that both the priest and the gangster are saved like the Christ and the just thief as we come across this assurance in the later verse: "And Jesus said unto him, 'Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (St. Luke 24:43).

In the night before his execution the priest has a curious dream in which he finds that "the glass by his plate began to fill with wine". The analogy is not far from that of the sacrifice of Christ's blood for the absolution of the sins of mankind at the Last Supper:
This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. (St. Luke 22:20)

This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. (Mathew 26:28)

After the death of the priest the lieutenant dreams of “laughter all the time, and a long passage in which he could find no door” (207). This probably refers to the laughter spoken about by Dante on the upper slopes of purgatory indicating the happiness of a soul as it enters the paradise.

It is noteworthy that Greene never intends to glorify sin. He condemns sin but takes pity in the plight of the sinner who inspite of his failures, in his heart of hearts awaits the visitation of the divine grace. Infact it is neither his addiction to whisky nor the act of fornication that makes Greene sympathise with the priest. Greene describes the spiritual agonies of the priest who plunging into “the pentecostal flame of earthly sin” (Harbert 266) suffers like Greene’s all other heroes because of “the awareness of the anxiety that he causes to God”, “fears more for God than for himself and accepts death in a spirit of humility and hopelessness” (Kulshreshtha 227). Greene shows how the priest, humbled and purified by sins develops spiritual virtues like humility and compassion. He glorifies this spirit of humility, the stepping stone for receiving salvic grace. Francis L. Kunkel holds the same opinion as he
observes in *Graham Greene: Some Critical Considerations* edited by R.O. Evans:

He never abandons himself to sin without a soul-tearing struggle, and he continually fights his bondage .... Greene does not glorify sin; he glorifies humility. The priest's love for Christ, like that of Peter the prototype of all priests, is not augmented by his betrayal but by the sorrow that ensues from the betrayal. (57-58)

We can conclude with the following observation that sums up the process of the priest's sanctification: "If the road to hell is paved with good intentions, the very pathos of hell is there to lead us to Heaven" (Sankaran 133).

In *The Heart of the Matter* Greene highlights the corrupting influence of excessive pity. Here Scobie, the protagonist is conspicuous for his compassion – his inability to see the others suffer. Infact Scobie is unable to desist himself from assuming the task of relieving the pain of others and is ready to face even damnation for their sake. He seems to suffer, in the words of David Lodge from "a kind of emotional egoism, a compulsion to take the whole load of cosmic suffering on his own shoulders" (107).

It is this almost a fatal sense of pity that leads Scobie deeper and deeper in the dark world of evil and corruption. We have already
discussed in chapter III how Scobie sacrifices his integrity and borrows 
money from the cunning Syrian trader Yusef, a smuggler of diamonds to 
ensure happiness of his wife by sending her to South Africa.

Scobie is fully aware of the fact that none can find true happiness 
in a world full of sufferings and woes and it is impossible on the part of a human, being to "arrange another's happiness" (The Heart of the Matter 85). But he cannot shake off his sense of responsibility - the burdensome task of making others happy. Greene gives us an insight into the inner workings of Scobie's psyche as he watches the lights of the temporary hospital set up for the victims of the shipwreck:

The lights were showing in the temporary hospital, and the weight of that misery lay on his shoulders. It was as if he had shed one responsibility only to take on another. This was a responsibility he shared with all human beings, but that was no comfort, for it sometime seemed to him that he was the only one who recognized his responsibility. In the Cities of the Plain a single soul might have changed the mind of God.(122)

This unmistakably shows Scobie's eagerness to share the burden of the wretched and the suffering. "The lights inside [the hospital] would have given an extraordinary impression of peace if one hadn't known, just as the stars on this clear night gave also an impression of remoteness,
security, freedom", but they are unable to relieve his mind of the thought of miseries of his fellow human beings – his one and only concern. Thus his sense of pity which seems to be inspired by Pauline doctrine of the extreme form of human love acquires a universal dimension as his heart bleeds for the distressed everywhere:

If one knew, he wondered, the facts, would one have to feel pity even for the planets? If one reached what they called the heart of the matter? (124)

When Scobie comes across a six year old child who inspite of surviving the shipwreck is about to die, he fails to reconcile her wanton suffering to the image of a benign God:

Even the pagans realized that the love of God might mean an early death, though the reason they ascribed was different; but that the child should have been allowed to survive the forty days and nights in the open boat – that was the mystery, to reconcile that with the love of God. (120)

Out of sheer pity he therefore prays: "...Take away my peace for ever, but give her peace" (121). And his prayer does not go unanswered. The arrival of Helen Rolt seems to be a divine response to his prayer.

Scobie develops an intimate relationship with Helen who he feels could have been in age, his own child. It is not lust but pity that makes Scobie interested in Helen. It is noteworthy that Scobie feels pity only for the helpless, friendless and uncared for, as Donat O’ Donnel puts it:
Pity is the form of Scobie's relationship with those around him. This solitary tentacle of his takes hold only on children or on adults who appear to him in the guise of children. His wife, his mistress, his enemy are for him rather unattractive fumbling children .... The people who touch him must be immature and helpless: he alone is responsible, the policeman, the father. (85-86)

And this sense of pity "smouldered like decay at his heart. He would never rid himself of it. He knew from experience how passion died away and how love went, but pity always stayed. Nothing ever diminished pity. The conditions of life nurtured it. There was only a single person in the world who was unpitiable, oneself" (178).

When Helen in anger mocks his religion ["It doesn't stop your sleeping with me – it only stops you marrying me" (179).] and drives him away ["... go and don't come back" (180).] Scobie gets an opportunity to conform to Roman Catholicism and get back the peace of his mind:

It occurred to him how much easier life might be if he took her at her word. He would go into his house and close the door and be alone again; he would write a letter to Louise without a sense of deceit and sleep as he hadn't slept for weeks, dreamlessly. (180)
But at the same time "He thought of her alone in the hut, wondering whether the irrevocable words had been spoken, if all the tomorrows would consist of Mrs. Carter and Bagster until the boat came, and she went home with nothing to remember but misery" (180-81). So Scobie driven by a congenital self-destructive impulse sets about "trying to make things right for Helen". He writes a letter to Helen where he pledges that he loves her more than anything else including God himself.

This readiness to desert God surfaces again when being inspired by "the command to stay, to love, to accept responsibility, to lie" he promises to Helen: "I'll always come if you want me" (187). Helen puts the question: "Will you?" Scobie confirms unhesitatingly: "Always if I'm alive" (187). Greene, in this context highlights the going-ons in Scobie's mind:

God can wait, he thought: how can one love God at the expense of one of His creatures? Would a woman accept the love for which a child had to be sacrificed? (187)

This shows that he is unable to reconcile his love for God to his love for fellow human beings. This knotty problem namely "the problem of reconciling the existence of suffering with an omnipotent and merciful providence" (217), Kenneth Allott and Miriam Farris observe has never been illustrated so explicitly in Greene's any other novel.
And his inability to trust the divine mercy leads Scobie to abandon God so that he can share the burden of human miseries. So he repeats his vow: "I'll always be here if you need me, as long as I'm alive" (187). But he has promised at the Ealing altar to make Louise happy. And he cannot make both Louise and Helen happy at the same time. This conflicting vows – unbridgeable and irreconcilable make him pray for his death:

They wouldn't need me if I were dead. No one needs the dead. The dead can be forgotten. O God, give me death before I give them unhappiness. (189)

This seems to be the origin of the idea of suicide in his mind.

Yusef gets his letter to Helen and uses it to draw him into a whirlpool of evil and corruption. Louise's arrival aggravates Scobie's corruption. It has been already illustrated in Chap III how he harbours despair, attends holy communion in a state of mortal sin and ultimately commits suicide thereby embracing perpetual damnation as Roman Catholicism predicts.

The issue of Scobie's salvation or damnation has generated varied critical opinions. Scobie's sense of pity has been regarded by some critics as an outcome of his pride, the sin that makes the angels fall. Dr. Subramanium finds this pity destructive as it is "separated from love" (133). Driven by his sense of hidden pride Scobie seems to take up the
role of the Supreme Being. He does not leave it to God to arrange for the happiness of the two women. In fact he seems to have lost faith in divine providence. And this indeed is a sin according to Roman Catholic doctrine.

The conversation between Scobie and his "other voice" inspired by the "sacrament which lodged" in "the cave of his body" confirms the loss of his faith in divine mercy (258):

Can't you trust me as you'd trust a faithful dog? I have been faithful to you for two thousand years. All you have to do now is ring a bell, go into a box, confess .... to go up to the Nissen hut and say goodbye. Or if you must, continue rejecting me but without lies any more. Go to your house and say goodbye to your wife and live with your mistress. If you live you will come back to me sooner or later. One of them will suffer, but can't you trust me to see that the suffering isn't too great?

The voice was silent in the cave and his own voice replied hopelessly: No, I don't trust you. I've never trusted you. If you made me, you made this feeling of responsibility that I've always carried like a sack of bricks. I'm not a policeman for nothing – responsible for order, for seeing justice is done ... I can't shift my responsibility to you ... I can't make one of
them suffer so as to save myself. I'm responsible and I'll see it through the only way I can. The God seems to be "lowering the terms every time it spoke like a dealer in a market" : So long as you live, the voice said, I have hope. There's no human hopelessness like the hopelessness of God. Can't you just go on, as you are doing now? (259)

But Scobie is determined as he finds no way out of this situation except committing suicide:

But no, he said, no. That's impossible I won't go on insulting you at your own altar. You see it's an impasse, God, an impasse, he said .... (259)

Indeed "Trust was a dead language of which he had forgotten the grammar" (264). Gwenn Boardman finds Scobie nurturing a deceptive sense of pride, distorting his sense of reasoning:

Clearly Scobie's judgment is at fault. Trying always to do what is 'right' as befits the just man, Scobie continuously chooses wrong routes because he suffers from a false pride in his own intellect, because his love of God is as distorted as his pity for men. (83)

Scobie seems to transgress the role which his religion assigns to him, defies divine law and offers his damnation to God as he prays: "O God, I offer my damnation to you. Take it. Use it for them" (225). This uncommon
act of embracing his own damnation has been strongly criticized by Evelyn Waugh in *Graham Greene: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Samuel Hynes:

To me the idea of willing my own damnation for the love of God is either a very loose poetical expression or a mad blasphemy, for God who accepted that sacrifice could be neither just nor lovable. (101)

George Orwell's criticism of Scobie's acts is all the more severe:

If he really felt that adultery was a mortal sin, he would stop committing it; if he persisted in it his sense of sin would weaken. If he believed in Hell, he would not risk going there merely to spare the feelings of a couple of neurotic women. (Hynes 108)

F. N. Lees also points out the human frailties in Scobie's character:

The personality presented is, in fact, a curiously egotistic, blind one, insensitive to the fullness of others' existence, prone to sentimentality, self-deceived in its very self-knowledge, and lacking in real moral courage. (39)

But we should not be oblivious to the fact that *The Heart of the Matter* deals with — "man's sinfulness and his need for divine forgiveness" (Kulshrestha 104). At the end of the novel Louise apprehends Scobie's damnation. She opines that being a Catholic Scobie was fully aware of the
consequence of his act: “He must have known that he was damning himself” (271). And so even prayers would not be of any use. But Father Rank stoutly refuses to rationalize the strange ways of God’s mercy, to assume that it is directed by the church: “For goodness’ sake, Mrs. Scobie, don’t imagine you – or I – know a thing about God’s mercy” (272). He points out that God is more generous and liberal than he is thought to be. And if Louise can no longer cherish any bitterness against Scobie why would not God epitomizing infinite goodness be able to condone his sins? Infact God’s mercy is “not strained” and can shower upon a sinner even in the absence of repentance.

Moreover we should not lose sight of “the redemptive power of a sinner’s love and sacrifice” (Kulshrestha 110). N. Sankaran argues that Scobie would not be damned because “love was the driving spirit of his misguided activities” (142). It is worth mentioning in this context that Scobie ceases to feel any physical attraction towards Louise as the nature of his love is unselfish and philanthropic. And Mesnet’s exploration of the nature of his love as he approaches death rules out the presence of pride in it:

After all, when a man knows that he is dying in a few moments, sexual love has itself become completely altruistic – pride can no longer enter into it, nor can the hope of receiving or giving pleasure; it is love, pure and simple, and therefore, there must be some confusion in the mind as to the object of love. (89)
Scobie's last words "Dear God, I love ..." bears a mark of ambiguity as it is not clear whom he loves. But it may be interpreted in the light of Mesnet's comment as an evidence of the altruistic nature of his love. Scobie remains inconclusive regarding the object of his love as it is not directed towards any particular human being. It encompasses the whole of humanity compelling him to ignore his duties as a Roman Catholic.

Regarding Scobie's pity John Atkins comments:

Pity led to a stunning of the truth and a retreat in to cowardice.
It blasted a breach through his integrity ... It finally destroyed him, for there was a chain leading back directly from the final act, his suicide, to his first surrender to pity, expended on his wife. (165)

But it seems that his pity is an expression of his charity though it leads him to transgress the ethics of Roman Catholicism. And when he gets ready to sacrifice his peace for the sake of the six year old child, a victim of the ship-wreck his spirit of self-crucification no longer remains a mere manifestation of pity. It becomes an expression of pure love as he loses in return the very peace, he so earnestly longs for.

In so far as attainment of heaven is concerned it is man's relation with God that carries pivotal importance in Greene's novels. And we are bound to agree with what Father Rank tells Louise: "... I think, from what I saw of him, that he really loved God" (272).
Scobie can not go on committing Eucharistic blasphemy for ever insulting and hurting God on every occasion:

He had a sudden picture before his eyes of a bleeding face, of eyes closed by the continuous shower of blows: the punch – drunk head of God reeling sideways. (237)

His deep love and concern for God which leads him to commit suicide becomes evident when he says:

O God, I am the only guilty one because I've known the answers all the time. I've preferred to give you pain rather than give pain to Helen or my wife because I can't observe your suffering. I can only imagine it. But there are limit to what I can do to you – or them. I can't desert either of them while I'm alive, but I can die and remove myself from their blood stream. They are ill with me and I can cure them. And you too, God – you are ill with me. I can't go on month after month, insulting You. I can't face coming up to the altar at Christmas – your birthday feast – and taking your body and blood for the sake of a lie. I can't do that. You'll be better off if you lose me once and for all. (258)

His own salvation does not matter to him. His primary concern is to save God from the suffering, he is inflicting on Him:
I know what I'm doing. I'm not pleading for mercy. I am going to damn myself, whatever that means. I've longed for peace and I'm never going to know peace again. But you'll be at peace when I am out of your reach. It will be no use then sweeping the floor to find me or searching for me over the mountains. You'll be able to forget me, God, for eternity. (258)

Infact we can not overlook Peguy’s apophthegm used as the epigraph to the novel:

The sinner is at the heart of Christianity ... None is so competent in the matter of Christianity as the sinner. None unless it is a saint.

There is indeed something Christ-like in Scobie’s act of self-immolation as The New Testament declares:

They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners. (St. Mark 2:17)

Scobie, always taking care of the suffering humanity, thus treads the path shown by Jesus.

Scobie remarks “How desperately God must love” and he is also desperate in his love. His readiness to court damnation for the sake of others amply testifies his desperation while loving the unfortunate and the miserable. He prays: “Make me put my own soul first. Give me trust in your
mercy to the one I abandon" (220). But he knows that this is an impossibility as he can not give up his self-assumed role as a reliever of human agony. So he continues: 'If instead I should abandon you, punish me but let others get some happiness" (220). And finally if Scobie is a Christ-like figure he has Wilson to assume the role of Judas. We have discussed in chapter III how Wilson motivated by his selfish personal interests – his feeling of love towards Louise, Scobie's wife, leaves no stone unturned to humiliate Scobie and to alienate him from Louise, though Scobie has always been generous and sympathetic towards him.

Thus we find that Scobie bearing his cross – the task of alleviating the miseries of his fellow human beings, unable to take care of themselves, leads a life of suffering love. His deep love for the fellow human beings reminds us of the words of *The New Testament*:

> We know that we have passed from death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death .... Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

> But who so hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? ' (1John 3 : 14 - 17)
Scobie's spirit of self-sacrifice – the willingness to embrace damnation for others may be traced back to the following lines of the Romans:

For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my Kinsmen according to the flesh. (Romans 9:3)

And it is virtues like charity and compassion as well as acts of benevolence that seem to lead man towards salvation. In the words of William R. Mueller:

The ultimate test of any human action is whether it was occasioned by man's surrender of himself in love to others; the ultimate test of a man's sanctity is his possession of the gift of agape, the gift to love others as God loves him. (151)

We have already discussed how Scobie harbours despair. But we should remember that it is not a sense of evil or dislike of God but his genuine concern for the sufferers and above all his love for the Divine Being whom he hurts because of his Eucharistic blasphemy, that make him a victim of despair. What R.W.B. Leurs says is very relevant in this context:

Despair is the price one pays for setting oneself an impossible aim. It is, one is told, the unforgivable sin, but it is a sin the corrupt or evil man never practises. He always has hope. He never reaches the freezing-point of knowing absolute failure. Only the man of goodwill carries always in his heart this capacity for damnation. (241)
Scobie indeed sins and as a consequence he loses the peace of his mind. In fact he suffers hell on earth. What Scobie says to Helen is therefore worth mentioning here:

And then against all the teaching of the Church, one has the conviction that love – any kind of love – does deserve a bit of mercy. One will pay, of course, pay terribly, but I don’t believe one will pay for ever. (210)

So we can conclude that Scobie in spite of his mortal sin may skip perdition and attain salvation – find light at the end of the dark tunnel, by virtue of his self-effacing and all-encompassing love which paradoxically prompts his disobedience to divine law.

The End of the Affair portrays Sarah’s odyssey from one extreme to another – from “physical lust” to “metaphysical love” (Sankaran 55), from a lustful woman committed to debauchery to a saint cherishing virtues, Christian in the true sense of the term. “The key changes from the familiar minor to an unfamiliar major, from the unmaking of a mistress to the making of a saint” simply highlight the glory of suffering love and the unfathomable depth of divine mercy (“The End of the Affair” 4).

We have already discussed in Chapter IV how Sarah a licentious and unscrupulous woman makes a deal with God that if he saves her lover Bendrix from death, she will start believing in God and cease to
see Bendrix. This contact leads to the erosion of Sarah's old self - the lustful and the lascivious one, under the divine influence, which reminds us of Father Callifer in *The Potting Shed*, one of Greene's plays. Father Callifer offers his faith, his most precious possession to God, in exchange of the life of James, his nephew. Thus divine influence makes inroads in Sarah's life silently and stealthily like a pilferer:

> I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shall not know what hour I will come upon thee (Revelation 3:3).

But it would be unjustified to overlook the significance of the carnal love. Infact it prepared the ground for divine love. Sarah would perhaps never realize the nature of God's all-encompassing love if she did not love Bendrix. Sarah in her infidelity and dissoluteness however defied all norms of morality remaining quite unaware of her spiritual sterility. De Vitis aptly points out in this context:

Sarah refuses to speak of the permanence of their love when Bendrix offers her to do so; yet she often surprises him by telling him that she loves him, more than any man she has ever known .... There had been other men before Bendrix, and he reasons that there will be others after him. She 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 a shadow of a greater lover. In her complete abandonment to her lover she reckons only on the gratification of her physical passions; she does not realize the emptiness of her spiritual self. (109)

But the realization that perfect human love is the shadow of a divine love gradually dawns on her as she remarks:

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? (147).

Sarah admits that her divine love flowers out of human lust in her letter to Bendrix:

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, but you cleared the way yourself. (178)

This is reminiscent of the following lines of The Devil's Advocate by Morris L. West where Giaemo Nerone, the wrong doer who is in love with Nina Sanduzzi, finds the origin of the divine passion in his experience of the carnal love:
The act of love is, like the act of faith, a surrender; and I believe that the one conditions the other ... But even in sin, the act of love – done with love – is shadowed with divinity. Its conformity may be at fault; but its nature is not altered, and its nature is creative, communicative, splendid in surrender .... It was in the splendour of my surrender to Nina and hers to me, that I first understood how a man might surrender himself to God – if a God existed. The moment of love is a moment of union – of body and spirit – and the act of faith is mutual and implicit. (274)

Sarah undertakes a spiritual odyssey as the awareness of the divine love gradually comes into existence in her mind. This has close parallel to the journey of the soul seeking union with God, described by St. John of the cross in his *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*.

Sarah is torn by the conflict between the demands of flesh – the old corrupt carnal passion and faith defining her new identity. What St. Paul says is very relevant in this context:

> For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh and these are contrary one to the other; so that ye can not do the things that ye would. (Galatians 5:17)
The awakening of faith results in the absence of all sensual pleasures – the dark night of the soul. St. John explains that the journey of the soul to the divine union is called night for three reasons:

We may say that there are three reasons for which this journey made by the soul to union with God is called night. The first has to do with the point from which the soul goes forth, for it has gradually to deprive itself of desire of all the worldly things which it possessed, by denying them to itself; the which denial and rejection are, as it were, night to all the senses of man. The second reason has to do with the mean, or the road along which the soul must travel to this union – that is, faith, which is likewise as dark as night to the understanding. The third has to do with the point to which it travels – namely, God, who, equally, is dark night to the soul in this life. These three nights pass through the soul – or, rather the soul must pass through them – in order that it may come to divine union with God. (The Complete Works 19-20)

He also describes the experience of the soul as it enters a period of purgation:

The sensual part is purified in aridities, the faculties in emptiness of their powers, and the spirit in thick darkness. (The Dark Night 91)
Sarah also finds herself abandoned and deprived of sensual pleasures. She naturally becomes rebellious. She admits:

I feel a terrible insecurity if a man turns on me, if I lose a friend. I do not even want to lose a husband. I want everything all the time, everywhere. I'm afraid of the desert. God loves you, they say in the churches; God is everything. People who believe that don't need admiration, they don't need to sleep with a man, they feel safe. But I can't invent a belief. (107-08)

She experiences agony and despair as her soul at this stage remains solely concerned with its own wretchedness and suffering. Being blind to the glory of the divine love she asserts: "You can't have a merciful God & this despair" (110).

Sarah in despair makes many attempts to break her pledge, for instance, she meets Richard Smythe an atheist but his lectures instead of weakening her belief in Divine Being strengthens it further:

I had gone to him to rid me of a superstition, but every time I went his fanatism fixed the superstition deeper. (137)

A desperate Sarah finds no joy in life as her belief in Divine Being gets strengthened:

I said to God 'so that's it. I begin to believe in you, and if I believe in you I shall hate you. I have free will to break my
promise, haven't I, but I haven't the power to gain anything from breaking it. (118)

St. John of the Cross also describes this joyless state of mind as an essential condition for purgation:

For when God brings the soul into the dark night in order to wean it from sweetness and to purge the desire of sense, He does not allow it to find sweetness of comfort anywhere.

(The Dark Night 37)

Sarah tries to contact Bendrix repeatedly but the Divine Lover foils all her attempts, for example, Bendrix can not kiss her when they meet again because of her fit of coughing.

A tired and exhausted Sarah understands the futility of her attempts against an infinitely powerful divine will. She can not rule out the existence of the Divine Being and finds herself in the grip of an unshakable faith:

I believe there's a God – I believe the whole bag of tricks; there's nothing I don't believe; they could subdivide the Trinity into a dozen parts and I'd believe. They could dig up records that proved Christ had been invented by Pilate to get himself promoted, and I'd believe just the same. I've caught belief like a disease. 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. (178)

Sarah gradually discovers the joy in surrendering herself to God. God takes away her corrupt and selfish human love and offers her "agape" – "God's special love and man's response to it as inspired and energised by it" (Arcy 352). Sarah accepts this offer and displays a truly Christian Charity – the most liberal manifestation of love. She therefore prays to God to give Bendrix peace:

But you are too good to me. When I ask you for pain, you give me peace. Give it [to] him too. Give him my peace – he needs it more. (235)

Love of God makes Sarah quite oblivious to her own pains and misery. She shows her willingness to share the burden of suffering humanity:

Let me think of the strawberry mark on Richard's cheek. Let me see Henry's face with the tears falling. Let me forget me ... 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 (143-144).
In relieving the pain of others she discovers the grace of God. Sarah like the Christian saints who used to kiss the leper’s sores, kisses the strawberry mark on Smythe’s face and observes:

I am kissing pain and pain belongs to you as happiness never does. I love you in your pain .... How good you are. you might have killed us with happiness, but you let us be with you in pain. (147)

Her deep compassion for the wretched and the miserable is not bereft of a Christ like humility. She humbly confesses to God:

All my life I’ve tried to live in that illusion – a soothing drug that allows me to forget that I’m a bitch and a fake. But what you are supposed to love then in the bitch and the fake?

Where do you find that immortal soul they talked about?(178)

The novel also illustrates the value of suffering in so far as purgation is concerned. Sarah suffers terribly in “the dark night of the soul” but it cleanses her mind of all sensual desires and prepares her for a greater love – the love of Divine Being.

Sarah brings Bendrix on the verge of recognition of the truths, he so long intended to skip – the role of divine providence in man’s life. We have already discussed in Chapter-IV how Bendrix turns into a devil’s advocate and nurtures a hatred against Him for losing Sarah to Him. But this hatred brings him closer to God as he admits:
I mustn't be like Richard Smythe, I mustn't hate, for if I were really to hate I would believe, and if I were to believe, what a triumph for you and her. (166-67)

Indeed an intense dislike of God is probably better than being an atheist, a non-believer in His existence. As the anonymous critic of Time remarks:

The end of the affair, he [Greene] implies, can only be the beginning of another. And this affair will have no end. Better to hate God, much better, says Greene than not to know Him at all. For you can hate God only when you are in pain and if you can stand the pain without drugs. It may turn it into love. ("The End of the Affair" 4)

Bendrix desperately resists all the attempts of God to wean him away. He rules out the miracles as mere coincidences as he is afraid that in believing God he would lose his identity — his sensual self:

Loving you [Sarah] I had no appetite for food, I felt no lust for any other woman, but loving Him there'd be no pleasure in anything at all with Him away. I'd even lose my work, I'd cease to be Bendrix. Sarah, I'm afraid. (225)

Actually in his heart of hearts Bendrix apprehends that he can no longer ignore the place of God in the scheme of life as "in the life of the woman
whom he loved supernature had invaded—nature, transcendence immanence, God man". (Evans 46-47)

Bendrix thus undergoes a gradual transformation as he is compelled to believe in God though he makes impotent attempts to defy Him. He says:

For if this God exists, I thought, and even if you [Sarah]—with your lust and 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. (235-36)

Bendrix declines to "leap" but it appears that God is not ready to leave Bendrix alone. After all his state of mind may lead him to this direction as Herbert Haber points out:

Bendrix finds himself in that exhausted state that conduces to the irrational leap to faith, that state of anxiety-ridden impatience with reason and consciousness, with self in short, which kierkegeard called the 'sickness unto death'. (Evans131)
So after a temporary sojourn it seems that he will embrace the visitation of the divine grace. In fact his prayer to God at the end of the novel aptly reflects his state of mind:

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 forever. (237)

In his mood of weary dejection Bendrix comes closer to Job. Job, suffering from pain and agony, reflects the same feeling:

Are not my days few? Cease then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little. (Job 10:20)

A saint is supposed to exercise a profound influence on the lives of ordinary human beings and ensure the visitation of the divine grace. Sarah's influence also brings about a significant change in Bendrix. From a doubtful jealous lover he changes into a humble believer, purged of his hatred and excessive pride, which amply testifies Sarah's saintliness.

Some critics have taken exception to Greene's use of miracles in the novel. Walter Allen for example observes:

For obvious reasons, few novelists have taken the working of divine grace as their subject. Greene succeeds up to a point and then fails attempting too much .... Coincidence in fiction is less convincing the more often it is involved. There comes
a point .... when the novel is overlaid by the parable, an element that is outside literature, in that it cannot be judged in literacy terms, takes over. (Tradition and Dream 206-07)

A non-catholic, they argue can not easily accept the coincidences as miracles – the proof of Sarah's sanctification. But since Greene is dealing with the workings of divine grace in man's life, the very religious basis of the novel demands some proof which would convince a non-believer like Bendrix of the capabilities of God. Greene, himself a Catholic, finds them as proofs of God's presence and "it is impertinent to tell him that they are not permissible" (Atkins 201).

But it is noteworthy that miracles serve not as source but as mere evidences of Sarah's sanctification. Like the Whisky Priest in The Power and the Glory Sarah, a lascivious woman turns into a saint by virtue of her life of suffering love, featuring the spirit of self-surrender, charity and humility. Of course Sarah's carnal passions, as we have already discussed, helps her to realize the full significance of the divine love. But it is her all-encompassing love and unflinching belief in God that ultimately counts in so far as her turning into a saint is concerned. Thus the Bible firmly asserts the value of faith:

I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. (St. John 11:25-26)
Infact Hindu Scriptures also guarantee the eternal life of a believer as Bhagavad Gita assures:

Even if the most sinful worship Me, with undivided heart he too must be accounted righteous, for he hath rightly resolved. Speedily he becometh dutiful and goeth to eternal peace, O Kaunteya, know thou for certain that my devotee perisheth never. (Ninth Discourse, verses 30-31).

Sarah's sanctification confirms Greene's impatience with the established precepts of Roman Catholicism. Female saints are generally found to be virgins. Here Sarah, not a virgin but an adulterous and married woman achieves sanctification as she displays Christ like humility and charity. Again Sarah, who ultimately becomes a saint, firmly denounces the role of the priests as intermediary when the priest informs her that she has to give up her faith in Roman Catholicism if she marries her lover Bendrix in her husband's lifetime:

I thought, to hell with the whole lot of them and I walked out of the room where I was seeing him, and I slammed the door to show what I thought of the priests. They are between us and God, I thought; God has more mercy (178).

Thus The End of the Affair shows, what Greene intends to display in The Power and the Glory, The Heart of the Matter and possibly even in Brighton Rock, precisely the attainment of salvation and sometimes
even sainthood by quite unlikely characters. This only affirms Greene's faith in the mysterious ways of the Divine Being. We can conclude with the words of The Old Testament:

Jehovah is a killer and a pre-server of life,
A Bringer down to She'ol and He brings up Jehovah is an Impoverisher and an Enricher,
An Abaser; also an Exalter,
A Raiser of a lowly one from the dust; (Samuel 2:6-7)