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David Prather  
*Seton Hall University*

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**Graham Greene's Catholic Conscience in**  
*The Heart of the Matter & The End of the Affair*

**David Prather**

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the**  
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*James B. Kindrott*  
Thesis Mentor

*Paul W. Wagoner*  
Second Reader

Graham Greene is acknowledged as a Catholic writer, though he sees himself as a writer who happens to be a Catholic. There is a distinct difference of views between the two phrases. There are many Catholics who believe that “the function of the Catholic writer [is] to produce only advertising brochures setting out the attractive terms the advantages of Church membership” (Waugh 96). According to Waugh’s definition of a Catholic, the job of the Catholic writer is to show the world why everyone should be Catholic. Greene wrote his novels, not as a Catholic but as a writer, to convey a story which incorporated aspects of the Catholic life such as church, God and sin. However the stories do not always follow the doctrine of the church, and they do not always show the positive aspects of Catholic life. Greene’s novels show people at their basest and in their most reviled states but they are all tempered with a Catholic conscience; a conscience that sets the characters on a path of internal struggle and ultimately understanding and faith.

Conscience is described by the Catechism of the Catholic Church as:

a law which he [man] has not laid upon himself but which he must obey. Its voice, ever calling him to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, sounds in his heart at the right moment...For man has in his heart a law inscribed by God...His conscience is man’s most secret core and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths. (490)

The Catholic conscience begins with a belief in God and builds upon the teachings of Christ. Greene’s belief in God is the beginning of his Catholic conscience. In *The Heart of the Matter* and *The End of the Affair* Graham Greene’s Catholic conscience can be seen working in the characters; though they question God, they doubt, and they suffer, the protagonists know what is right. And when they transgress they know it

because through it all God is the backdrop that holds the novels together. The novels as they are would not exist without the presence of God interlaced through them; a latticework that cannot be seen but, unseen, holds the entirety together.

Evelyn Waugh was one of Greene's contemporaries who praised *The Heart of the Matter*. Waugh said of Greene, upon the publication of *The Heart of the Matter*, "among contemporary writers one can say without affectation that his breaking silence with a new serious novel is a literary 'event'" (95). Though Waugh praises Greene's novel he acknowledges the controversy that will appear because of the moral ambiguities inherent in Major Scobie, a man who commits suicide. "There are loyal Catholics here and in America," Waugh writes, "...To them this profoundly reverent book will seem a scandal. For it not only portrays Catholics as unlikable human beings but shows them as tortured by their Faith. It will be the object of controversy and perhaps even condemnation" (Waugh 96). A work can only engender controversy when it tackles a subject matter which engages the reader in a dialogue and asks them to come to their own conclusions. When the characters become real, as they do in Graham Greene's novels, they live on in the minds of the reader, and the questions that arise in their lives are questions we must answer for ourselves.

Evelyn Waugh's remark regarding *The Heart of the Matter* was made with the knowledge that there were going to be people who saw Greene's novel as an attack on religion because it did not follow the prerequisite of only stating the positive aspects of the Church. Waugh is quite aware of the difference between a Catholic writer and the writer who happens to be a Catholic and he praises Greene for a work that he believes will turn people towards religion through its realistic portrayal of suffering.

In "Scobie Reconsidered: A Casualty of Catholicism or Conscience?" Lisa Crumley Bierman remarks that Scobie "is not constrained or condemned by any kind of religious imposition as much as he is a victim of his own conscience, which includes but is not limited to traditional elements of Catholicism" (65). It is his conscience fueled by elements of Catholicism which drives Scobie. His decisions are made through his conscience and while he has a belief in God his Catholic conscience is not as developed as it should be for a complete understanding of the moral decisions he faces. Where he shows compassion, it turns to a romantic encounter. He believes this cannot be wrong because it helps the young widow to overcome her grief, yet, he also knows that it is against his Catholic doctrine as it involves adultery. Scobie errs in his good intentions because of his fear of hurting other people's feelings. This quandary of Scobie's carries psychological weight because Graham Greene dealt with the very same situation.

Graham Greene's Catholic influence was obvious early. In 1948 Graham Greene had been a published writer for twenty-three years with fifteen novels completed, including *The Heart of the Matter*. With the publication of *The Heart of the Matter*, his fifteenth, came the knowledge that Greene could make a living as a novelist. Greene's previous novels, though acknowledged as literary ingenuity, failed to reach as wide an audience as *The Heart of the Matter*. His earlier literary success, *The Power and the Glory*, published during the height of World War II, failed to be a commercial success due to its unfortunate release date. It was not advertised as much and the print run was much smaller due to the restrictions on paper during the war. Kenneth Allott, in his book *The Art of Graham Greene* (published in 1951),

recognized that “the problem of reconciling the existence of suffering with an omnipotent and merciful providence is now raised explicitly for the first time” (217) in *The Heart of the Matter*. This is a prominent theme Greene would use throughout his literary career. Greene continues this idea in his next work, *The End of the Affair*.

With the publication of *The End of the Affair* in 1951 Greene completes his triumvirate. Along with *The Power and the Glory* and *The Heart of the Matter* many see Greene’s struggle with the idea of good and evil, morality, God and conscience come to the forefront. Greene deals with God more directly than ever before. God becomes another character in the novel; He is talked to and questioned and even deprecated. Later we will see the passage which will question the destination of Major Scobie’s soul, when Father Rank acknowledges the unknowable nature of the soul.

Paul O’Prey, in his book *A Reader’s Guide to Graham Greene*, has seen Greene’s Catholic novels “explore situations which reveal the conflict between the rigidity of the Church’s rules...” (82). Greene is always questioning “text-book moral theology which...has turned religion ‘into a kind of police system’” (83). Greene questions the basic principles of Catholicism while maintaining his faith. He demonstrates that one need not be confined to theological rigidity; one can question the mandates of the church and still retain a belief in God. Greene distrusted theologians in general and this can be seen also in the characters Greene creates.

The questions Greene raises in his novels have been seen by some to point to Greene’s “surrendering to skepticism and abandoning his faith,” but Joseph Pearce, in his book *Literary Converts*, believes, “if anything he surrendered to faith without abandoning his skepticism.” Pearce believes Greene never lost his faith, though it may

have waned at times in his life. When Graham Greene died he still professed himself Catholic; this in itself should be proof of his Catholic status.

Pearce returns to Greene later in his book stating, “Greene spent most of the century as a Catholic, having embraced the faith as a young man in 1926, but was continually and restlessly searching for aspects of the truth outside the church” (410). Greene’s search for the truth outside the church can be recognized in *The Heart of the Matter* and in *The End of the Affair*. In these two novels Greene has shown that the world is not black and white. Absolutes never work in the real world. In a “perfect” world absolutes would be a reality; there would also never be hunger, poverty, and no one would covet another’s property, or wife.

Greene didn’t live in a perfect world and neither do his characters, though we know Greene longed for peace in his life just as Scobie longs for peace. We can see Greene speaking through Scobie during Mass:

Peace seemed to him the most beautiful word in the language:  
My peace I give you, my peace I leave with you: O Lamb of God,  
who takest away the sins of the world, grant us thy peace. In the  
Mass he pressed his fingers to his eyes to keep the tears of  
longing in. (48)

This scene highlights Scobie’s desires. His supreme desire is for peace. Peace in all its aspects. Peace is the sole comforting thought in Scobie’s mind, and it is the one thing that will elude him.

Scobie experiences another attack on his conscience later in the novel while attending Mass with his wife. As the priest says, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you,” Scobie sees “the old black women shuffling up towards the altar rail, a few soldiers, an aircraft mechanic, one of his own policemen, a clerk from the bank:



they move sedately towards peace, and Scobie felt an envy of their simplicity, their goodness” (199). Scobie sees the other parishioners as good people; better people than himself. He doesn’t know anything about their personal lives, but he supposes them to be good people who “move sedately towards peace” as they prepare to receive the Eucharist. This is another moment when Greene’s Catholic conscience shows in the novel. It is easy to imagine Greene himself in church, looking upon the other parishioners, knowing of his own guilt in the eyes of the Church, and supposing that other people are experiencing the peace for which he longs. The world is filled with people wishing the same thing.

In Scobie’s desire for peace he reflects on the multiplicity declinations for the word peace, in Latin: “*Pax, pacis, pacem*: all the declinations of the word “peace” drummed on his ears through the Mass. He thought: I have left even the hope of peace for ever” (198-99). Scobie has slipped into a depression and feels that peace will never come to him again. Scobie’s state, his lack of peace, could be seen as something he willed away. Earlier in the novel Scobie sits at the bedside of a dying girl:

When he looked at the child, he saw a white communion veil over her head: it was a trick of the light on the mosquito net and a trick of his own mind. He put his head in his hands and wouldn’t look. He had been in Africa when his own child died. He had always thanked God that he had missed that. It seemed fair after all that one never really missed a thing. To be a human being one had to drink the cup. If one were lucky on one day, or cowardly on another, it was presented on a third occasion...He thought: this is what parents feel year in and year out, and I am shrinking from a few minutes of it. They see their children dying slowly every hour they live. He prayed again, “Father, look after her.

Give her peace.”... “Father,” he prayed, “give her peace. Take away my peace for ever, but give her peace.” (108)

Scobie prays for God to give his peace to the girl. This theme occupied Greene’s mind throughout his life. The idea of peace surfaces again in *The End of the Affair* with Sarah in Scobie’s place, asking God for his intervention. The little girl reminds Scobie of his own child’s death, which he did not witness, and he sacrifices his own peace for the girl’s peace. When the girl dies, she is taken to the Lord; she has attained peace. If we see this moment as God granting Scobie’s prayer then we know that Scobie will never find peace. Scobie’s lament for peace will continue though he gave it away willingly to a young girl who suffered and found peace.

Scobie is often seen as a reflection of Greene; and many of the longings, desires and fears Scobie has can be viewed as a reflection of Greene. *The Heart of the Matter* and *The End of the Affair* reflect Greene’s thoughts so readily because of the subject matter he deals with which mirrors Greene’s life so abundantly. Robert Hoskins recognizes the link between Graham Greene and his characters and the reoccurring motif of adultery in his work *Graham Green: An Approach to the Novels*:

*The Heart of the Matter* is also the first extended treatment of adultery in a Greene novel, and as such it introduces a major subject of his second-phase novels: five of the next seven books will deal with adultery, a circumstance that points to an inevitable and unhappy link between the writer and his characters, a link that may account for the problematic nature of his treatment of pity in *The Heart of the Matter*. (115)

The morally corrupt situation that Scobie goes through, specifically adultery, resonates with Graham Greene’s own life. Norman Sherry’s three volume biography highlights the many correlations to Greene’s own life in *The Heart of the Matter* and

in *The End of the Affair*. At the beginning of the novel Greene states that “no character in this book is based on that of a living person”. We learn from Sherry’s biography of Graham Greene that these two novels developed during “the most emotionally wrenching period of his life.” And that:

Catherine Walston dominated his thoughts for over a decade and her influence was paramount during his great creative period. She was the source of his creativity, for *The Heart of the Matter* would not have been completed without her and *The End of the Affair* would not have been started. (219)

One of Greene’s overarching themes in the two novels is that of Love, which comes from God, and anything that comes from God cannot be evil or wrong no matter where it leads, even if it leads one into adultery. Scobie is not an evil character, he knows right from wrong. He only begins to skirt the fringes of the law and enter into compromising ventures, such as receiving a loan from Yusef, in his desire to protect his wife. Every criminal activity Scobie goes into is promoted, not by self-interest, but to see his wife happy. It could be said that Scobie’s motives are influenced by self-interest because Scobie wants his wife to leave him in peace, a peace which will be seen to have been voluntarily given up. We would like to believe in Scobie’s goodwill; and if self-interest is a motive for Scobie, we would like to believe it is a secondary to his wife’s peace of mind. The main reason for the actions Scobie takes in the novel emanate from Scobie’s desire to see to his wife comfortable and at ease. Scobie’s main concern is not to cause his wife any pain, and after he begins his affair with Helen, not to cause any pain for Helen either. In the end he takes his own life in order to spare the two women any more pain from himself.

While this is a mortal sin in the eyes of the church, Greene supplies a gray area of culpability.

*The End of the Affair* was published in 1951 and it once again deals with the same issues as *The Heart of the Matter*. Three years have passed since *The Heart of the Matter*, but Greene has still found no resolution to the moral dilemma he sees within society. *The End of the Affair* can be seen as Greene's vindication for his own lifestyle. Greene, like the narrator of *The End of the Affair*, was involved with a married woman. The novel is dedicated to Catherine Walston, his mistress, "and is one of the most personal of Greene's books. He would later refer to difficulty he had 'in my private life', but the book is far more complex than even Greene realized at the time. He was certainly driven to the point of breakdown trying to resolve personal problems and Catherine Walston was at the heart of them" (West 134). While the novel is based partly on Greene's first affair with Dorothy Glover, the novel would not have been written without the influence of Catherine Walston.

Greene's voice can be seen in Bendrix just as it can be seen in Scobie. These characters provide a conduit for Greene to express his own feelings and to work out a catharsis in the process. Ian Gregor has said, "it is not always easy to distinguish Bendrix speaking from Greene speaking through him" (116). This fusion of conscience and personality is understandable when we realize the depth of Greene's personal connection to the events in the novel. If Greene had not been involved with Catherine Walston the novel would never have been written, as stated earlier. Many of the moral problems the characters encounter are ones Greene himself would have

suffered through. As Greene delves into the lives of his characters, infusing them with his own questions and dilemmas, he creates a reality in the stories which speak to people. Sherry notes that there have been sincere conversions to Catholicism through the Greene's novels. This happens because of the truth that is found in the characters. They have real dilemmas and real worries. And as Greene fleshes them out the reader too comes to an understanding of a merciful and loving God.

Greene depicts Sarah in *The End of the Affair* as a woman who comes to a belief in God, though this does not mean she begins to follow the strict regulations of the church. The realization that she is religious does not become apparent until later in the novel when Bendrix is reading through her journal. Sarah does not feel guilt for her affair with Bendrix. Then why does she contemplate becoming a Catholic? She cannot confess regret for her affair, because she doesn't regret it. And without a sincere confession asking for forgiveness for a sin, in the eyes of the Church, she will not find salvation. Bendrix and Sarah's relationship is a tenuous one. Sarah is willing to do anything for Bendrix. Before their relationship ends through the prayer Sarah has answered by God, she only wants to make Bendrix feel secure in their relationship:

He is jealous of the past and the present and the future. His love is like a medieval chastity belt: only when he is there, with me, in me, does he feel safe. If only I could make him feel secure, then we could love peacefully, happily, not savagely, inordinately, and the desert would recede out of sight. For a lifetime perhaps. (91)

Sarah understands Bendrix better than he understands himself. She can see the way he looks at their relationship as something that will one day come to an end. Greene probably felt the same way regarding Catherine Walston. Bendrix, like Greene, enters

into a relationship that cannot become permanent when the woman involved is tied to another man. Bendrix says of his affair with Sarah:

I had come into this affair with my eyes open, knowing that one day this must end, and yet, when the sense of insecurity, the logical belief in the hopeless future descended like melancholia, I would badger her and badger her, as though I wanted to bring the future in now at the door, an unwanted and premature guest. My love and fear acted like conscience. If we had believed in sin, our behaviour would hardly have differed. (56)

Bendrix feared the future without Sarah and instead of cherishing the moment he let jealousy of a non-existent lover torment him. It is because of Bendrix's fear of the future which precipitates his actions towards Sarah. At the end of the novel Father Crompton makes a comment regarding time, "St Augustine asked where time came from. He said it came out of the future which didn't exist yet, into the present that had no duration, and went into the past which had ceased to exist. I don't think that we can understand time any better than a child" (179). This comment, said in reference to the message left in Sarah's book, can be applied to Bendrix. In his misunderstanding of time, fear of the future, he neglected the present. Bendrix also put too much significance on the past, which even Sarah had admitted to Bendrix did not matter as if it did not exist. Greene's relationship with Catherine Walston manifestes itself in the jealous paranoia of Bendrix. Bendrix's fear is Greene's fear. Anyone entering into a relationship with a married woman would suspect the woman involved of disloyalty. It is not difficult to imagine disloyalty when the woman is involved in an extra-marital affair in the first place.

Bendrix's relationship with Sarah would be a secure one if he only believed in her love. Bendrix never truly believed Sarah was in love with him until he reads her journal:

...what I found when I opened the journal was not what I was expecting. Hate and suspicion and envy had driven me so far away that I read her words like a declaration of love from a stranger. I had expected plenty of evidence against her—hadn't I so often caught her out in lies?—and now here in writing that I could believe, as I couldn't believe her voice, was the complete answer. For it was the last couple of pages I read first, and I read them again at the end to make sure. It's a strange thing to discover and to believe that you are loved, when you know that there is nothing in you for anybody but a parent or a God to love.  
(88)

His inability to believe in Sarah stems from his outlook of himself. Since Bendrix believes that there is nothing about himself for anybody to love, he cannot imagine Sarah can truly be in love with him. Bendrix projects his own feelings for himself onto Sarah. Where he sees himself as unlovable, Sarah sees him as unlovable in his eyes.

Greene returns to the idea of peace which he makes a major motif of in *The Heart of the Matter*. Scobie prays to God to give his peace to a dying girl and Sarah does the same for Bendrix. Sarah writes in her journal a prayer to God saying, "When I ask You for pain, You give me peace. Give it him too. Give him my peace—he needs it more" (123). At the end of the novel Bendrix does come to a kind of peace. At least he is on the path to peace; at the end he does not refuse to believe in God, he acknowledges God's existence, and that is the beginning of peace.

Greene is illustrating how there is a difference between organized religion and belief. One can be a believer without following the strictures of the church. We find at the conclusion of *The End of the Affair* that Sarah had a change in her religious beliefs. That is, she became a believer in God. As seen in Sarah's journal, she continually tells God that she's not sure if she believes in Him, but, by the very fact that she is talking to God presupposed a belief in Him. Sarah's constant battle with belief mirrors Greene's own. In an interview at eighty-four Greene said, "I pray at night...that a miracle should be done and that I *should* believe" (Pearce 421). This belief, or wanting to believe, can also be seen in Bendrix. It is in his tirade against God that we see this theme represented:

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 wanted something very simple and very easy: I wanted Sarah for a lifetime and You took her away. With Your great schemes You ruin our happiness like a harvester ruins a mouse's nest: I hate You, God, I hate You as though You existed. (191)

In Bendrix's diatribe he tells God that he hates Him as though He existed. How can hate be attributed to something that does not exist? Bendrix is acknowledging the existence of God by hating Him. Without the existence of God Bendrix's hate would have nothing to cling to; he would have to blame himself and that is not something Bendrix can do. It is easier to believe in an omnipresent and omnipotent being than blame oneself for the loss of love.



Bendrix is on the verge of admitting belief in God. Before he admits his hatred of God, which in itself presupposes a being to hate, Bendrix, in a monologue to the dead Sarah, says:

Oh, I'm as capable of belief as the next man. I would only have to shut the eyes of my mind for a long enough time, and I could believe that you came to Parkis's boy in the night with your touch that brings peace. Last month in the crematorium I asked you to save that girl from me and you pushed your mother between us – or so they might say. But if I start believing that, then I have to believe in your God. I'd have to love your God. I'd rather love the men you slept with. (181)

Mark Bosco recognizes Greene's penchant for making veiled innuendoes to God's existence. When referring to Greene's three major works in Catholicism Mark Bosco states, "Greene's use of Catholicism extends the psychological and moral crisis of characters beyond their own deception and treachery and places it in confrontation with the objective reality of God" (19). Bendrix admits the possibility that Sarah intervened on his behalf, but then quickly says, "or so they might say." Bendrix automatically pushes the conclusion away from himself. He will not allow the concept of Sarah's intervention to exist as his own thought. Bendrix automatically attributes the thought to be something "they might say". It can be seen that Bendrix, while denying he believes in God and the afterlife, believes Sarah has intervened for him but has trouble accepting it. He acknowledges the possibility but he does not yet have the faith to follow up his belief.

After Sarah's death her mother, Mrs. Bertram, tells Bendrix that Sarah was a Catholic. When he realizes that she had been baptized as a child he says, "I thought at

first you meant that Sarah was a real Catholic” (163). Sarah, though she didn’t realize that she had been baptized, was in the process of becoming Catholic. Her belief arose from a prayer she did not expect to be answered:

I knelt and put my head on the bed and wishing I could believe. Dear God, I said...make me believe. I can’t believe...I shut my eyes tight, and I pressed my nails into the palms of my hands until I could feel nothing but the pain, and I said, I *will* believe. Let him be alive, and I *will* believe. Give him a chance. Let him have his happiness. Do this and I’ll believe. But that wasn’t enough. It doesn’t hurt to believe. So I said, I love him and I’ll do anything if you’ll make him alive. I said very slowly, I’ll give him up for ever, 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, and then he came in at the door, and he was alive, and I thought now the agony of being without him starts, and I wished he was safely back dead again under the door.  
(95)

It is because of this newfound belief that she broke off the adulterous relationship with Bendrix, not because she believed that it was wrong, but, because God had answered her prayer. She told God that she would not see Bendrix again if He brought Bendrix back to life. She believed he was dead after the V2 attack when she found him under the broken door of the house. We can see the scene with Bendrix under the door as a miracle; Bendrix was dead and brought back to life. Sarah says she touched him and he felt like death. Bendrix’s version of the same scene precludes the miraculous. When Bendrix wakes up under the door and goes back upstairs he sees:

The door of my room was open and coming along the passage I could see Sarah; she had got off the bed and was crouched on the floor – from fear, I supposed. She looked absurdly young, like a naked child. I said, ‘That was a close one.’

She turned quickly and stared at me with fear. (72)

As seen from Sarah’s point of view the fear Bendrix sees in her face is understood. She knows in her heart that she will not see him again. Bendrix won’t find out the real reason for two years when he gets his hands on Sarah’s journal. Until then he believes Sarah found another lover when the truth is she made a bargain which her conscience will not allow her to break because of the love she has for Bendrix.

We can see the scene as a natural event; Bendrix was only knocked unconscious. A Catholic reader may view the scene as a miraculous event, while the non-Catholic reader will view the scene as Bendrix explains it; that he was only knocked unconscious. It all depends on the faith or belief ascribed to the author and what his intentions may be. If we see this scene as the first of Sarah’s miracles we can imagine a future of hope for Bendrix. There is a possibility that Bendrix will be led to faith. When we look closer at the scenes which implicate Sarah’s sainthood we can get a better indication of the future laid out for Bendrix, and, by extension, Greene.

Greene’s portrayal of Sarah’s Catholicism is not orthodox. Mark Bosco recognizes another ironic aspect of the novel. He notes that while critics “consider this the most Catholic of his novels because Sarah Miles spiritually ascends to a kind of sainthood, the novel is paradoxically devoid of any explicit Catholic consciousness in the characters” (58). Greene’s use of an “unbeliever” as storyteller gives the story a “religious point of view filtered through a highly unsympathetic consciousness,” (58) which adds credence to the miraculous in the novel. Sarah turns to God out of love for

Maurice Bendrix, not out of a love for God. Her belief in God is generated in the exact opposite from what is traditionally expected. The usual belief goes from the love of God to the love of his creation which includes man. Sarah goes from the love of Bendrix to an understanding or belief in God. She does not repent the adulterous relationship, she does not regret it; in fact, she continues to have adulterous relationships, but her newfound belief in God forgoes her relationship with Bendrix.

Ian Gregor ends his essay "The End of the Affair" from *Graham Greene: A Collection of Critical Essays* stating, "A report on *The End of the Affair* would conclude not that the art was too remote from life, but rather that there was a failure to distinguish between them" (125). It is this blending of art and life which makes the characters come alive. Greene infused his characters with aspects of himself and the women he loved, this gives them life and depth; a conscience.

Scobie can be seen as a precursor to Sarah Miles. Where Scobie's sainthood is not as bluntly portrayed, Sarah's is not. Sarah has miracles attributed to her, both in life and, more importantly for saints, in death; all she lacks is the Congregation for the Causes of Saints to convene and for the Pope to declare her venerable and beatified. Sarah subjects herself to "hell on earth" by depriving herself of Bendrix. She subjects herself to suffering, and another prerequisite for sainthood is suffering for your belief.

A similar theme runs through *The Heart of the Matter* giving it endurance in its resonance of the questioning of right and wrong, and the suffering endured by the protagonist. Greene's characters show us that suffering is a part of life. A common element of a saint's life is suffering; a life lived in denial of creature comforts. Sarah

and Scobie both deny comforts which they desire—Sarah denies the comfort she would find in Bendrix’s love, and Scobie denies himself a life of peace in his attempt to make others happy. It is through suffering that we can recognize the good in life and embrace it. It is through suffering that we come closer to God. Greene believes suffering is a necessary aspect of life. “Point me out the happy man,” Scobie says, “and I will point you out either extreme egotism, evil—or else an absolute ignorance” (107). Greene’s voice can clearly be seen coming out of Scobie. It is through the evil in the world that the good can be recognized and appreciated.

The book of Job is a perfect example of suffering leading to God. The more Job suffered the more he trusted in the Lord. Does this mean that Major Scobie’s suffering and suicide brings him to God? There have been some who say it has, that Scobie becomes a saint:

Scobie’s pity—certainly as it applies to the dying child for whom he gives up his own happiness, and possibly as it applies to his desire to prevent further suffering by Louise and Helen—may qualify him for sainthood. Scobie dies because he cannot reconcile the conduct of his life with his Catholic conscience. (Hoskins 115)

Waugh too speculated in his review of *The Heart of the Matter* that he believed Mr. Greene “thinks him [Scobie] a saint” though Greene himself denies that he intended it (100). Scobie can also be seen as a saintly man in his inability to recognizing virtue in himself:

...lying flat on his back under the net he began to pray. This also was a habit. He said the Our Father, the Hail Mary, and then, as sleep began to clog his lids, he added an Act of Contrition. It was a formality, not because he felt himself free from serious sin but

because it had never occurred to him that his life was important enough one way or another. He didn't drink, he didn't fornicate, he didn't even lie, but he never regarded this absence of sin as virtue. (99)

Soon Scobie will have events thrust upon him that lead him to drink, to fornicate, and to lie. Scobie does not intentionally seek out these things, he does them in order to protect, comfort and safeguard someone else. Scobie preserves his virtue even in the face of sin.

Another passage that Greene uses to try to persuade the reader that Scobie is not committing a brazen act of mortal sin is in his contemplation of suicide. Scobie asks:

But they taught also that God had sometimes broken his own laws, and was it less possible for him to put out a hand of forgiveness into the suicidal darkness than to have woken himself in the tomb, behind the stone? Christ had not been murdered—you couldn't murder God. Christ had killed himself: he had hung himself on the Cross as surely as Pemberton from the picture-rail. (167)

This passage is obviously an attempt by Scobie to justify his actions to himself and can be seen as Greene speaking of his own thoughts of suicide. Greene's wife, Vivien, felt that Greene's portrayal of Scobie's suicide was exactly the way he would do it. Vivien says, "he attempted it twice before I met him, and he has this obsession that writers show in their writing the way they will die, and this is a strong feeling with him. If he took an overdose, as he has often threatened, it would be like Scobie in *The Heart of the Matter...*" (Sherry 287). Scobie knows that suicide is a sin, but if Christ is guilty of suicide and was forgiven, there was a chance for Scobie as well. And if God can break

his own laws, laws the Church follows without question, He may break them for Scobie who believes he is helping others by dying.

We learn from Father Rank, who may be reiterating Greene's own belief, when he responds to Mrs. Scobie after the death of her husband. She believes that praying is useless for her husband since he committed suicide:

Father Rank clapped the cover of the diary to and said furiously,  
 "For goodness' sake, Mrs. Scobie, don't imagine you—or I—  
 know a thing about God's mercy."

"The Church says..."

"I know what the Church says. The Church knows all the rules.  
 But it doesn't know what goes on in a single human heart." (241-  
 42)

Greene is leaving Scobie's damnation open for interpretation. The Catholics that believe and follow the exact rules of the church will never accept the idea that Scobie is not a damned person. He committed suicide, and suicide is a sin no matter what the reasoning behind it. The people who believe in a God of infinite mercy, who believe but are not bound by the laws of the church, may come to another realization. When we view Scobie as a partial manifestation of Greene's own thoughts, Greene himself contemplated suicide many times, then we can suppose that Scobie is saved by his "sacrifice." In a sense Scobie is giving up his life that others may live.

Unlike Scobie, Sarah stands firm in her belief even though it goes against what she wishes for herself. It is through Sarah's steadfastness that she becomes a "saint". Two major miracles are attributed to Sarah at the end of the novel: the healing of a child with appendicitis and the curing of a strawberry birthmark. Sarah had kissed Smythe the rationalist preacher's birthmark shortly before her death, and it goes away.

Parkis's son was cured when he received a book of Sarah's. The book had a message in it, written when she was a child herself, saying:

When I was ill my mother gave me this book by Lang.  
 If any well person steals it he will get a great bang,  
 But if you are sick in bed  
 You can have it to read instead. (179)

Parkis's son had a dream that Sarah came to him, touched his side, and healed him. If the two miracles are acknowledged as fact then Sarah has passed the requirements for sainthood. A condition of sainthood is that the saint is in heaven intervening on behalf of humanity. This places Sarah in heaven and establishes God's existence.

Sarah can also be equated with Christ in a scene which brings to mind Christ's agony in the garden of Gethsemane. Christ, in his one moment of weakness, asks God, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me: yet, not as I will, but as you will" (Mt 26:39). Sarah, in her moment of weakness, says to God:

I'm not at peace any more. I just want him like I used to in the old days. I want to be eating sandwiches with him. I want to be drinking with him in a bar. 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. (124)

Sarah is able to overcome her weakness and denies herself Bendrix when she is given the chance. She takes refuge in a church and sends him away. Though there is the speculation that Sarah could possibly be a saint, nothing is ever confirmed.

Bendrix does not want to believe in God, and he will not let himself, though he knows that he is capable of belief; and it is in his denial that he substantiates God's existence. Bendrix is continually having a conversation with God, and all of his



conversations involve Bendrix telling God that he does not believe in Him. The very fact that Bendrix talks to God makes God a reality. Bendrix can and does imagine a God and the imagining makes Him real.

Mark Bosco refers to *The Heart of the Matter* and *The End of the Affair* as novels that “are character studies of persons who, though they resist heroic elevation or self-satisfying identification, come to an extreme situation that awakens their conscience and, in the process, humanizes them” (38). Bendrix is human in his grief and in his lashing out at God. Bendrix’s hate of God can be seen as a temporary one, his acceptance, with the help of Sarah as saint, is easily envisioned. Greene’s hope for salvation is reflected in *The End of the Affair*. Greene, like Bendrix, is questioning the limits of salvation, pushing the boundaries of God’s saving Grace, and offering another view of life.

In the examination of *The Heart of the Matter* and *The End of the Affair* we see a connection which has been engendered by the private life of Graham Greene. Greene’s life had a great influence on his writing. This can be seen in the human struggles which he subjects his characters to which give them life. Robert Hoskins makes a similar assessment in *Graham Greene: An Approach to the Novels*:

...it seems clear that the novel’s powerful expression of its protagonist’s emotional anguish over his unwillingness to cause suffering and pain for either of two women, his religious crisis over his betrayal of the teachings of his faith, and his longing for death as a means of escape—all of these come from the heart.  
(114-5)

Hoskins is referring to *The Heart of the Matter*, how the crises of the protagonist reflect Greene's own crises. In the development of *The Heart of the Matter* and *The End of the Affair* Greene has suffused both texts with his own longings, questions, sufferings and hopes. Greene's conscience speaks through him in the characters; they come alive in their struggles. Scobie's soul is never known and cannot be known; only God knows "what goes on in a single human heart." Though Scobie's actions may be misguided by a conscience that steers him to suicide, he seems to work as catharsis for Greene. As Scobie dies in the novel, Greene rises from the ashes, a modern day phoenix, to contemplate sanctity in his next novel.

Greene's last paragraph for *The End of the Affair* is an invective against God. Moments earlier Bendrix thinks about calling up a doctor and asking if a faith cure is possible; he changes his mind because "so long as one doesn't *know*, one can imagine innumerable cures" (191). This is yet another moment when Greene has Bendrix refuse to look into the possibility of God working in the world. Bendrix refuses again because he is afraid he will believe. Instead Bendrix says:

I wrote at the start that this was a record of hate, and walking there beside Henry towards the evening glass of beer, I found the one prayer that seemed to serve the winter mood: 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. (192)

Greene ends the novel with Bendrix once again praying to God; this time he does not tell God that he does not believe, he simply asks God to leave him alone, that he cannot learn to love. Bendrix has finally accepted God's existence. *The Heart of the Matter* ends with a similar notion of love:

Father Rank said, "It may seem an odd thing to say—when a man's as wrong as he was—but I think, from what I saw of him, that he really loved God."

She had denied just now that she felt any bitterness, but a little more of it drained out now like tears from exhausted ducts. "He certainly loved no one else," she said.

"And you may be in the right of it there too," Father Rank replied. (242)

Bendrix's final words tell us that he cannot learn to love, and Louise Scobie tells us that Scobie only loved God. The two characters' failures are that they do not love. They are contained inside themselves; they do not share themselves with others and like Greene they cannot establish personal relationship with others. Together the novels build upon each other. Greene's search for understanding is inherent in both novels as is his questioning outside of the confines of Catholicism which Greene understood to exist within himself. In order to try and come to terms with his own conscience Greene wrote about the adulterer. Greene tries to explain to himself how a believer in the Catholic Church can hold to opposing views and accept them both; accept the truth of the Catholic Church and the truth of his own heart. Though Greene's characters fail to measure up to the orthodox teachings of the church, just as Greene fails, his characters inspire others to the faith in their unwavering adherence of their hearts, their own conscience.

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