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## Theme of Sin, Salvation and Suffering in Graham Greene's The Heart of the Matter

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### Abstract

*There is no doubt in denying the fact that The Heart of the Matter is one of the powerful novels written by Graham Greene concerned with various themes like Catholicism guilt, suffering, death and salvation. The novel focuses on the internal and external struggle of man for liberation. Scobie is found weak in his personal life; but he was sincere and dedicated to his duty and at the end of his life, he may be said to have attained martyrdom. Scobie dies for the happiness and safety of others.*

Keywords : Roman Catholicism, Christ, Decline, Degeneration, Psychological, Psyche, Mental agony, Religious,

### Paper

*The Heart of the matter* is one of the three powerful novels written by Graham Greene within the compact framework of Roman Catholicism with all its attendant rituals and ceremonies. Albeit, the novel has variously been interpreted and discussed by different scholars and critics as per their own tastes, likes and dislikes, and angle of perception, but all agree that the novel is primarily concerned with the socio-spiritual decline and downfall of an exceptionally

honest and efficient man trapped in a degenerated corrupt society.

That means, the tragic downfall of the hero of the novel, Henry Scobie, is an artistic illustration of the undeserved and a natural demise of the innate goodness at the behest of the evil rampant in a sick and corrupt society of West Africa. The operational pace and the consequential impact of the evil is studied and assessed in terms of Roman Catholicism which is thoroughly interwoven within the socio-individual and psycho-spiritual matrix of the novel.

Though not a born catholic, Henry Scobie converts himself in to a Roman Catholicism to attain individual, familial, social and spiritual happiness in the form of his marriage with Louise. However, this quest for peace and happiness when stretched beyond normal limits, precipitates a crisis in the life of Scobie terminating in to the tragic downfall and death of the hero of the novel.

In other words, the nature and personality of Henry Scobie do not

partake of Roman Catholicism as just after his marriage, Scobie stops loving Louise, stops going to church for masses and confessions, starts making love to Helen Rolt in a blatant disregard to the dictates of the church.

That means, instead of facilitating a smooth and peaceful flow of life, Roman Catholicism becomes an obstruction in the realization of Scobie's search for happiness. It is because Scobie does not accept Roman Catholicism blindly and, being an ex-army officer, put every facet of Roman Catholicism to honest doubts and analytical exploration so much so that his close scrutiny of the church imitates its crumbling.

The whole of Scobie's personality is informed by his sense of pity and responsibility which, at the moral level, seeks of selfless love for others. He does not merely abet the unlawful activities indulged in by Yusuf, but also becomes an active accomplice of the smugglers when Scobie goes to hand over a packet of diamonds to the captain of Portuguese ship. It is also out of his sense of pity and responsibility that he decides to look after Helen Rolt who is a victim of ship-wreck where she loses her husband and happiness.

Scobie's immediate reaction at the sight of ship-wreck victims, particularly a six year old girl, is that of sympathy and disbelief because he could not reconcile

the image of benevolent god with the miserable plight of an innocent child as he prays to god to give happiness and peace to this little child whose condition has greatly been worsened when addressing to god, he says:

"Father, give her peace. Take away my peace forever, but give her peace".

The same sense of aesthetic attitude is expressed by Scobie in the church when he goes for a confession. The priest speaks the words of solace, but Scobie fails to find any relief and comfort as father rank says:

"This distrust in god by Scobie is circumstantial and situational which forces a man to waver".

The second most important analytical study of the Roman Catholicism and almighty god is made by Greene through Scobie's impulsive and extramarital extension of his feelings of pity and responsibility to Helen Rolt in the novel, but this love affair acquires a religious overtone when Scobie does not go to the church with Louise to participate in mass and communion without confession; and it assumes a sinful proportion when Scobie participates in masses and communion with a moral sin: on having been berated by Helen Rolt for his half-hearted sincerity in religion, Scobie equates Helen with god, even more

than god when in one of his letters he writes:

“My darling, I love you more than myself, more than my wife, more than god, I think I am trying very hard to tell the truth. I want more than anything in the world to make you happy. I love you. Forgive me”.

But, soon he curses himself for his impious act of bringing god in to this context and implores to him in distress when he says:

“O god, I have deserted you. Don't you desert me”.

However, the climax of this religio-spiritual affair of Scobie with Roman Catholic Church and god, reaches a flash point with the murder of Ali- his servant at Yusuf's hands which now makes the death and damnation of Scobie a certainty. In spite of his repeated attempts to hammer out a re-approachment with god, Scobie fails to tame, prune and overcome his inquisitive nature and restless spirit and, with the result of it, he arrives at a dead-lock that forces him to choose either the happiness of Louise and Helen, or his personal well being, and he decides in the favour of the former with a view to provide them happiness at his own cost. So, the concluding suicide, the death of Henry Scobie, is in tune and harmony with the Roman Catholic church, and the terror makes

this novel as a spiritual drama of sin, suicide, salvation.

Consequently, Scobie manages his death in such a fashion that it must look like a natural death as he feels that Jesus Christ also committed suicide, because we can never kill the god.

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