

**The Concept of Real Religiosity
in
Graham Greene's *The Heart of the Matter***

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Abstract

Religion in its general and simplified form is defined as a set of values or moral laws, which include provisions that people should follow to organize their affairs and ratify that they are provisions sent from the divine.

The concept of religion is not limited to the narrower sense represented by the performance of the virtual rituals of worship and religious fashions, etc., but also includes all the moral and spiritual values, conduct and good dealing that reflect the true essence of religion, which boils down to a set of values – such as sincerity, honesty and dedication to work, merciful dealing and compassion, etc. All religions agree on the moral content of religion. The Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (peace be upon him) said in a hadith that: “God does not look at your photos and money, but look into your hearts and your deeds”. As the Prophet Jesus (Isa in Islam) (peace be upon him) said: “blessed are those of the pure hearts, they bear witness to God.” However, in the present day religion is measured only by its external shape. Lots of thinkers and writers have rebelled against this narrow vision of religion and insisted that religion is an essence rather than appearance. Among these is the English writer and novelist Graham Greene (1904-1991) who, despite the stigma of atheism, did not stray far from the soul of religion. In his novel, *The Heart of the Matter* (1948) Greene tries, through his protagonist, to pinpoint what the heart of religion is.

Key words: Graham Greene, *The Heart of the Matter*, religiosity
faith, the essence of religion

I

Religion, represented by its religious institutions (in all its forms), has dominated human life since creation. However, after the emergence of liberal concepts by such philosophers as Thomas Hobbes and others (during the 17th century), after the publication of the Darwinian Theory (1859) by Charles Darwin (during the 19th century), and later came the communist ideas, represented by the ideas of Karl Marx (during the 20th century), the religious link has been weakened and the religious values no longer constitute for the human beings, but only a manifestation. As some people began to stay away from the essence of religion, which is represented by the actual application of its moral and humanitarian values, and contented themselves only with the practice of the virtual rituals of worship, while others took from atheism, so to speak, a new religion. Most of these are thinkers and writers who have spoken out their atheism and defended it through their writings. As a result, this culminates to the decline of religion during the twentieth century.

Because of becoming a polemical issue, religion has formed and still continues to form an important theme for so many writers and novelists who have used it as a background for their literary works, either for expressing a particular religious point of view, or for defending certain religious principle, or for the justification of a certain religious attitude. Amongst those was Graham Greene (1904 –1991) the English novelist, playwright, and literary critic, who, according to William Golding, “will be read and remembered as the ultimate chronicler of twentieth-century man’s consciousness and anxiety,” ¹ and an aspect of this anxiety was religion.

Being a writer in the twentieth century, Graham Greene has exploited the theme of religion, which has formed a fertile soil for most of his novels “that were serious social, moral and religious explorations.” ² According to David Pryce-Jones, “Greene has achieved something strange in English literature by grafting what have become alien theological concepts on to the English novel without straining either the beliefs or the form to the point of collapse.” ³ Though Greene objected being classified as ‘a Roman Catholic novelist’ rather than “a writer who happens to be a Catholic,” ⁴ as he declares in an interview, there is no novel by him which is almost devoid of the religious dimension, especially his four major ones: *Brighton Rock*, *The Power and the Glory*, *The Heart of the Matter* and *The End of the Affair*.

Despite the fact he was brought up in a strict Christian environment, Greene converted against it and turned later into to a completely atheist man. An accumulation of certain factors had resulted in a setback. From an early age Greene has suffered a psychological stress the matter that sent him away from his home, thereby from this strict religious environment. Also, though for a short time (four weeks), Greene joined the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1925, and as everyone knows religion and communism are incompatible. In 1926 Greene converted from Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism in order to marry a devout Catholic woman – Vivienne Dayrell-Browning (which is later shortened to Vivien). **5** Actually, his conversion was not a matter of faith, but, according to Michael Thornton “an act of expediency to enable him to marry a woman he loved.” **6** Even his wife was well aware that his conversion was not an act of faith. She says once that “he was mentally converted; logically, it seemed to him ... [it] was all rather private and quiet,” **7** and that she “[does not] think there was any emotion involved.” **8** However, Greene himself admits that “[his] conversion was not in the least an emotional affair. It was purely intellectual.” **9** Religion to him “went no deeper than the sentimental hymns in the school chapel,” **10** to use his expression. In an interview he puts it clearly that he calls himself “a Catholic agnostic.” **11**

Another factor that has collaborated in his complete transition away from religion, precisely Catholicism, is the experience which he gained through his travels, especially his experience in Mexico in 1938 which enabled him to observe, on a large scale, the mask of some of the religious men who hid behind their religious clothes to persecute others in the name of religion.

In order to understand Greene’s religious inclination, we must try to investigate through his own words his attitudes to religion. In a book that bears the title *The Other Man: Conversations with Graham Greene*, Marie-Francoise Allain has registered a series of interviews that have been conducted with Greene. Replying on a direct question if he “[was] an atheist?” **12**, Greene puts it clearly:

No, but religion bored me to death with its Sunday services and its endless readings from the Bible. Anglicanism meant absolutely nothing to me, no more than Buddhism or Catholicism. One of my grandfathers was a clergyman with a great sense of personal guilt, ... I’ve inherited some bad genes. I too rebelled but not from a sense of guilt. **13**

In a reply to the question of “[when] did [he] begin to ‘feel’ [his] faith?” **14**, Greene explains that he has recognized the first inroads during his visit to Mexico in 1938. He confirms that “[it’s] all bound up with [his] loyalty to the underdog - and so it has been ever since.” **15** He further illustrates:

In Mexico the underdogs were the Catholics. When I heard a woman tell of the death of one of her family, ... when I had witnessed the fervor of the peasants, who would go back and forth on their knees across the flag-stones of those churches in Chiapas which were still open (though not to priests) and who would kneel for ages with their arms out-stretched as though crucified – I tried to pray this way ... the fidelity of the believers assumed such proportions that I couldn’t help being profoundly moved. ... I’d feel that religion was the peasant approaching the altar on his knees, his arms outstretched as though crucified. **16**

At the end of the interview, Greene pinpoints his religious philosophy. He explains to his interviewer that “[he has] ... more doubts, but [his] faith has grown too.” **17** According to him “[there’s] a difference between belief and faith,” **18** and that “[if he doesn’t] believe in X or Y, faith intervenes, telling [him] that [he’s] wrong not to believe.” **19**

According to Ernest Hemingway “[all] thinking men are atheists,” **20** and Greene was one of those who seem to find that religious affiliation and thinking ability are independent from each other. Like most atheists he seems to insist that rational thinking does not require the adherence to a certain belief at all. A great bulk of his art has discussed religious issues, precisely Catholic issues. His four major novels reflect a profound concern over religious matters, as each one of these deals so specifically with a certain religious dilemma to the extent that in some of these Greene provoked the ire of the religious men and some critics, who took these works badly, especially *The Power and the Glory* (1940) which offended some Catholics. Nevertheless “his work was a strong leader in the Catholic literary revival of the 20th century.” **21**, as Stephen Jolissaint puts it. At the same time it reflects that its author is not overcome completely by the authority of atheism, so to speak, as he, like some of twentieth century thinkers and writers, has worked on the assumption that morality is independent of religion. Though in each of the

aforementioned religious novels the writer tries to expose a side of religion or religious men thereby confirms his atheism, in his *The Heart of the Matter* (1948) he seems to dramatize his answer concerning his atheist attitude. Thus, the novel seems to reveal ‘the man within’, to use the same words he used for the title of his first book (1929).

In reading Graham Greene’s works one would soon be aware of his deliberate intention to direct his readers towards certain issues. He purposely seeks to instruct and confirm his point of view on his readers who soon begin to turn their eyes toward his intended goal.

II

As *The Heart of the Matter* is concerned, the novel is the third of Graham Greene’s religious novels. It has been ranked as one of the Top 100 best English-language novels of the 20th century, as drawn up by the editorial board of The Modern Library – Random House. ²² It belongs to Greene’s post war novels. It tells the story of Henry Scobie (the protagonist), a longtime police deputy commissioner serving in an unnamed British colony in a West African state during World War II – an imaginary setting that was drawn after a personal experience on the author’s part in Sierra Leone. He is an honest and immune to bribery officer. His wife, Louise, is a devout catholic who always complains of living in the colony and wants to get away to South Africa, especially when her husband is passed over for a promotion (in favor of another man), as she lost hope to satisfy her ambition that the local British community will accept her. They had one daughter, Catherine, who died many years ago. In his regret for disappointing Louise and in his desire to satisfy her, Scobie (the straight man) is forced to borrow an amount of money (two hundred pounds) as a fee for Louise’s passage to South Africa. He makes a deal with Yusuf, a Syrian black market trader, with whom he later on, though unwillingly and unknowingly, entangled with a criminal issue. Gradually the protagonist has passed of difficult circumstances forced him to downfall, as he, under the feelings of being guilty and of being torn between two issues, blames himself and commits suicide.

In *Ways of Escape* (1980) – Greene’s second volume of autobiography (the first was *A Sort of Life* (1971)), he recalls:

There had been a chance encounter during one of my

journeys up-country [Sierra Leone] with a Father B whom I have now completely wrote in *The Heart of the Matter* of Father Clay whom Scobie met when he went out to Bamba to inquire into young Pemberton's suicide. ...I had no idea of Major Scobie in those days. It was the young north country priest who grew in my imagination, so that I find a few lines in faded pencil beginning his story. **23**

To better understanding of Greene intention concerning this novel, it is important here to quote some few lines of this autobiography. He pinpoints:

If I were a writer, I would be tempted to turn this into a novel. I imagine this is what writers feel – the haunting presence of an individual whom they wish to understand. But I haven't the time or the skill for such work and all I have been able to do is to gather the impressions that this man made on others who knew him, the documents as it were in the case of Father –. I am afraid a character can hardly emerge from such a collection as this. In the reviews I have read novelists are praised or blamed for their success or failure in creating a character, but such characters usually seem to bear about the same relation to life as the pictures in this country that you see painted on the mud walls of the native huts. **24**

On his general perspective of a fictitious character in a work of art he states:

a 'character' is simplified by the novelist: the contradictions you find in human beings are pared or explained away. The result is Art – which is arrangement and simplification for the purpose of conveying a mental condition. This book cannot pretend to be art because the compiler has left in all the contradictions: its only purpose is to present as truthfully as possible an enigma, though I daresay it is an enigma common to most of us if every man had his own case-book. **25**

While on his personal point of view in sketching the main character or characters of a novel, Greene further illustrates that:

The main characters in a novel must necessarily have some kinship to the author, they come out of his body as a child comes from the womb, then the umbilical cord is cut, and they grow into independence. The more the author knows of his own character the more he can distance himself from his invented characters and the more room they have to grow in. **26**

Likewise in analyzing the main character in *The Heart of the Matter*, one can easily discern that Scobie bears an aspect of kinship to the author and comes out of his own body; thereby it naturally bears an aspect of his own philosophy in all matters of life as well.

From the beginning to the end Scobie has been the focus of the novel. He has been sketched to present Greene's religious philosophy that he, later on, implies in his novel *The Comedians* (1966). That philosophy is summarized in some few lines contained in the last letter of one of the characters, Dr. Magiot (the Haitian doctor who is at the same time a committed Communist), and which says – "if you have abandoned one faith, do not abandon all faith. There is always an alternative to the faith we lose. Or is it the same faith under another mask?" **27**. The matter which indicates that faith, of whatever sense, it does exist in Greene's life, and that his novels are but only a means to deliver certain messages. According to him "[writing] a novel is a little like putting a message into a bottle and flinging it into the sea – unexpected friends or enemies retrieve it." **28** It is through Scobie that Greene consistently seems to raise the question of – is the standard of the outward appearance of a human being is a prerequisite in the evaluation of others and in judging the degree of religiosity? Or is it the essence that is translated through good deeds that must be taken into account when we judge real religiosity?.

Scobie lives in a society which identifies itself from the first page of the novel, as we are given the signal that "[it] was Sunday and the Cathedral bell clanged for matins." **29** An early image to portray the type of society and the type of the religious atmosphere of the colony in that West African state. Yet soon the author gives a successive image which is opposite to the prevailing atmosphere. The protagonist is portrayed as a man with a broken rosary – the image which is most

central to the text, as while he appears to us as he breaks faith with God, in fact most of the time he was retaining his own religious beliefs. He lives among people, including his household, who measure the amount of faith according to the outward rituals of religion more than caring about the inward faith which is represented by good deeds and good conduct. From inside he seems more than any one of the other characters sketched in the novel, a believer.

Throughout the course of the novel, the author seems to equate between Scobie's actions and other characters'. Though both of the Scobies are Catholic, they differ from each other in the measure of religiosity and the degree of understanding real faith. Throughout the novel the character of the wife is sketched to represent the outward appearance of religion. Louise's religiosity is confined only to going to the Church and in her prayers. She goes to the Church every Sunday as any good Catholic (according to her). She is always concerned about her husband's eternal salvation, for this she always encourages him to accompany her to communion and participate in the Mass. She seems to measure real faith with the regular commitment in going to the Mass. When Scobie has missed going to the Church on some occasions, she accuses him that he "[hasn't] got much faith," (*HM*, p. 25) and that he "just became a Catholic to marry [her]. It doesn't mean a thing to [him]" (*HM*, p. 25). When she discovers that he has not gone to the Church and missed some of the Masses after she has traveled to South Africa, she tells him about the things that worried her. She tells him that she "was afraid [he] wouldn't be much of a Catholic without [her] around, keeping [him] to things" (*HM*, p. 207). According to her, "[missing] Mass on Sunday's a moral sin, just as much as adultery" (*HM*, p. 207). While in examining all her conduct, Louise, who projects herself as a good Catholic, seems to be far away from a real Catholic wife or even a mere religious woman. She is not contented and convinced with what God has given her, like any devout human being. On the contrary she was a pretentious woman. She seems one of those women of the colony who "depended so much on pride, pride in themselves, their husbands, [and] their surroundings" (*HM*, p. 21). Throughout the novel she appears to us as a worldly-minded woman. When her husband has passed over for the promotion, she tells him that she "[will] never be able to show [her] face at the club again" (*HM*, p. 23), and that when Mrs Castle (a friend of her) conveys the news, she was so upset that she "came out of Mass before the end" (*HM*, P, 24). For her "[how] different the whole day would have been ... if [he'd] come and said, 'Darling, I'm going to be the Commissioner'" (*HM*, p. 25).

What matters to her most, is what the people of the surrounding community would think if they knew all about it.

In any religion, there are more important issues for the good and religious wife. The good wife at least has to be characterized by forgiveness, unselfishness, patience, kindness, etc. Yet Louise, most of the time, appears as a miserable woman. She is upset with the colony life and always complains and tries to escape the life she hates. She begs her husband to send her to South Africa, and then he can come and join her after he retires, uncaring from where he would provide the money needed for the trip, as for her “[that’s] man’s business” (*HM*, p. 77). A good wife is she who leaves her touches at her home making a paradise of it. But in Louise’s case “[the] only improvements [she] had been able to impose were the cork mat by the bath, the bright white medicine cabinet” (*HM*, p. 40). While “the rest of the room was all his own” (*HM*, p. 40). A good wife must be the one who waits for her husband when he comes home from his job or from a trip. But in the case of Scobie, it was Ali, the African servant who attended to his master, and who had been with him fifteen years, “a year longer than his marriage – a long time to keep a servant” (*HM*, p. 23), as the persona of the author explains.

On the other hand, the character of the husband is sketched to represent those individuals who seem not to embrace any faith, yet in fact, they do believe. It has been used for the purpose of raising a certain issue the author intends to debate over in this novel. According to Milan Marković, “[throughout] his long literary career, Greene tended to incorporate serious philosophical themes into seemingly simple and trivial plots of genre fiction and to reshape many of his genre novels into works of moral and philosophical debate,” **30** hence, the purpose of the main character which comes to represent the focal point from which the author begins his debate.

The protagonist, as we have seen (from the course of the role drawn for him throughout the novel), has his own way of religiosity which is so apparent from his behaviour – the religiosity which focuses on the essence of religion, i.e., the internal dimension of it. In an interview, Greene declares that “[he has] always considered it better to be a Protestant inside rather than outside.” **31**

The idea of the difference between the inside and outside faith is embodied in this novel through the main character who acts according to the same principle, i.e., Greene’s principle (mentioned above), as though Scobie is not sketched as a conventionally pious man, he is possessed by an absolute faith, but this faith is

different from the belief system of those around him. He rejects the outward appearance of religion represented by its rituals. Throughout the novel (either on the tongue of the protagonist, or through the writer's own narration) religion is referred to, as – ‘a habit’, ‘a formality’, ‘a formula’, ‘hocus pocus’ words, ‘a routine’, ‘a legal document’... etc. In more than once the author switches to the second person, especially during his more philosophical reflections to emphasize this point:

He closed the diary, and 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. (*HM*, p. 115 [italics is emphasized])

Again, in another place, the same idea is reinforced:

He began to speak the words of absolution, but the trouble is, Scobie thought, there's nothing to absolve. The words brought no sense of relief because there was nothing to relieve. They were *a formula*: the Latin words hustled together – *a hocus pocus*. He went out of the box and knelt down again, and this too was part of *a routine*. (*HM*, p. 154)

Religion, for all those around Scobie, is confined to mere rituals, prayers, meditations, and confessions, yet their religious values diminish, while in Scobie's case his religious values remained stable. He seems to see religion in the actual practice and the realism of the laws and regulations that govern the lives of the people. For him the religious rituals are only manifestations of formality far from the essence of belief, and of faith, to the extent that he seems to be making fun of these rituals, as the author states:

It seemed to him for a moment that God was too accessible. There was no difficulty in approaching Him. Like a popular demagogue He was open to the

least of His followers at any hour. Looking up at the cross he thought, He even suffers in public. (*HM*, p. 154)

Right from the beginning the readers are made aware of Scobie's humanistic character, as the novel abounds with the good characteristics of his personality. He applies most the religious values that are enshrined by all religions. As a human being, Scobie is not a self-centered man. In most of the details of his life, he translates his religion into actions, as the religious values were the primary engine for all his manners and morals. This indicates that the religious scruples do exist inside him.

As a matter of fact all religions connect between good deeds and real faith. For example, according to *The Holy Qur'an* (the Islamic Holy Book), "whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer – We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do." **32**

As an officer Scobie does his best to meet the demands imposed on him by his job. He appears to worship his job more than anything else. He doesn't drink while he is on duty. He doesn't take bribes. According to the author: "he didn't drink, he didn't fornicate, [and] he didn't even lie" (*HM*, p. 115). He bears all the insults and the bad experience during the early days of his tour "when the black had slashed his [tires] and written insults on his car," (*HM*, p. 28) and "the nickname of the Bad Man that had stuck to him through all one long sad tour" (*HM*, p. 20). Nevertheless, as the author illustrates "he had begun to desire these people's trust and affection" (*HM*, p. 20). In the time his fellow countrymen hate the place and its people and their black colour, Scobie, "loves 'em so much...he sleeps with 'em" (*HM*, p. 15), as Mr. Harris (a middle-aged man and a cable censor) puts it. He doesn't even hate Fellowes (the sanitary inspector and one of his fellow countrymen) who "had snatched his house" (*HM*, p. 28). On the contrary, "Scobie had done his best to like the man– it was one of the rules by which he set his life, to be a good loser" (*HM*, p. 28). He works in the heat and dump to the extent that he once "had black water fever and was nearly invalided from the service altogether" (*HM*, p. 20). For "fifteen wasted years" (*HM*, p. 20), as Greene puts it, he has managed to stay clean among a sea of corruption among saboteurs and diamond smugglers.

One of the humanistic values that are urged on by any religion is the sense of responsibility and Greene was keen to sketch his main character with such a

characteristic. Scobie is a man shaped by a high sense of responsibility which is one of the most important aspects that make a human. He bears a strong sense of pity and responsibility towards all those around him. He admits to Robinson (the bank manager) that “[he]’ll have to retire one day, but that’s a long way off,” (*HM*, p. 45) as “[he’d] much rather die in [his] boots” (*HM*, p. 45). In an internal monologue, Scobie replies to the voice which “spoke from the cave of his body” (*HM*, p. 258) emphasizing to it the huge responsibility placed on his shoulders: “[if] you made me, you made this feeling of responsibility that I’ve always carried about like a sack of bricks. I’m not a policeman for nothing – responsible for order, for seeing justice is done” (*HM*, p. 259). From what has been shown, it is so obvious how he has very strong ethics that he takes the matter of order and justice seriously. He identifies himself with the people’s misery, pain as the author illustrates:

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 there was no comfort, for it sometimes 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. (*HM*, p. 122)

The writer goes further to confirm that his man “couldn’t shut his eyes or his ears to any human need of him; he was not the centurion, but a man in the ranks who had to do the bidding of a hundred centurions” (*HM*, p. 187). Moreover, he appears to us as a man who believes in the value of his work. “[He] regarded himself as a man in the ranks, the member of an awkward squad, who had no opportunity to break the more serious military rules” (*HM*, p. 115). He admits:

I missed Mass yesterday for insufficient reason. I Neglected my evening prayers. This was no more than admitting what every soldier did – that he had avoided a fatigue when the occasion offered. (*HM*, p. 115)

Putting his work first in his priorities never makes him excuse himself from serving others. He admits to himself: “[admit] that you must come second to these others... I must come last: I am the Deputy Commissioner of Police: a hundred men serve

under me: I am the responsible man. It is my job to look after the others. I am conditioned to serve (*HM*, p. 224).

As a husband, Scobie has fulfilled his duties assigned for him by God. Though Louise accuses him that: “[he has] no responsibilities towards [her]” (*HM*, p.78), Scobie always seems busy for securing her comfort and happiness, as, according to the author, “[it] had always been his responsibility to maintain happiness in those he loved” (*HM*, pp. 25-26). He always seems anxious and wonders “if [he] could just arrange for her happiness first... [though] he forgot for the while what experience had taught him – that no human being can really understand another, and no one can arrange another’s happiness” (*HM*, p. 85). He even dropped some of his life insurance for her “the year [she] went home for an operation” (*HM*, p. 45).

Also, in sketching the character of Scobie, the author does not neglect to impart the features of mercy and compassion in the heart of his main character – and as we all know all religions are based on love, pity, compassion and faith; and all came to plant these merits in the hearts of all the human beings and urge them to make of these a part of their behaviour and of their treatment between each other, especially pity and compassion which constitute some of the characteristics of our almighty God for he is, according to the Islamic Religion, ‘the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.’ Likewise Greene’s protagonist has a compassionate liking for the place and its natural pure people. On this aspect, Greene observes:

Why, he wondered ... do I love this place so much?
Is it because here human nature hasn’t had time to
disguise itself? Nobody here could ever talk about
a heaven on earth. Heaven remained rigidly in its
proper place on the other side of death, and on this
side flourished the injustice, the cruelties, the mean-
ness that elsewhere people so cleverly hushed up.
Here you could love human beings nearly as God
loved them. (*HM*, pp. 35-36)

It is through Scobie, the ordinary man that the human element is magnified in the novel, and not through the priests who supposed to be the ones who identify themselves with the poor, weak, and miserable creatures. Unlike them Scobie identifies himself with the weak creatures like the thin black people of the colony who “can’t get rice at the controlled price” (*HM*, p. 35), and for whom “he felt an

extraordinary affection” (*HM*, p. 141). He identifies himself with the desperate people and comprehends their problems like Pemberton (a young commissioner in Bamba who commits suicide because of the overwhelming debts). It was Scobie who played the role of the priest. It is he who helps, feels, forgives, understands, and thinks of others all the time. Unlike Louise who was annoyed and would “never forgive Pemberton for [his suicide]” (*HM*, p. 81), as her husband was forced to travel to investigate the case, “[he] thought of Pemberton and wondered how he would feel if he were his father – that elderly, retired bank manager whose wife died in giving birth to Pemberton” (*HM*, p. 83). He even asked his wife sharply not to talk nonsense, as according to him “[we]’d forgive most things if we knew the facts” (*HM*, p. 81). Here, Scobie seems to apply what the Creator has recommended in such matters. According to *The Holy Bible* (Luke 6:37): “Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.”³³ Moreover, in Scobie’s opinion “[a] policeman should be the most forgiving person in the world if he gets the facts right” (*HM*, p. 81). He compassionately defended young Pemberton against Father Clay, the resident priest in Bamba who relays information to Scobie about Pemberton’s suicide, and who is only concerned about ‘the teachings of the Church’ to the extent that he hopes that the death may be a crime and not a suicide for, he asserts, “[it] puts a man outside mercy” (*HM*, p. 86). But for Scobie, after reading a script-writing which was written by Pemberton to his father, it is a matter of despair:

He handed the letter to Father Clay. ‘You are not going to tell me there’s anything unforgivable there, Father. If you or I did it, it would be despair – I grant you anything with us. We’d be damned because we know, but he doesn’t know a thing. (*HM*, p. 89)

When the priest tries to interfere reminding him of the Church’s teaching, Scobie earnestly replies “[even] the Church can’t teach me that God doesn’t pity the young” (*HM*, p. 89). It is Scobie who shows an understanding of the terrible situation of the young Pemberton. It is he who shows respect for the body of the boy, as when “the pious ejaculation of Father Clay irritated him,” (*HM*, p.88) as the author explained, “[it] seemed to him that unquestionably there must be mercy for someone so unformed” (*HM*, p. 88).

In addition to compassion and mercy, pity is an imported feature of his character. He pities all those whom he has dealt with. He pities the Portuguese

captain of the ship *Esperança* who tries to conceal a letter to his daughter; he pities Wilson (the new inspector who secretly spies on him, and who falls in love with Louise), who seems to have been ignored by the other members of the social club. On this special feature of Scobie's personality, the author more confines the narrative to his point of view:

Outside the rest-house he stopped again. The lights inside 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. 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?" (*HM*, p. 124)

The sense of duty and responsibility accompany him early in the morning to attend for the survivors of a shipwreck who begin to arrive after forty days at sea in lifeboats. It has been a very anxious time for him, and he, according to the author, "couldn't describe to Mrs Bowles [the wife of the local missionary] the restlessness, the haunting images, [and] the terrible impotent feeling of responsibility and pity" (*HM*, p. 124). He asks about them one by one and expresses to Mrs Bowles, who becomes a nurse for the shipwreck victims, that he "[wishes] there was something [he] could do to help" (*HM*, p. 127). He feels sorry for the little girl with whom he reflects an ideal parental responsibility, and though he is not interested in books, as the author confirms, he compassionately accepts the demand of Mrs. Bowles to read for a shipwrecked boy, Fisher, (the little boy who recovers in the rest-house), stressing to him at the same time on the importance of choosing pious books for reading, telling Scobie that they "are not teaching the children here to read in order that they shall read ...novels" (*HM*, p. 127).

The same sense of pity which reflects Scobie's ethical and moral concerns for others is his sense towards Mrs. Rolt (Helen Rolt), a 19-year-old widow who survived a shipwreck, and who lost her husband of two months. The profound weight of responsibility pushes him to console her when she tells him that she feels bad for not missing her dead husband more. As he believes "[when] they are dead our responsibility ends. There's nothing more we can do about it. We can rest in peace" (*HM*, p. 155).

In addition to his humanistic character, Scobie reflects an awareness of religious matters concerning other religions. Through his relation with Yusef, the Syrian trader, Scobie shows an awareness of the Islamic religion which forbids wines. When Yusef offers him a glass of beer, he wondered: “The Prophet doesn’t forbid it?” (*HM*, p. 103). Also he shows an understanding of the necessity of speeding up burying of the dead. As we all know all religions urge to speed the burial of the dead, and this is exactly what Scobie has done when he gives his orders to speed up the burial of Pemberton as he breaks abruptly off telling the sergeant to “see that a grave’s dug quickly before the sun gets too hot” (*HM*, p. 89).

Thus, from what has been illustrated, religion for Scobie appears to be a detailed curriculum, a set of duties towards his family, his work, towards humanity in general. In most of his daily conduct, Scobie was an embodiment to the moral basis of religion. Hence, so many critics observe *The Heart of the Matter* as a moral novel. Yet, despite this, the main character, throughout the novel, appears as a reluctant Catholic like all Greene’s characters who are, according to Terry Eagleton, “reluctant Christians, men and women who would like to be rid of God but find themselves stuck with him like some lethal addiction.” ³⁴ Likewise, Scobie feels tired of religion. He admits to Father Rank:

I don’t know how to put it, Father, but I feel – tired of my religion. It seems to mean nothing to me. I’ve tried to love God, but – ... I’m not sure that I even believe. ... I feel – empty. Empty. (*HM*, p. 153)

The best illustration of Scobie’s situation is summarized through the two lines of verse (of a Syrian poet) which are recited by Yusef, the Syrian Muslim trader, who seems to observe the real nature of the man: “Of two hearts one is always warm and one is always cold: the cold heart is more precious than diamonds: the warm heart has no value and is thrown away” (*HM*, p. 93). If it is put to the whole context of the novel, these two lines seem to summarize one of the themes of the novel, as well as the subject of the paper. In fact Scobie resembles this cold heart, as he from outside seems ‘empty’ as he admits to Father Rank, yet from inside he is not quite alienated from the real faith, as we have seen. Though his faith in the Catholic Church was not quite so firmly fixed, yet his “religious scruples ... [are] too extreme,” ³⁵ to use William Boyd’s expression, and on contrary to those around him who from outside seem as good adherents to their Catholicism and disguise themselves as good Catholic believers, yet from inside they are empty.

As we have seen, the existence of God is not rejected by the protagonist, as he does have an authentic relationship with God. He tries to do all the things that all religions call for. Though for him it is not a religion of worship and it means nothing to him, nevertheless he prays. Though “[the] awful languor of routine fell on his spirit” (*HM*, p. 153), Scobie resorts sometimes to prayers for the sake of others. He “prayed – vaguely and ramblingly – for Louise, that she might be happy now this moment through him” (*HM*, p. 153). Though “[the] Lord’s Prayer lay as dead on his tongue as a legal document: it wasn’t his daily bread that he wanted but so much more. He wanted happiness for others and solitude and peace for himself” (*HM*, p. 189). In the depth of his heart there is always a higher cause, such as humanity. Thereby, from the perspective of belief, Scobie shows that he has a deep connection with religion and believes profoundly in God, yet he does not show it. In more than once, especially in time of mental conflict, Scobie was in monologues with God, delivering Greene’s thoughts:

Oh God, I am the only guilty one because I have 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... They are ill with me and I can cure them. And you too God are ill with me. (*HM*, p. 258)

From what has been presented, or more precisely from what has Greene wanted to present is that there is a huge difference between believe and practice. Throughout the novel, the writer through his protagonist has worked according to this concept. His critique revolves around the rejection of the outward manifestations of religion which, to a large extent, do not necessarily reflect real belief or faith. In more than once, either on the tongue of the main character, or the tongue of any other character, the writer presents his argument concerning such philosophy. We find many scenes of this kind of argument. Through the scene which brings together Louise and Wilson, and through a conversation concerning his vision of romance she indirectly attacks the priests who pretend things they do not actually believe in. She explains to him: “[the] world has too many spoilt priests of this faith or that: better surely to pretend a belief than wander in that vicious vacuum of cruelty and despair” (*HM*, p. 216). The same notion is repeated when Scobie was trying to confess, as the persona illustrates:

Those ruined priests who presided at a Black Mass,

consecrating the Host over the naked body of a woman, consuming God in an absurd and horrifying ritual, were at least performing the act of damnation with an emotion larger than human love: they were doing it from hate of God or some odd perverse devotion to God's enemy. (*HM*, p. 223)

Another character that has been used in the novel as a mirror to reflect the hollow appearance of religion is Father Rank (a priest in the colony) who is sketched to shed light on the notion of believe and practice. In more than once the author equates between Scobie who most of the time is presented as an alien man and Father Rank whose Catholicism is confined only in the external appearance of religion. He is a prone to gossip priest who brags that his "head is a hive of rumours" (*HM*, p. 69) which supposed to be circulated among people. He says:

if a man tells me anything I assume he wants me to pass it on. It's a useful function, you know, at a time like this, when everything is an official secret, to remind people that their tongues were made to talk with and that the truth is meant to be spoken about. (*HM*, p. 69)

He admits that "[his] tongue runs away with [him]" (*HM*, p. 70) and observes "if it was Scobie I wouldn't think twice about it" (*HM*, p. 70). Here, Father Rank indirectly sheds light on Scobie's professional personality that respects the issues that related to the secrets of the work or that of the people.

More than once, Father Rank (who is supposed to be a religious symbol) is shown, by the writer, like any normal human being, and whose appearance of holiness, which he carries, has no meaning. We see him like any normal man who is looking for the pleasures of life, as we have seen him looking for the pleasures of eating and drinking in the house of Tallit (a local Christian Syrian trader). We see him as an impatient man, though he spends only twelve years in the colony (less than Scobie's), he feels overcome by the dreary surroundings of it. We see him as a tired man who is frustrated of his job and of the people of the colony. He complains to Scobie with "an expression of undefined appeal" (*HM*, p. 182) that he feels "as though [he wasn't] a working man at all" (*HM*, p. 183). He sees that the people only "send for [him] when they are dying" (*HM*, p. 183) and that "[he has] never been

any good to the living” (*HM*, p. 183). He exchanges roles with Scobie and confesses to him “with his glass between his knees” (*HM*, p. 183) about his frustration. He recalls the times when he was a novice:

I thought that people talked to their priests, and I thought God somehow gave the right words. ... God doesn't give the right words, Scobie. I had a parish once in Northampton. They make boots there. They used to ask me out to tea, and I'd sit and watch their hands pouring out, and we'd talk of the Children of Mary and repairs to the church roof. They were very generous in Northampton. I only had to ask and they'd give. (*HM*, p. 183)

He observes that “[he] wasn't of any use to a single living soul” (*HM*, p. 183), admits his failure amid the social environment, and further recalls, revealing the real character beneath its mask, i.e., religious appearance:

I thought, in Africa things will be different. You see I'm not a reading man, Scobie. I never had much talent for loving God as some people do. I wanted to be of use, that's all. Don't listen to me. It's the rains. I haven't talked like this for five years. Except to the the mirror. If people are in trouble they'd go to you, Scobie, not to me. They ask me to dinner to hear the gossip. (*HM*, p. 183)

So, the priest is like any ordinary man who only looks for his own interests and who cannot give himself the Nirvana (a state of being in peace or complete happiness), and as the proverbial saying goes – a man can do no more than he can. The uselessness of the priest has been emphasized even more by the persona of the author who raises rhetorical questions to stress his point of view:

His joviality filled the room with hollow sound. For twenty-two years that voice had been laughing, joking, urging people humorously on through the rainy and the dry months. Could its cheeriness ever have comforted a single soul? Wilson wondered: had it even comfort-

ed itself? It was like the noise one heard rebounding from the tiles in a public baths (*HM*, p. 68)

He only cares for the formalities, just like Father Clay before him with his ‘teaching of the Church’, and ignores the true essence of religion. From what has been illustrated the two mentioned priests appear to us as any ordinary men who seem to believe in the rituals rather than the dogma. Thereby, they work as a real embodiment to the concept of the standard of the outward appearance versus the inward faith.

On the other hand, the character of Scobie, as we have seen, represents the man who applies the essence or principles of religion more effectively. Even he, in advance, knows what kinds of answers those priests already have for man’s troubles. He wonders about the use of telling Father Rank about his dilemma, and then acknowledges that he himself “[knows] the answers as well as he does” (*HM*, p. 184). According to him “[it] wasn’t he who required the magic word, it was the priest, and he couldn’t give it” (*HM*, p. 184).

Though he may not go to Church or participate in the Masses as regularly as he should, yet he bears an authentic relationship with God and the absence of religious motivation does not diminish or exclude his zest for moral actions towards humanity. His spirit of altruism pushed him to postpone taking his leave in South Africa, and as he tells Father Rank “[the] young men need it more” (*HM*, p. 182). The same philosophy that is more clarified by the author himself who more illustrates: “God can wait, he thought: how can one love God at the expense of one of his creatures?” (*HM*, p. 187)

Hence, the author more effectively reveals his idea of practice versus believe, or to put it in another words the idea of appearance and reality. As we have seen, the author, through the character of Scobie, has attacked the outward manifestations of religion on the part of a handful of religious men, which represent God as a trivial too accessible thing. God in their hands was reduced to a mere tool. In more than once he mocks the idea of a God who, according to the persona:

to have exposed himself in this way, a man, a wafer of bread, first in the Palestinian villages and now here in the hot port, there, everywhere, allowing man to have his will of Him. Christ had told the rich young

man to sell all and follow Him, but that was an easy rational step compared with this that God had taken, to put Himself at the mercy of men who hardly knew the meaning of the word. (*HM*, p. 213)

Moving further to attack so many religious heresies, Greene helps to fathom the depths of his thoughts which bespeak the reason behind his religious orientation. As he mocks the idea of having God as a morsel or as a chew in someone's mouth, he wonders: "taking God in my mouth in what they call the state of grace One must be reasonable" (*HM*, p. 219). In other occasions, on his protagonist's tongue, he argues "[t]hrough two thousand years...we have discussed Christ's agony in just this disinterested way" (*HM*, p. 193), but then he observes "but God would never work a miracle to save Himself" (*HM*, p. 225).

Eventually, the main character has been molded and shaped to be the mouthpiece of the author. Though he is not wrapped with the clothes of prayer, so to speak, Scobie from inside has fulfilled his duty as a believer. In fact he finds himself lonely among those pretending of being Catholics or those who are only Catholics in name. Unlike Father Rank who believes that "[i]t's better to sin seventy times and repent each time than sin once and never repent" (*HM*, p. 221), Scobie refuses to go to the Church and confesses in a state of sin; especially he was convinced that "it was a fool to imagine that somehow in this airless box [he] would find a conviction" (*HM*, p. 221). He believes that in doing this he is cheating human beings every day he lives. According to him "[he is] not going to try to cheat [himself] or God" (*HM*, p. 221). Through one of his monologues, which according to the author, "spoke from the cave of his body" (*HM*, p. 258), Scobie reveals his pure conscience which refuses to cheat or lie. He asserts to God:

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. (*HM*, p. 258)

Though, he always longs for peace and the word "peace seemed to him the most beautiful word in the language" (*HM*, p. 60), he prays earnestly to God to "take away his peace forever" (*HM*, p. 125), but give it to others. Even in one of his prayers he asks God to punish him but to "let the others get some happiness" (*HM*, p. 220). Moreover, he tries his best not to inflict any harm to anyone. On the

contrary he decides to damn himself just to let others live in peace. He tells God that He “[will] be better off if he lose [him] once and for all” (*HM*, p. 258), and he is going to damn himself and that God “[will] be able to forget [him] ..., for eternity” (*HM*, p. 258).

Hence, some of the characters have observed such aspect of sanctity in Scobie’s personality. For example, Yusuf has likened him to Daniel (a Hebrew prophet of the sixth century b.c.), especially when he was astonished by his fairness, as he said to himself “Yusuf, a Daniel has come to the Colonial Police” (*HM*, p. 91). Even Father Rank, at the end of the novel, has praised Scobie, after his suicide, telling Louise that “from what [he] saw of him, that he really loved God” (*HM*, p. 272) the matter that is acknowledged by Louise herself who observes that “[he] certainly loved no one else” (*HM*, p. 272). Moreover, the priest himself at the end seems to understand and agree with Scobie’s system of thought. He acknowledges that Scobie did not care for himself as he cares for others, concluding that the late “never had any trust in mercy – except for other people” (*HM*, p. 272). In an attempt to reassure Louise for the salvation of her husband, he further convinces her not to imagine that she or he himself “know a thing about God’s mercy” (*HM*, p. 272) as, according to him, “[t]he Church knows all the rules. But it doesn’t know what goes on in a single human heart” (*HM*, p. 272).

Thus, from what we have seen, the character of Scobie is intended to represent the personal perception of the writer himself about the essence of religion, as the character, in its every detail of life, was moving and acting according to this perspective. It does not represent those who fancied that religion is a religious cloak (the religious robe), a rosary, a prayer, and nothing more. In fact religion is a relationship between man and his Creator. The real measure of religiosity lies in the good deeds and in what these have in return to the others, and a religious man is not necessarily a good man, but the good man is a real example of real worship. Eventually what Greene wants to say is that the essence of any religion is included in the application of its principles and that it is not of religion that the religious concepts become mere rituals performed without having an impact on human behavior and actions. To conclude at the end that all such religions heresies are thought up by man and that what God really looks for, is the very valuable moral points that all the prophets have been sent for.

Conclusion

In *The Heart of the Matter*, which is the best interpretation in understanding Graham Greene's concept of religion, the novelist gives a deep perspective on his opinion concerning what real religiosity is. In many ways, as we have seen, it is Scobie (the protagonist) who represents the voice of rational religion. It is he after all who has grabbed the respect of the priest and of others towards him at the end.

So, what the writer wants to shed light on is that real worship is not the establishment of rituals, but it is our behavior, and that true religion is embodied through the virtues of morality. Also, he wants to say that it is not of religion that its religious concepts become mere rituals performed without having an impact on human behavior and actions. On the other hand, his novel also highlights that some of the religious figures are, sometimes, not reliable enough to judge the people righteously, as is the case with Father Clay in the novel.

All these attitudes, which the writer implies in this novel, may be that which a careful philosopher would have towards religion nowadays. Today, one finds that religions take another form, a form of routine which somehow tends to be completely isolated from the actual life and realism, as is the case with Scobie's wife, Louise, and Father Rank. Another attitude is the writer's attitude towards the secular people whose dilemma, to a large extent, may be that of Scobie who seems as well to represent the outline of Greene's own life, as well as that of the modern man who sometimes, though unwillingly, goes away from religion, not because he or she is unbeliever, but because of some troubles of life. Hence, what Greene wants to say is that we all have faith; faith already exists in our hearts; it resides in us all, but it has different shapes or forms.

In addition, in *The Heart of the Matter* Greene has juxtaposed the Catholic by the Muslim; the Syrian by the British; the British by the African in a way which seems to suggest that his attitude encompasses all religions – Christian, Islam, etc. Moreover, this indicates the need to the essence of religion which is the same in all religions, while, by contrast, the outward appearances of religion, represented by religious fashions or religious symbols, vary and differ from one religion to another, so they divide more than they join. This is so obvious in our modern world where these things have helped in increasing the discrimination and differences among mankind. Especially nowadays, we realize how much we are in need of Greene's perspective in insisting on the heart of religion which focuses on the inner side of it

represented by its essence, especially in societies of religious diversity, as so many problems have been aroused because of the diversity and differences in the outward appearance among religions. Hence, the study, while confirming the need for religion as without religion, there would be moral and social unrest that would spell the end of civilization, in addition to its necessity to satisfy the spiritual needs of the human beings, nevertheless the study also tries to remind and recommend paying attention to the following points:

* The ethical content of religion is more important than the outward appearance of it, especially nowadays when some groups start to take advantage of this appearance for certain ends. Hence, some religions have been considered as dangerous and violent. Because of this reason those religions, without any guilt, have been attacked. As a consequence religion nowadays has become the main source of conflict. As a result, religions are to blame and some people are pushed towards atheism, just because of their religion or their religious men themselves.

* Today so many problems are aroused because the majority of people evaluate the appearance of things, forgetting that the essence is more important.

* The ethical commitment which has seriously dealt with by Graham Greene in *The Heart of the Matter* should be the primary criterion in the evaluation of a human being, male or female. Thus, Man must work truly on his essence.

* The community is in need of human good more than it is in need of religious rituals only. A society that lacks the righteous people is an invalid community, even though it has so many religious people who are characterized only by the outward appearances of religiosity.

* The real and right religion does not depend only on religious ordinances or laws. But it consists of a real relationship with God, a relationship that depends on the real applications of the inner aspects of religion, i.e., through good deeds, love, tolerance. To quote Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, "The purpose of all major religious traditions is not to construct big temples on the outside, but to create temples of goodness and compassion inside, in our hearts."

* A positive interpretation of real religiosity is that people should find their way to God through their hearts rather than through their fashions or any outward appearances.

At the end, this leads us to think of the same question raised at the beginning of this study – Is the standard of the outward appearance of a human being a prerequisite in the evaluation of others and in judging the degree of religiosity?, or is it the essence that is translated through good deeds that must be taken into account when we judge real religiosity?.

Notes

1- Cedric Watts, “*The Heart of the Matter and the Later Novels of Graham Greene*”, in *A Companion to – The British and Irish Novel – 1945 – 2000*, ed. Brian W. Shaffer, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. 2005), p. 288.

2- Robert Bernard, *A Short History of English Literature*, (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1984), p. 169.

3- David Pryce-Jones, *Graham Greene*, (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1963), pp. 1-2.

4- Unsigned, “The Uneasy Catholicism of Graham Greene.” Available from: www.nytimes.com/.../html, p. 1. (21-9-2014). A selection of interviews from Marie-Francoise Allain’s *The Other Man: Conversations with Graham Greene* (1984).

5- Michael Thornton, “The decadent world of Graham Greene - the high priest of darkness,” www.dailymail.co.uk/.../The-decadent-world-Graham-Greene--high-priest-darkness.html, p. 3, retrieved in (5-6-2014).

6- *ibid*, p.1.

7- Joseph Pearce, “Graham Greene: Doubter Par Excellence”, available from: www.catholicauthors.com/greene.html, p. 2, retrieved in (3-8-2014).

8- *ibid*.

9- *ibid*.

10- *ibid*.

11- Michael Thornton, p, 7.

12- Unsigned, “The Uneasy Catholicism of Graham Greene”, p.1.

13- *ibid.*

14- *ibid.*

15- *ibid.*, p. 3.

16- *ibid.*

17- *ibid.*

18- *ibid.*

19- *ibid.*

20- Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1929), p. 11.

21- See Stephen Jolissaint, (2013). "Graham Greene" available from: prezi.com/frtmalov11vm/graham-grenne/, p. 1. (3-8-2014)

22- See "Modern Library", available from: (aggsliterature.wordpress.com/the-100-best-english-language-novels-of-the-20th-century), P. 2. (25-4-2014).

23- Graham Greene, *Ways of Escape*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1980), p. 15.

24- *ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

25- *ibid.*, p. 90.

26- *ibid.*, p. 15.

27- Graham Greene, *The Comedians*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1966), p. 286.

28- Graham Greene, (1980), *Ways of Escape*, p. 14.

29- Graham Greene, *The Heart of the Matter*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1948). Edition of 1971, P. 11. All subsequent quotations from the book are taken from this edition. The page numbers being incorporated into the text are preceded by the abbreviation *HM*.

- 30- Milan Marković, “Challenging the Dogma in Graham Greene’s *The Power and the Glory*”, available from www.academia.edu/.../, p. 1, (4-10-2014)
- 31- “The Uneasy Catholicism of Graham Greene”, p. 3.
- 32- *The Holy Quran*, Sura *Al-Nahl* (the Bee) chapter 14, verse 97, p. 291.
- 33- *The Holy Bible*, King James Version (1611). Cited in: ingjamesbibleonline.org/Luke-6-37., p. 1 (21-11-2014)
- 34- Terry Eagleton, “Religion for Atheists by Alain de Botton – review”, available from: www.theguardian.com/.../religion-for-atheists-de-botton-review, p. 1 (27-11-2014)
- 35- William Boyd, “The God Confusion: an atheist reads Graham Greene’s *The Heart of the Matter*”, available from: www.williamboyd.co.uk/literature-graham-greene, p. 2 (9-9-2014)

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مفهوم التدين الحقيقي في رواية غراهام غرين صميم المسألة

الباحثة : نوال حمدان محمود

الخلاصة

يُعرّف الدين بشكله العام والمُبسّط على أنه مجموعة من القيم أو القوانين الأخلاقية، والتي تشمل الأحكام التي يجب على الناس إتباعها لتنظيم شؤونهم والتصديق بأنها أحكام مُرسلة من الذات الإلهية .

ولا يقتصر مفهوم الدين على المعنى الضيق المتمثل بأداء الشعائر الخارجية من طقوس وتعبّد وأزياء دينية ... الخ، بل يشمل كذلك كل القيم الإخلاقية والروحية والمتمثلة بالسلوك والتعامل الذي يعكس الجوهر الحقيقي للدين والذي يتلخّص في مجموعة من القيم – كالصدق والأمانة والإخلاص في العمل، التعامل الرحيم والرافقة والشفقة... الخ. وتتفق جميع الديانات على المضمون الأخلاقي للدين. حيث قال نبي الإسلام مُحَمَّد (صلى الله عليه وسلّم) في الحديث الشريف: " ان الله لا ينظر إلى صوركم وأموالكم ولكن ينظر إلى قلوبكم وأعمالكم". كما قال يسوع (عيسى في الإسلام) (عليه السلام) : " طوبى لأطهار القلوب فإنهم يشهدون لله". إلا أنه في يومنا هذا لم يعد يُقاس الدين إلا بشكله الخارجي. وقد تَمَرّد الكثير من المفكرين والكتاب على هذه الرؤية الضيقة للدين وأصرّوا على أنّ الدين جوهر أكثر منه مظهر ومن هؤلاء الكاتب والأديب الإنكليزي غراهام غرين (1904-1991) الذي وبالرغم من وصمّه بالإلحاد لم يبتعد كثيراً عن روح الدين، ففي روايته *صميم المسألة* (1948) حاول غرين، عبرَ بطل روايته، أن يُبيّن ما هو قلب أو صميم الدين؟!

الكلمات المفتاحية: غراهام غرين ، رواية *صميم المسألة* ، التّدين ، الإيمان ، جوهر الدين

نبذة عن الباحثة :

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