Who Has Seen The Wind – The Godlessness Of Formal Religions Essay, Research Paper

The essence of God isn’t found in today’s formal religions. It is evident throughout the novel Who Has Seen the Wind that author W.O. Mitchell intrinsically believes and wishes to convey this message. He states that the prairie is nature in it’s simplest form, complete onto itself, and that the religious structure of today’s “God” is simply made up by people to ease their pain and fears. Underlying everything is the sense that we as human beings don’t really know where we’re going, or for that matter, where we’re coming from, in our search for God and the truth.

W.O. Mitchell sees the prairies as the basic fundamental unit of nature. “Here was the least common denominator of nature, the skeleton requirements simply, of land and sky- Saskatchewan prairie” (WHSTW, p3) One might assume that this implies that God doesn’t exist; That somehow, since the prairie is already complete, God is effectively out of the picture. Not the case! Rather, this implies, perhaps subtly, that God exists incorporated into nature itself, living with it, and not as the heavenly arbitrator he is supposed, by modern religion, to be. This is perhaps the most important message we are shown in the book. God is real, lives in real things, and, as we will see, is not bound by the finicky limitations and expectations of human beings.

It is apparent that there is a definite message we are willed to decipher when we come across Brian creating his own “gods” on paper. This act is symbolic of the childish way in which we’ve created our own religious conventions and beliefs. Brian feels sad and lonely, so he solves the problem by copying what he sees as religion’s solution:

Brian was wishing that Forbsie didn’t have the mumps? He didn’t want to draw men, he wanted to ride a vacuum cleaner up into the sky where it was blue? on the paper he made blue with his crayon. And God was there. (WHSTW, p31)

Brian, being a child, is impervious to the horrible sin of blaspheme. This, in conjunction with his natural curiosity, allows him to take religion at face value exposing it to the readers for the hollow shell it is: Not as a means to God, but a means to solving personal problems of loneliness and fulfilling dreams. This “confusion” on Brian’s part is used by W.O. Mitchell to show insight into the falseness of religion as a means to God.

The casual conversation between Digby and Hislop is also not without great significance. They are arguing, not about simple matters regarding some subtle technicality of religion, but rather, the practicality of it’s very existence! Digby isn’t convinced that anything new has really been discovered since it’s conception: “There hasn’t been any advance in the things that count? it was all there with Plato – with Christ” (WHSTW, p29) And after Digby recalls Milt’s words about the relativity of morals Hislop is left to grasp at straws vaguely reciting the fact that morals must be and are only founded in God. W.O. Mitchell introduces the Ben’s to throw a wrench into the overly simplistic view of religion Hislop was trying to develop. Without this view, religion as it is, idealistically the exact same for everyone, couldn’t exist. This forces him and the reader to come to terms with the fact that there is no single set of basic intrinsic morals all people will gravitate towards.

God will not be bound by our limitations and expectations. If what W.O. Mitchell suggests is true, then most people in the world are lost spiritually, and aren’t living to their full potential. They may believe in something, but are missing out on the benefits of conceiving God on a higher and simpler level. He also implies that organized religion is a means to confusing the reality of Gods existence – immanently leading people astray from the truth. Essentially – the search for God is a personal one, when influenced by the agendas of others it becomes muddled and lost.