

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The Christian fundamentalist movement in the United States has had far-reaching effects, including in politics, church management, and education. It makes Christian fundamentalism one of the common topics covered in the study of religion and sociology in the United States. The reduction of religion due to liberalism and secularization of society led to the fundamentalist movement to restore the original Christian teachings. This movement is a reaction to the state of the church that no longer shows the strength of the Christian faith in facing the world, as well as a reaction to the development of science and technology.

Religious fundamentalism is mainly an excessive tendency to preserve the principles of faith and their strict applications without compromise. It is a concentrated effort to dwell on the truths, as purely as possible, and avoid potential errors and inaccuracies, in matters of beliefs and conduct (Hood et al., 2005). Religious fundamentalism may be distinguished from religiosity, defined as an individual's commitment to a religion. In contrast, religious fundamentalism is concerned with the structure or system within which beliefs are organized, rather than with the personal dimension associated with religiosity (Altemeyer and Hunsberger, 1992). Christian fundamentalism is not a monolithic movement. There is a broad range of beliefs and practices among Christian fundamentalists, and they can be found in various Christian

denominations. Some Christian fundamentalists are actively engaged in political and social activism, while others focus more on religious separation and personal piety.

The psychology of religion is interdisciplinary, with links to many areas of general psychology. The most fruitful pursuit of this field is when its links are strong. The psychology of religion is the methodical application of psychology's tools and analytical frameworks to the large topic of religion. The psychology of religion's boundaries has always been difficult to define, especially given the field's long history of furnishing groundworks for religious literacy and exhortation. (Wulff, 2014:4)

The Psychology of Religious Fundamentalism is a theoretical work that considers the reality of religious fundamentalism from a psychological standpoint and contributes detailed histories of the development of a number of fundamentalist religious traditions (Martin, 2007:574). There is considerable interest in the various explanations for the strength of fundamentalism in the lives of its adherents. In view of the frequency with which fundamentalist faith-motivated violence is occurring in various parts of the world, there is a pressing need for a more detailed examination of this subject. Christian fundamentalism's rise relates to the armored structure of fundamentalisms, which are hierarchical, centrally organized, precisely delineated against outsiders, and goal-driven towards a sacred past or future. This demonstrates how fundamentalism studies can be used to better understand the structure of religious movements. Religious fundamentalism has influenced individual attitudes and behaviors throughout history and continues to do so. This demonstrates how

fundamentalism studies can be used to better understand the impact of religion on society.

Fundamentalist Christians are also firmly anti-abortion and, as with their opposition to homosexual marriage, have frequently utilized their influence in government to impose severe anti-abortion state laws (Marcovitz, 2010: 43). Some states, however, have rejected fundamentalist efforts and the severe anti-abortion laws they propose. Fundamentalists campaigned in support of a South Dakota law that prohibited almost all abortions during the 2008 election, but it was defeated by voters. Voters in Colorado rejected a referendum that would have established human existence at the moment of conception, a view supported by anti-abortion campaigners. Despite the same-sex marriage ban, abortion rights restrictions had the potential to harm households across the three states.

The influence of Christian fundamentalism on contemporary society manifests as a clash between conventional and modern perspectives within religious settings. Pleders of Christian fundamentalism align themselves as guardians of established religious norms and convictions. They assert these principles in response to what they perceive as the disruptive influence of modernism, which is seen as promoting a decline in religious adherence and advocating for a literal interpretation of Scripture. These defenders of fundamentalism resist symbolic interpretations of verses, leading to a conflict with modernism, which relies on critical analysis and a more liberal interpretation of religious texts.

Paul Schrader's *First Reformed* (2017) is a provocative and introspective film which addresses themes of faith, despair, environmental degradation, and personal crisis within the context of a small Reformed church. The title of the film, "First Reformed," relates to the historical and theological foundations of the main character's church. The Protestant Reformation's Reformed tradition emphasizes key theological principles such as predestination, the authority of Scripture, and God's sovereignty. These elements shape the film's thematic underpinnings.

First Reformed (2017) implicitly focuses on fundamentalism as a central theme, but certain elements within the film can be interpreted in relation to fundamentalist tendencies or beliefs in general. Fundamentalism, contrary to popular belief, is a movement within various religions, including Christianity, that emphasizes strict adherence to traditional beliefs and practices. The film examines the relationship between religious psychology and religious practice. The film explores spirituality, environmentalism, and depression, as well as the faith crisis of a pastor of a small church in upstate New York. The film illustrates the conflict between traditional, devotional church services based on silence and bible study and mega-churches' entertainment-oriented performance. The film addresses concern about the psychological processes that drive religious beliefs and practices, as well as the consequences for individuals and societies.

In the film *First Reformed* (2017), the psychology of religion is evident through the portrayal of the protagonist's struggle with faith, despair, and self-neglect. Toller, the pastor, grapples with alcoholism, which is linked to his past and the guilt he

feels over his son's death in the Iraq War. This illustrates the psychological impact of trauma and loss on religious practitioners. Additionally, the film depicts Toller's transformation and his recitation of Revelations 11:18, reflecting the psychological complexities of religious belief and the influence of environmental and personal despair on faith. The movie also explores the tension between traditional church services and the impact of modernity on religious practices, shedding light on the psychological dimensions of religious experiences and behaviors. These elements collectively demonstrate the intersection of psychology and religious practice in the film.

1.2 Research Problems

1. How are the intrinsic aspects portrayed in *First Reformed* (2017)?
2. How is Christian fundamentalism portrayed in *First Reformed* (2017)?
3. What are the effects of Christian fundamentalism in *First Reformed* (2017) portrayed?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The writer has three objectives of the study, which are:

1. To analyze the intrinsic aspects from the movie.
2. To explain the psychological aspect and the influence of Christian religious fundamentalism through the main character.

3. To analyze the impact of religious fundamentalism on self-control and women perspectives.

1.4 Previous Studies

To show the novelty of the research, the writer uses four research journals, including two journals and three theses. Some writers have conducted the research about Religious Fundamentalism. They are (1) Mohammad Alvian Dharma Nararya and Ekky Imanjaya; (2) Michalina Czerwońska; (3) Bunga Christiani; (4) Taufik Febriansyah; and (5) Kresentia Madina Jelangdeka and Bayu Kristianto.

The first research entitled Representation of Radical Environmentalism in *Pom Poko* and *First Reformed*, it was published in 2023. The authors selected both films to demonstrate that the profound environmentalist dogma and actions have been portrayed in a relevant manner since 1994 and continue to be so in 2017 and beyond. The study aims to explore how narrative films can impart a multifaceted and emotionally resonant perspective to otherwise deeply separating issues by utilizing impressive techniques including scriptwriting, cinematography, and directing. It seeks to demonstrate how a film can be both forcefully compelling and adhere to the environmental principles it advocates. Additionally, the study examines how narrative films can offer depth and philosophical insight into these issues without compromising the inherent features of fictional art forms.

The second research conducted an analysis of the Collaborative Survival in Paul Schrader's *First Reformed*, it was published in 2023. This research investigates

Paul Schrader's film *First Reformed* through an ecocritical lens, drawing upon Lawrence Buell's conceptualization of the climate crisis as a conflict rooted in imagery. It explores the necessity and pursuit of novel, collective perspectives to address and mitigate this crisis, departing from individualistic frameworks. The study aims to examine the environmental dimensions of *First Reformed* from a novel standpoint. It will pursue a line of reasoning intended to illustrate how *First Reformed* advocates for shifts in perspective, notably from individualistic to collective viewpoints, as a strategy for survival in a compromised and noxious environment. The final scenes of *First Reformed* appear to corroborate Cvetkovich's assertions, specifically the notion that the formation of emotionally committed communities is essential for political efficacy. The research argues *First Reformed* appears to highlight the problematic nature of political actions deeply entrenched in negative emotions experienced in isolation, contrasting them with the optimism that arises from interpersonal connections.

The third research entitled *Religious Abuse and Fundamentalism as Seen in The Crucible*, it was published in 2018. This research's purposes are to reveal the abuse of religious power in *The Crucible* directed by Nicholas Hytner in 1996. *The Crucible* depicts the story of the punishment of witches in Salem, Massachusetts, in the 17th century. This study scrutinizes how religious authority can serve as a tool for usurping power to exonerate an individual who would otherwise be deemed culpable, employing a political sociology framework. The examination is underpinned by theories of religious abuse and fundamentalism. The study uses qualitative method to present the

data. Data and theories are gathered through library research utilizing written sources such as books to support the analysis. This study demonstrates the occurrence of religious abuse within the subject of the study, evidenced by the findings and outcomes of religious abuse, as exemplified in *The Crucible*.

The fourth research entitled Discussion of Fundamentalism Issue in “Fitna” The Movie Using Recontextualization Theory, it was published 2008. The objective of this research is to investigate the recontextualization strategies employed by Indonesians in shaping the representation of Islam and to explore how audiences perceive and react to Islamization and fundamental issues. The analysis of the data utilizes a CDA (Critical Discourse Analysis) framework as outlined by Norman Fairclough, incorporating the theory of Recontextualization. The findings of the study highlight various strategies employed by viewers to reconceptualize the narration presented in the movie. The research result is according to the Indonesian’s audience, Fitna is a documentary movie without valid sources; the validity of the source is doubted because they sense that there is some kind of data manipulation consciously presented to disrepute Islam.

The fifth research entitled Nature through God’s Eyes: Eco-theological Perspectives in Paul Schrader’s First Reformed, it was published in 2020. This study investigates the depiction of the reconciliation between Christianity and environmentalism in the film First Reformed. Utilizing Jürgen Moltmann’s eco-theological concept and Kierkegaard’s notion of despair, the study reveals that while

the movie illustrates Christianity as both a supporter and a hindrance to environmentalism, its ultimate message leans toward portraying the church's potential response to the crisis. It involves embracing perspectives and values that extend beyond the fundamental doctrines of Christianity and align more closely with environmental concerns.

The novelty that the writer raise from this research is in the object of research material, namely using the movie *First Reformed* (2017) which has not been studied before. In addition, the approach that the author uses in this research is the psychology of Christian fundamentalism which focuses on its impact.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the notions of religious fundamentalism and modernity. In this study, the author has limitations in the study of objects. The writer divides the analysis into two elements, there are intrinsic and extrinsic. The intrinsic elements studied include theme, characterization, setting, and plot. As for extrinsic, the author examines the psychology of religious fundamentalism and its impact.

1.6 Research Methods

1.6.1 Method of Data Collection

The primary data of the thesis is a *The First Reformed* (2017) movie which is directed by Paul Schrader. The writer uses a theory by Peter C. Hill from his book *The Psychology of Religious Fundamentalism* (2005). The secondary data comprise references and materials pertinent to the study, selected from various sources such

as textbooks, internet sources, articles, papers, dissertations, author biographies, journals, and other relevant data.

The study was conducted through qualitative library research method that rely on pre-existing theories or frameworks to guide data collection and analysis. The material has been gathered from electronic sources. By doing close viewing and close reading through transcriptions, the writer tries to understand and to analyze the movie in order to interpret a brief passage of the character psychology in his reformed faith on Christian Fundamentalism.

1.6.2 Method of Approach

In this study, the writer utilizes the objective approach. The objective theories consider the work of art not in relation to its constitutive external elements, but in isolation from all these external points of reference, as a self-sufficient entity constituted by its parts in their internal relations (Abrams, 1953: 27). These interpretations of objective research encompass crucial facets of our usage of this term, indicating diverse perspectives on understanding objectivity (Harre & Krausz, 1996).

In analyzing the object of the study, the writer uses a religion psychology theory. Based on the Book *Psychology of Religion* by Peter C. Hill, psychology of religion approach is a subfield of psychology that explores the psychological aspects of religious beliefs, practices, and experiences (Hill, 2018:21). It seeks to understand

how individuals form, express, and transform their religious beliefs, and how these beliefs influence various aspects of their lives, including mental health, well-being, and interpersonal relationships.

1.7 Organization of Writing

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains the background of study, research problems, objective of the study, previous studies, research method, and writing organization.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter describes the theoretical framework and research method used for the study. The theoretical framework is an explanation of the theory used for analyzing the research problems which is the psychology of religious fundamentalism.

CHAPTER III

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter consists of the result of the discussion and the answer from research problems. The writer analyzed the impact of religious fundamentalism psychology towards Christianity church activity in the

film *First Reformed* and linked it to the theory used for the study.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

This chapter contains the summary of the analysis result based on the research.

REFERENCES