

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

In American society, religion plays a part in forming what people think is right and wrong, how they act and how they live together in their communities. While religion can provide guidance and comfort, it can also create opposition when beliefs are practiced in a strict and extreme way. One form of that belief is religious fundamentalism. According to Conkle (1996), religious fundamentalism is a type of religion that considers its sacred texts or other religious authorities as definitive sources of absolute, clear, and unalterable truth. This rigid belief system often rejects different perspectives and can lead to intolerance toward those who do not share the same beliefs (Conkle, 1996). In a society that values freedom, diversity and individual rights, religious fundamentalism can be seen as something that conflicts with these values.

This social and ideological issue is often shown in the media, especially in films and television series. One television series that the writer assumes depicted religious fundamentalism is the Netflix miniseries *Midnight Mass* released on September 24th, 2021. The miniseries was created and directed by Mike Flanagan. It was also nominated in thirty awards including Saturn Awards for Best Streaming Limited Event Series and won four awards including Bram Stoker Awards for Superior Achievement in Screenplay and Fangoria Chainsaw Awards for Best Series (IMDb, n.d.). The miniseries tells the rise of religious fervor in a small community that leads to increasingly extreme behaviors among its people.

This study points out on that aspect and aims to specifically explore how religious fundamentalism controls a community and how that community uses human values to try to resist it.

*Midnight Mass* (2021) follows the events that happen in Crockett Island after the arrival of a mysterious young priest, Father Paul. As miraculous events begin to occur, the residents' religious devotion intensifies and this leads them to accept increasingly disturbing events as divine intervention. Crockett Island in the miniseries captures the small religious community that believes their faith is different and more superior than others' and becomes so obsessed with it that they are willing to believe anything that derives from that belief. The increasing religious devotion gradually leads to fear, obedience and the suppression of doubt within the community. Moreover, the miniseries also presents moral conflicts that reflect tensions between rigid belief and human values in American society.

While numerous researchers have analyzed Netflix miniseries *Midnight Mass* (2021) and explored religious fundamentalism and resistance in other media, there appears to be a gap in the literature regarding this topic in this miniseries. This study fills that gap by using George Lakoff's Strict Father and Nurturant Parent models to analyze how religious fundamentalism and resistance to religious fundamentalism are shown in *Midnight Mass* (2021). By looking at all seven episodes, the researcher aims to give a clear discussion of how people understand and practice religion in different ways and how these differences can shape their moral values.

This study assumes that the depiction of religious fundamentalism in *Midnight Mass* (2021) might offer a representation of rigid moral authority to justify harmful actions and to fulfill selfish agenda. Furthermore, this study also assumes that the miniseries might offer a representation of empathy and moral responsibility as a resistance to religious fundamentalism. Through this analysis, the study hopes to add to discussions about religion in American society and show how empathy and responsibility can help people resist rigid beliefs.

## 1.2 Research Questions

The research questions of the study are:

1. How does *Midnight Mass* (2021) depict religious fundamentalism through the lens of the Strict Father model?
2. How does *Midnight Mass* (2021) depict the resistance to religious fundamentalism through the lens of the Nurturant Parent model?

## 1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

1. To examine the depiction of religious fundamentalism through the lens of the Strict Father model in *Midnight Mass* (2021).
2. To examine the depiction of resistance to religious fundamentalism through the lens of the Nurturant Parent model in *Midnight Mass* (2021).

## 1.4 Scope of the Study

Netflix's miniseries *Midnight Mass* (2021) presents many aspects of religious fundamentalism. The writer gives a specific limitation on the scope of

the study that is religious fundamentalism and the resistance to religious fundamentalism aspects that can be seen in the seven episodes in miniseries *Midnight Mass* (2021).

### 1.5 Previous Studies

The writer has found five previous studies that were relevant for this study. The first related study is an undergraduate thesis entitled *Religious Abuse And Fundamentalism As Seen in The Crucible* by Bunga Christiani. In this thesis, Christiani discussed how religion is used to manipulate and punish innocent people accused of witchcraft. It also provides an analysis of how religious power can be misused and abused.

The second related study is a journal article entitled *The Intersection Between Faith and Horror: The Vampiric Angels of Netflix's Midnight Mass* by Kamilia. In this journal article, Kamilia talks about how *Midnight Mass* (2021) mixes religious ideas with horror by showing how people confuse a vampire for an angel which leads them to act in extreme ways. This connects to the writer's focus on religious fundamentalism because it shows how blind faith can lead people to make dangerous decisions.

The third related study is an essay entitled '*Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood*' *Real presence and personhood in Midnight Mass and Lips of Thomas* by Cormac Power. In this essay, Power talks how *Midnight Mass* (2021) and *Lips of Thomas* performance both focus on the Christian ritual of the Eucharist, where bread and wine symbolize the body and blood of Christ.

Moreover, the essay looks at how both *Midnight Mass* (2021) and *Lips of Thomas* challenge and interact with Christian rituals.

The fourth related study is a journal article entitled *How Do We Distinguish the Holy from the Demonic? An Anthropotheistic Meditation on Mike Flanagan's Midnight Mass* by Christoffer Lammer-Heindel. In this journal article, Lammer-Heindel discusses *Midnight Mass* (2021) is not just a horror story but also philosophical critique of Christianity and faith in general. The journal also explores the idea that the miniseries is not just a critique of Christianity, but also a commentary about the ways people respond to death and the afterlife.

The last related study is an undergraduate thesis entitled *The Gothic Horror Tradition and Religious Sanctity: Terror and Faith in Midnight Mass* (2021) by Kalen Krantz. In this thesis, Krantz explores how the show uses elements of Gothic horror while also bringing something new by focusing on religious questions and ideas of holiness in to create tension and critique societal beliefs.

Based on these previous studies regarding the miniseries *Midnight Mass* (2021) and the topic of religious fundamentalism, the writer found a gap where research on religious fundamentalism, the resistance to religious fundamentalism and George Lakoff's Strict Father and Nurturant Parent models had not been explored in the specific miniseries *Midnight Mass* (2021).

## **1.6 Methods of Study**

This research employs three methods of study: data and the sources of the data, method of data collection, and method of approach.

### **1.6.1 Data and the Source of the Data**

The primary data source for this study is the Netflix miniseries *Midnight Mass* (2021). Meanwhile, the secondary data source is from books, journals, and academic articles that can be found on internet. These secondary sources help support the study by providing information and perspectives that help to analyze the primary data.

### **1.6.2 Method of Data Collection**

This study uses a qualitative method based on library research. According to George (2008), library research is a method in which researchers gather and use resources that provide relevant information or expert insights connected to their research question. To gather this data, the writer follows a series of steps. First, the writer watches and examines *Midnight Mass* (2021) thoroughly to understand and identify the concept of religious fundamentalism in the miniseries. Next, the writer transcribes relevant scenes from the miniseries into text and then will follow by reviewing existing literature and academic sources related to the miniseries. Finally, the writer analyzes the findings using the religious fundamentalism framework and compiles critical insights and perspectives on religious fundamentalism and resistance to it portrayed in *Midnight Mass* (2021), supported by relevant texts.

### **1.6.3 Method of Approach**

In examining religious fundamentalism in the Netflix miniseries *Midnight Mass* (2021), the writer analyzes the intrinsic narrative elements, such as character and characterization, setting, and conflict, to investigate how religious

fundamentalism and resistance to it are depicted in the miniseries. To gain a deeper understanding of the issue, this study applies George Lakoff's Strict Father and Nurturant Parent model as its main theoretical framework, since these models focus on the opposing moral systems that shape the central conflict in the miniseries.

## **1.7 Organization of The Writing**

### **CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION**

The first chapter will consist of the background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, previous studies, scope of the study, methods of study, and writing organization.

### **CHAPTER II INTRINSIC THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The second chapter will consist of an intrinsic theoretical framework. It will include main theories that support the analysis.

### **CHAPTER III EXTRINSIC THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The third chapter will consist of an extrinsic theoretical framework. It will include main theories that support the analysis.

### **CHAPTER IV DISCUSSION**

The fourth chapter will consist of the discussion concerning the answers to the research questions of the thesis.

### **CHAPTER V CONCLUSION**

The last chapter will conclude the whole discussion of the thesis.