

**RELIGIOUS COMPLEXITY OF THE PATEL FAMILY
IN MARTEL'S *LIFE OF PI***



A Thesis

*Submitted to the Faculty of Cultural Sciences Hasanuddin University in Partial
Fulfilment for The Requirement to Obtain Sarjana Degree in English*

WRITTEN BY

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**ENGLISH LITERATURE STUDY PROGRAM
FACULTY OF CULTURAL SCIENCES
HASANUDDIN UNIVERSITY
2024**

LEGITIMATION

THESIS

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BY

FAHMI AMINULLAH

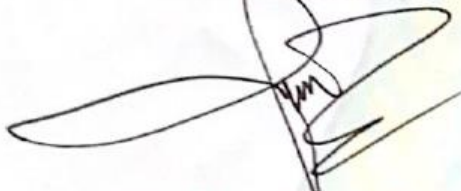
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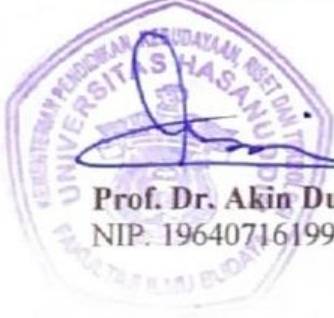
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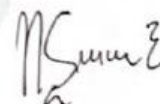
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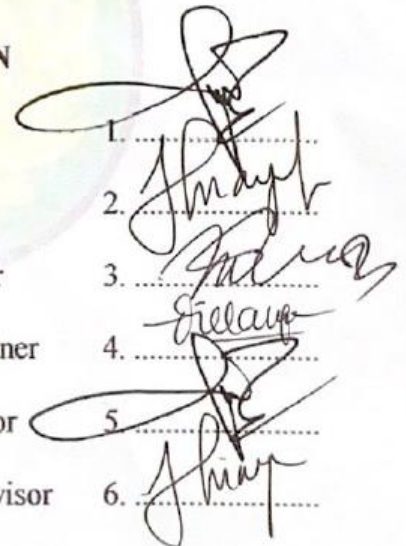
AGREEMENT

On July 12, 2024, the Board of Thesis Examination has kindly approved a thesis by Fahmi Aminullah (F041201083) entitled *Religious Complexity of The Patel Family in Martel's Life of Pi* submitted in fulfillment of one of the requirements to obtain *Sarjana* Degree in English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Hasanuddin University.

Makassar, July 17, 2024

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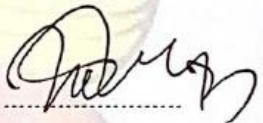


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DECLARATION

The thesis by Fahmi Aminullah (F041201083) entitled *Religious Complexity of The Patel Family in Martel's Life of Pi* has been revised as advised during the examination on Friday, July 12th 2024 and is approved by the Board of Undergraduate Thesis Examiners:

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Hereby, the writer declares that this thesis is written by himself. This thesis does not contain any materials which have been published by other people, and it does not cite other people's ideas except quotations and references.

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APPROVAL FORM

With reference to the letter of the Dean of Cultural Sciences Number 1299/UN4.9.1/KEP/2023 regarding supervision, we hereby confirm to approve the thesis draft by **Fahmi Aminullah** (F041201083) to be examined at the English Department, Faculty of Cultural Sciences.

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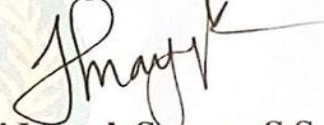
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Makassar, 7th July 2024
The Writer,

Fahmi Aminullah

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ABSTRAK

Fahmi Aminullah. 2024. *Kompleksitas Keberagamaan Keluarga Patel dalam Life of Pi karya Martel* (Dibimbing oleh Abbas dan Andi Inayah Soraya)

Penelitian ini membahas fenomena sosial pada novel *Life of Pi* yang mengisahkan tentang seorang remaja bernama Pi yang sangat terobsesi dalam hal agama. Dia bahkan sampai menjalankan tiga agama sekaligus, yakni Hindu, Kristen, dan Islam. Dia hidup dalam suatu keluarga yang spiritualitasnya berbeda dengan keluarga lain pada umumnya. Keluarga tersebut memiliki kompleksitas keberagaman, yang mana masing-masing anggota keluarganya memiliki perjalanan spiritualitas yang berbeda-beda. Ayahnya tidak memperdulikan agama sama sekali dan hanya mementingkan bisnis, sedangkan ibunya memiliki kepercayaan terhadap Hindu, kemudian kakaknya tidak memikirkan apapun kecuali hiburan seperti musik, film, dan kriket.

Pendekatan Strukturalisme menjadi metode ilmiah yang digunakan oleh peneliti dalam menganalisis novel *Life of Pi* karya Yann Martel. Pendekatan ini menekankan pada unsur-unsur intrinsik novel *Life of Pi* seperti penokohan, plot, setting, dan tema. Kemudian data penelitian diolah secara kualitatif dan hasil penelitian ditampilkan secara deskriptif.

Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa keluarga Patel dalam novel *Life of Pi* merupakan sebuah keluarga yang memiliki kompleksitas keberagaman. Hal tersebut disebabkan oleh perbedaan pemahaman yang dimiliki masing-masing anggota keluarga yang ada pada keluarga tersebut. Penulis meyakini bahwa fenomena tersebut merupakan dampak dari beberapa faktor seperti modernisasi dan dampak dari lingkungan yang mereka tinggali. Faktor modernisasi membuat keluarga tersebut menerapkan pemahaman keluarga modern, yang mana lebih terbuka dengan pemahaman tiap anggota keluarga dan saling menghormati pendapat satu sama lain. Sedangkan faktor lingkungan mampu membuka pandangan kepada tiap anggota keluarga dengan melihat keberagaman budaya yang ada disekitarnya.

Kata kunci: Keluarga, Kompleksitas Keberagaman, Strukturalisme, Modernisasi, Lingkungan, *Life of Pi*.

ABSTRACT

Fahmi Aminullah. 2024. *Religious Complexity of The Patel Family in Martel's Life of Pi* (Supervised by **Abbas** and **Andi Inayah Soraya**)

This research discusses social phenomena in the novel *Life of Pi* which tells the story of a teenager named Pi who is very obsessed with religion. He even practiced three religions at once, namely Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. He lives in a family whose spirituality is different from other families in general. The family has religious complexity, where each family member has a different spiritual journey. His father didn't care about religion at all and only cared about business, while his mother believed in Hinduism, and his older brother didn't think about anything except entertainment such as music, films and cricket.

The Structuralism approach has become a scientific method used by researchers in analyzing the novel *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel. This approach emphasizes the intrinsic elements of the novel *Life of Pi* such as characterization, plot, setting, and theme. Then the research data is processed qualitatively and the research results are displayed descriptively.

The results of this research show that the Patel family in the novel *Life of Pi* is a family that has religious complexity. This is caused by differences in the understanding of each family member in the family. The author believes that this phenomenon is the impact of several factors such as modernization and the impact of the environment they live in. The modernization factor makes the family apply the understanding of the modern family, which is more open to the understanding of each family member and respects each other's opinions. Meanwhile, environmental factors is able to open the views of each family member by seeing the cultural diversity around them.

Keywords: Family, Religious Complexity, Structuralism, Modernization, Environment, *Life of Pi*.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the writer explains the introduction of the research, consisting of the Background of The Study, Identification of The Study, Research Question, Objective of The Study, and Sequence of The Writing.

1.1. Background of The Study

Currently, there are many beliefs have spread in the world. The number of religions spread throughout the continent has now reached thousands of religions. There are three major beliefs that are widely adopted by people from all corners of the Earth, namely Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism. Christianity is an Abrahamic religion that originated as a sect of Second Temple Judaism in the middle of the first century AD. Christianity has played a major role in the formation of Western Civilization. Islam is a religion of Abrahamic monotheism centered primarily around the Qur'an, a religious text that Muslims believe to be the holy book and the direct word of Allah (God) as revealed to Muhammad, the primary and final prophet of Islam. Hinduism is the dominant faith in South Asia, especially in India and Nepal, containing a wide variety of traditions. Hinduism tends to be like a set of various philosophical or intellectual views, rather than a standard and uniform set of beliefs as in Abrahamic religions.

As one of the issues that are very often encountered in real life. The issues of religious complexity also often raised in a novel-shaped literary work. For example, *Abide with Me* by Elizabeth Strout, *On Beauty* by Zadie Smith, and *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel. Literature is an expression of the human person in the form

of experiences, thoughts, feelings, ideas, enthusiasm, beliefs in a form of concrete images that evoke fascination with language tools (Sumardjo and Saini, 1997).

One of the literary works that raised the issue of religious complexity is the novel *Life of Pi* written by Yann Martel. The novel tells of an Indian teenager named Pi drifting on a lifeboat with a tiger. However, in the story of the novel, not only that part is interesting, but also like the story of his experiences from childhood to finally growing up as a teenager. In his journey of growing up, he experienced many interesting things like living close to animals because his family owns a zoo, his quest for God, and his love story with a dancing girl. Pi lives in a modern family, which allows him to explore everything around him, including religion.

Yann Martel is a Canadian male born on June 25, 1963. After college, Yann Martel wrote several books, one a short story and the other a feminist novel, both of which were commercial failures, and decided to travel the world to experience life and find inspiration. Yann Martel emerged as a prolific writer in 1993, with his first publication, *The Facts Behind the Helsinki Roccamatios* and *Other Stories*, covering themes such as storytelling and its history, illness, youthful suffering, music, war and the importance of material things in human life. This successful endeavor paved the way for further publication and it was in 1996 when he created his first novel, *Self*. The novel reveals the story of an itinerant writer and his sexual identity. Until when he visited India, he finally got another idea in writing a novel, which resulted in a novel that became one of his best works entitled *Life of Pi*.

The author's reason for choosing this novel is because this book is the best work written by Yann Martel. The novel won the *Man Booker Prize* in 2002 and

became an international bestseller. After reading the novel *Life of Pi*, the writer found the issue of religious complexity in it, interestingly it happened to a family in the story. By doing this research, we can know that differences are not a reason for people to be divided from each other, but rather, the differences that we have each other can unite us. The writer thinks the life of a family that continues to live in harmony and peace despite the differences in beliefs within it as in the title of this thesis is *Religious Complexity of The Family in Martel's Life of Pi*.

1.2. Identification of The Study

Novel *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel has some problem between the characters after read the novel, the writer found some problems in *Life of Pi*, as follows:

1. Family life conflicts of the Patel family.
2. The religious complexity of the Patel family.
3. The social background of the Patel family in the novel.
4. The richness of Indian culture which is shown as the background of the novel *Life of Pi*.

1.3. Research Question

From the identification of the study above, the writer emphasizes the analysis to answer these questions as follows:

1. What is the religious complexity of the family in the novel *Life of Pi*?
2. What is the social background influence the emergence of the religious complexity of family in the novel?

1.4. Objective of The Study

Based on the research question statement above, the writer determines two objectives of the study as follows:

1. To describe the complexity of the family in the novel *Life of Pi*.
2. To find out the social background which influence the emergence of the religious complexity of family in the novel.

1.5. Sequence of The Writing

This research consists of five chapters. Chapter one is an Introduction consists of Background, Identification of The Problem, Research Questions, Objectives of The Study, and Sequence of The Study. Chapter two is Previous Study which provides an overview of several Related Research, and Structuralism Approach. Chapter three is Methodology that contains Methodological Design, Method of Collecting Data, Method of Analyzing Data, and Research Procedure. Chapter four is about discusses data of collection and the results of research related to the *Life of Pi* novel by Yann Martel. And Chapter Five is the closing chapter that consists of a conclusion of the research and suggestion from the writer.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the writer discusses about Literary Preview, which consist of Previous Study, Structuralism Approach, and Religious Complexity.

2.1. Previous Studies

The writer has conducted research in search of previous studies that are relevant to support this research. The first relevant research is *The Personality Dynamics of the Character "Pi" in the Novel "Life of Pi" by Yann Martel: Sigmund Freud's Psychological Study and its Relation to Literary Learning in High School*, written by Satria Oki Putra in 2016, and published by the University of Mataram. In this research, Oki's want to examine the psychological condition of the main character in Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* book named Pi. In his research, Oki's used the psychoanalytic approach proposed by Sigmund Freud. Which in this theory, Freud put forward, Id, Ego, and Super Ego each instinct (Id), I (ego) and conscience (super ego), (Sarwono, 2012:31). The results of this study found that there are three forms of personality dynamics, namely instinct, anxiety, and ego defense mechanisms.

The next relevant research is entitled *Beliefs as Narratives in Yann Martel's Life of Pi: Walter Fisher's Narrative Paradigm*, written by Taufik Oktodila Hasbi in 2016, published by Andalas University. Taufik's aimed to examine how beliefs are described as Narratives in Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* according to Walter Fisher's Narrative Paradigm. Taufik's also wants to increase the number of research concerned with *Life of Pi* and Narrative Paradigm. Beside that with the research, Taufik's wants to increase the awareness of narratives amongst the public. In conducting the analysis, Taufik's focuses on the approach from the Narrative

Paradigm theory by Walter Fisher. The narrative paradigm is a communication theory that analyzes the influence of narrative on human survival in decision-making and reality. The results of the analysis conducted by Thaufik's show that, in the novel *Life of Pi*, Yann Martel describes that the narrative position around humans is essential. Where belief and reality are influenced by human involvement in weighing and consuming the narratives around them, which directly cause diversity in the choice of beliefs.

The last relevant research is the third research is *The Love Conflict in Green's The Fault in Our Stars* written by Nurul Nabila Said in 2022 and published by Universitas Hasanuddin. Nurul's explains the impact of love conflicts and the resolution of these conflicts in the novel *The Fault in Our Stars* by John Green. In analyzing the novel, Nurul's uses the Structuralism Approach, a literary research method that focuses on the intrinsic aspects of literary works, including characterization, plot, setting, theme, and others. In collecting research data, Nurul's also uses the literature review techniques. In Nurul's research, love conflict became the research issue in the novel. After analyzing the novel, Nurul's found that the impact of the love conflict on the main character in *The Fault in Our Stars* is disappointment, guilt, sadness, insecurity, and anxiety. Then Hazel Grace and Augustus Waters resolve the love conflict by means of the two-way communication they build.

This research different with the first relevant study is the issues and the approach theory that are used, the issue that Oki's raised is about the psychological condition of Pi's character, therefore he uses a psychoanalytic approach. While the

issue in this research is about the beliefs of the Patel family in the novel *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel, therefore the writer uses the Structuralism Approach. Although the issues raised in second study are same as the issues in this study, which is about researching character beliefs, the difference is that the approach theory used in Thaufik's research and this research are different. The writer considers that last study is relevant to this research because the approach used is the same, namely Structuralism Approach. However, what makes this research different from Nurul's research is that the objects studied are different. Based on this explanation, the writer believe that this research is different from existing studies.

2.2. Structuralism Approach

Structure comes from the Latin word *structura*, which means shape or building. The structural approach began to develop since 340 BC. Aristotle has recognized the structural approach itself since the Greek era with the concepts of wholeness, unity, complexity, and coherence (Teeuw, 1988: 121-134). One of the French linguistic figures, namely Ferdinand de Saussure, became an important figure in the development of structuralism theory in 20th century. Basically, structuralism referred to a group of writers in Paris who were based on Ferdinand de Saussure's methods. They opposed several literary theories, including theories which held that literary works were imitations of reality, literature as an expression of the author's feelings, and theories which considered literature as a medium communication between the author and his readers.

Therefore, literary structuralism departs from linguistics, where this approach aims to study literature from an objective point of view by looking at its

structure. According to Semi (1993), the structural approach is the objective approach. Structural approach is the objective approach, because it objectively responds to literary works based on an understanding of the literary work itself.

In a literary work, there is a structure of several building elements in it. Therefore, the elements in the structure of a literary work certainly cannot be independently, because one element influences each other. In studying this matter, the theory of literary structuralism was born, which will be able to help researchers of literary works in uncovering the relationship between the elements contained in the structure that builds literary works. With structuralism, we can show that each element has a certain function according to that structure. Nurgiyantoro (1995) divided the elements of a novel into three parts, namely: story facts, themes, and literary devices. There are several stages in carrying out an analysis structure, where the object is fiction, including identifying, studying, and describing the function and relationship between the intrinsic elements of the fiction.

As the writer has explained earlier, in a literary work, several elements are interrelated in it. Especially in a novel, the intrinsic elements include plot, setting, theme, character, and characterization. The following is a brief explanation of each of these intrinsic elements such as characters, plot, setting, and theme.

2.2.1. Characters

Character is elements that refer to actors who have a role in the progress of the novel story. According to Sudjiman (1990: 78), characters are fictional individuals who experience events or treatments in various events in the story. The characters themselves divided into main character and additional characters. The

main character himself is a character that has an important role in the progress of the story, and often appears in the story. Unlike additional characters, these characters only appear once or a few times in the story, making them not as important as the main characters.

Unlike characters, characterization includes a broader meaning. According to Nurgiyantoro (1995: 248), the term "characterization" has a broader meaning than "character", because it also covers the issue of who the story characters are, what their character is, and how they are placed and depicted in a story, so that they can provide a clear description to readers.

Nurgiyantoro (1995) distinguishes characters into several criteria that are protagonist and antagonist.

1. The protagonist is a character who presents something that is in accordance with the reader views and expectations.
2. The antagonist is the cause of the conflict. Usually opposition to the protagonist, directly or indirectly, is physical or mental.

Based on the explanation above, the writer can conclude that the character is the person who is fully responsible for the events that occur in the story. These people will experience or be witnesses to an event in the story. Each character has their own portion in the story, the main character will appear more often and have more influence on the story than additional characters. Meanwhile, characterization is a depiction of each character that will determine the course of the story. In this depiction, characters are divided into two types, namely protagonists who tend to appear kind, and antagonists who are the opposite.

However, not all literary works have antagonist characters in them, it depends on the author expressing his ideas

2.2.2. Plot

Plot is the stages or sequence of stories that exist in a novel literary work. The plot is the sequence of events in a fictional story, concerning what happens that planned by the author (Saparina, 1984: 45). Each stage of the story is be related with each other, that making a unified story. According to Jabrohim (2003), plot is a series of events arranged in a cause-and-effect relationship.

According to Aminuddin (2010), plot is a series of stories formed by stages of events to weave a story presented by the actors in a story. The stages in the plot that the writer referred are divided into five stages, including exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.

1. *Exposition*

The first stage starts the story in the novel. At this stage, the novelist will introduce the characters who will play a role in the story that will be presented. Apart from introducing the characters, other elements such as setting will also be explained.

2. *Rising Action*

It is the second stage that will present a conflict and its causes. The conflict will certainly affect the continuation of the story. At this stage, the novelist hopes to make readers curious about the continuation of the story after knowing the conflict that was raised.

3. *Climax*

In this third stage, the conflict that occurred in the previous stage will escalate and make the character look more difficult with the conflict. So, the novelist hopes to make readers more interested in finishing the story in the novel they are reading.

4. *Falling Action*

At this stage, the conflict has previously peaked at the climax stage will subside. This is usually shown by the character in the story finally being able to find a solution to the problem he faced before. The tension experienced earlier will gradually decrease before entering the end of the story.

5. *Resolution*

At this stage, it can be said to be the completion stage of the story. No more conflicts are raised, with that the readers can already conclude the impression. Usually, at this stage, novelists often insert a message that they want to convey to readers.

The writer concluded that plot is the stages of events that occur from the beginning to the end of the story. These stages are divided into five parts, namely the introduction of the character (exposition), the beginning of the problem (rising action), the peak of the problem (climax), the tension of the problem decreasing (falling action), and finally the resolution of the problem (resolution). Each of these stages is interconnected with each other.

2.2.3. Setting

The element of setting is an element that explains the situation or description. With the setting, readers can more easily reconstruct the story in their minds, making it easier to understand. The setting, also known as the foundation, refers to the places, historical time relationships, and social environment in which the events occur (Abrams, 1999: 284).

Nurgiyantoro (1995) said that the setting element can be divided into three parts, including place, time, and social settings. Although each offers different issues and discussed on their own, the three elements are in fact interrelated and affect each other such as setting of places, setting of time, and setting of social.

1. *Setting of Places*

It is a setting that refers to the location or area where the events in a story occur. Sometimes novelists name the setting of a place in their work according to the name of a place in the real world, but some do not.

2. *Setting of Time*

It is a setting that refers to the chronological era in which the events of the novel take place. The time period can influence the characters lifestyles, beliefs, and societal norms. Historical novels often explore specific periods in the past, while science fiction novels may be set in the future.

3. *Setting of Social*

It is a setting that refers to the societal and cultural backdrop against which the characters operate. This includes customs, traditions, social

hierarchies, and political systems. Understanding the cultural and social context provides insight into the characters motivations and behaviors.

In conclusion, the writer can conclude that setting is a description or depiction of the situation or conditions that occur during an event in the story. With this, the reader able to better understand the story by knowing the time, place, and social setting, based on what they already know.

2.2.4. Theme

The theme is another intrinsic element in a novel, representing the central idea or underlying message that the writer conveys through the narrative. Aminuddin (2002:91) said that theme is the idea that underlies a story so that it acts as a starting point for the writer to explain his work of fiction. The theme itself divided into two parts, namely the main theme (major) and additional themes (minor). The main theme is the main meaning of the story, which is the basis or general idea of the work. Additional themes are meanings that only found in certain parts of the story.

Based on the explanation above, the writer can conclude that theme is the most important thing in the story. The theme itself is the main idea or main basis that the author wants to convey through his work. In a literary work, there is not only one theme contained in it, therefore there is a main theme and there are also additional themes which sometimes only appear occasionally.

2.3. Religious Complexity

Etymologically, religion itself comes from Latin, namely *religio* which is taken from the word *re-ligare* which means to bind again. In general, religion is

defined as belief in God as the creator and supervisor of the universe. Religion is also believed to be a system of beliefs and worship that is based on certain beliefs. Bouquet in Ahmadi (1984: 14) defines religion as a permanent relationship between humans and non-humans which is sacred and supernatural, and which is self-existent and which has absolute power which is called God.

Religion is a complex and multifaceted concept that encompasses a set of beliefs, practices, rituals, moral values, and social institutions centered on the worship of or devotion to a higher power or powers. It often provides a framework for understanding the meaning and purpose of life, as well as guidelines for ethical behavior and moral conduct. The role of religion in society can change over time by the influenced of historical, cultural, and socio-political factors. In the history of religion, there are several religions that have been very influential in human development, such as Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, and others. Each religion has different origins, beliefs, practices, and traditions.

The history of religion covers many periods of human history, as religion has been an integral part of human life since prehistoric times. Religion first appeared in the world during the Paleolithic era, where humans began to worship the forces of nature and the spirits of their ancestors. Hinduism is one of the oldest religions in the world, originating from ancient India and having sacred books called the Vedas. This belief includes various schools, including the Saiva, Vaishnava, and Sakta, as well as a broad view of the laws and rules of "everyday morality" based on Karma, Darma, and societal norms.

Christianity originated in Jerusalem in the 1st century and has the holy book of the Bible. This sect spread rapidly to Europe, the Levant, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Transcaucasia, Egypt, Ethiopia, as well as India, and by the end of the 4th century had become the official religion of the Roman Empire. After centuries of exploration, Christianity spread to the Americas, Australasia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and throughout the world through missions and colonialism.

Islam was discovered in the 7th century, Arabia became the birthplace of one of the great monotheistic religions in the world, namely Islam. Precisely starting on Mount Hira, the angel appeared to the Prophet Muhammad SAW, this is where the history of Islam begins. Islam is basically a religion that believes in the existence of one God, the Almighty and the Most Merciful. In Islam it is also explained and acknowledged that other prophets besides the Prophet Muhammad SAW, such as the Prophet Abraham, the Prophet Moses, and the Prophet Isa, had taught the same truth in the past, before Islam emerged.

The history of religion also includes inter-religious conflicts and wars that occurred over the centuries, such as the Crusades and Civil Wars in Europe, the Civil War in the United States, and conflicts in the Middle East. Currently, religion is still an important part of human life throughout the world, although in some countries religion is no longer a major factor in people's lives.

Robert N. Bellah in his book *Religious Evolution* American Sociological Review, Vol. 29 (1964), defines evolution at the system level as a process of increasing differentiation and complexity of organisms, social systems, or units of any kind, with the ability to adapt to their environment. Therefore, they are

relatively more autonomous to their environment than to less complex systems of the past.

The writer concludes that religious complexity can be found anywhere, considering that every region from all corners of the world certainly does not only have one religion in it. This is supported by the fact that each type of religion will continue to spread and develop along with being influenced by history, social and human culture.