

## CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS IN GOD'S NOT DEAD MOVIE

By:

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### Abstract

This article describes the religious reality that appears in the movie "God's Not Dead" (2014). This article is the result of a research qualitative with a discourse analysis approach of the model Teun-A-Van-Dijk. Film discourse alone is not enough to rely on text, because it consists of different structures and levels. The structures are macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure. The results of the study indicate that the preparation of the discourse is quite structured based on the thematic structure, schema, semantics, syntax, stylistics, and rhetoric. The macro structure contains the subject structure, the super contains structure the structure schema, and the rest is contained in the microstructure. The two structural elements are true that this film lives in a very rational environment and although it does not include God in life, God still has a place in human life, indicating that there will be a message to be conveyed.

**Keywords:** Christian Faith, Secularism, Film, Discourse Analysis

### 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the modern mass media is film. In the digital era, messages conveyed in the form of television shows and films can be quickly channeled to various social circles. It is not possible with a written message (Deepak Nayyar, 2007). In addition, messages conveyed through films are more complex than written messages, because the messages conveyed can be verbal and nonverbal. Oral messages consist of dialogue, narration, and writing. Nonverbal messages can be actions, characters, expressions, appearance, light, shooting angle, background music, colors, and other signs that have a certain meaning in a film. (Surwati, 2012: 3-4). Cinema is also a product of popular culture, which has two functions: constructing reality and expressing socio-cultural reality.

Film as a means of delivering messages and products of popular culture has two main functions, namely expressing socio-cultural reality and building reality. In the first function, films are produced to represent several aspects (framing) of the reality that exists in society. The parties involved in making the film (producer, screenwriter and director) want to form a common opinion after the audience watches the film. Therefore, it is often suspected as a "side effect" of messages conveyed by digital media in the form of films, namely only highlighting something that is "deemed" important by the director. (Deepak Nayyar, 2007).

The function of film as a representation of social reality is to reveal things that are too sensitive to be discussed in everyday conversation in public. All problems that arise in society cannot be discussed freely and fairly because of the interests and considerations that accompany them. For this reason, films are often chosen as a means of conveying

messages along with other popular culture such as songs, paintings, dramas, and cartoons. (Gordon. B Arnold: 2008) This shows that the relationship that exists between film as a means of representation and the problem of reality is ambivalent. In a sense, films and other popular culture are real images and representations of real people's lives. However, in other cases, the vision and storyline of the film can be a conducive environment for the growth of public opinion, which can more or less affect real life.

God's Not Dead` is a film produced by Pure Flix Entertainment in the United States. This film takes the theme of the life of Christians and their faith in a society that is seen as a state without religion, secular state and has no place for supernatural issues such as faith and divinity. This film shows the reality of the problem of Christians by showing their religious identity (in this context is Christian) in Western society.

This article will analyze the manifestation of Christian faith in the film. The analytical knife used in this research is the discourse analysis of the Teun A Van Dijk model. That is focus on macro structure, superstructure, and micro structure in a film or other literary works. With this approach, messages related to the social reality of Christian life in America can be disseminated at the macrostructural, meta-structural, and microstructural levels.

### 2. RESEARCH METHOD

The approach used in this research is a qualitative approach and a discourse analysis approach. A qualitative approach is an approach that emphasizes interpretation and objectivity. Van Dijk has created an analytical framework that not only highlights the film's text, but also includes three

structures. The whole structure supports itself. The structure is (Sobur, 2001: 74):

1. Macro structure. This structure is the general and global meaning of a text, which can be understood by looking at the beginning of the text or a certain part of the text (Van Dijk, 1992: 6). In this study, this structure can be seen from the topic.
2. Super structure. This structure is the framework of a text in which the structure and speech elements in the text are composed as a whole.
3. Micro structure. This structure is observing the meaning in the text by analyzing words, sentences, propositions, and so on (Van Dijk, 1992: 7).

From the three structures, it is found several things that need to be observed in finding the discourse of this film. The macro structure relates to the thematic or topic "What is being said". Super structure relates to the schematic or topic "How is the opinion structured?". Microstructure is related to several things such as semantics (meaning in the text), syntax (how opinions are conveyed), stylistics (what word choice is used), and rhetorical (how and in what way the emphasis is done) (Van Dijk, 1992: 6).

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Movie Review

"God's not dead" is a film with a Christian spiritual theme. The cast of the film are Josh Weaton, Professor Radisson, Mina, Mark, Amy, Kara, Aisyah, Martin, and several others. Josh Weaton is a student from a college out there. He took a philosophy course taught by a professor named Radisson, who was an atheist (do not know God). Professor Radisson has a girlfriend named Mina. Mina is a Christian girl, she always heard Radisson's friends say that God is dead but she tried to maintain her faith and in the end she parted with Radisson.

In philosophy class, Professor Radisson said that in reality there is no God and he is dead. He also explained that we really can live without God in our lives. After saying all this, Professor Radisson asked each student to write a sentence that said "God is dead" on a piece of paper and the paper had to be signed. If they don't write sentences and sign them, they may not be in the course.

But a student named Josh Heaton, a Christian, refused to carry out Professor Radisson's orders. Professor Radisson is challenged by Josh's attitude, after which he asks Josh to provide evidence of his belief that "God is not dead" and that if Professor Radisson agrees, Josh can pass, but if Josh's argument is not accepted by Professor Radisson, Josh is declared unsuccessful and will lose. 30% of his value in this course. But Josh disagreed with Professor Radisson because he thought Professor Radisson could be cheating, so he asked his

classmates to be on the jury. Josh has three chances to convince everyone in the class that God exists.

During the first and second debates, Josh began to present his arguments, but Professor Radisson was able to argue. On the other hand, Josh has a girlfriend named Kara. Kara doesn't like seeing Josh go up against Professor Radisson because she worries it will have a fatal impact on Josh's graduation and their future. On several occasions, Kara told Josh to stop everything and write and sign Professor Radisson's graduation requirements, but Josh remained steadfast in his beliefs. Then in the end, Kara broke up with Josh. As they clashed in the canteen, they were heard by a girl named Aisyah. Ayesha is the daughter of a non-Christian father, but she believes in Jesus as her Savior. He trusted her for about a year and kept it a secret from his father. When her father found out, his father was very angry and frustrated, he slapped Aisyah and kicked Aisyah out of the house.

On the other hand there is a super duper busy woman named Amy, she was diagnosed with cancer and her life will not be long. He told this to his girlfriend, Mark, who is Mina's older brother. After Mark finds out about Ami's illness, he chooses to end his relationship with Amy because he cannot accept Amy's shortcomings.

#### God's Not Dead Movie Discourse Analysis

In understanding the communication messages and discourses built in the film, the researcher uses the discourse analysis model of Teun A. Van Dijk. In an effort to understand a discourse, Van Dijk uses six elements, namely the thematic aspect, the schematic aspect, the semantic aspect, the syntactic aspect, the stylistic aspect, and the rhetorical aspect. Here are some analysis of the conversations in the film.

##### 1. Thematic

Structure This structure is a macro structure of discourse in a film. This film is about the problem of Christian faith in life in Western countries. The topics raised are the position of religion and science. But while scientists and science deny the existence of God, rational scientific facts always lead to the recognition of the existence of God.

##### 2. SchematicThe

Structurestructure referred to here is how the flow or arrangement of the discourse text is made. This structure is a superstructure that describes the general form of a text in this film. In research analysis, the title of the film "God's Not Dead" is a statement and answer for those who still doubt the existence of God and His work in this world.

Here is one of the dialogues that brought the discourse as stated in the title:

*Professor Radisson argued about religion in a discussion session: "Because religion is like a mind virus that parents leave for their children, and Christianity is the worst virus in this world. It slowly creeps into our lives when we are weak or sick or helpless." Josh Wheaton responded: "So religion is*

like a disease?”. Professor Radisson replied: “Yes. Right, infects everything.” (1:23:47 – 1:24:05)

The dialogue above shows questions and objections regarding the existence of God which are answered firmly through the film’s title.

### 3. Syntactic Structure

The aspect that we see in this structure is the use of pronouns and coherent sentence forms. The elements of form and sentence consistency are underlined in a relation or sentence in the form of a word. Coherence is the association of ideas that make up a discourse. The following is a dialogue showing the relationship between coherence and pronouns:

*At the end of the discussion, Josh Wheaton asked Prof. Radisson: “Who exactly are you trying to fail, Professor? Me or God?” Then there was silence, as time went on Josh Wheaton asked again: “Do you hate God?”. Prof. Radisson replied: “That is no longer a question”. Josh repeated: “Okay, why do you hate God? Please answer the question! You know science and all the arguments. Science supports His existence. You know the truth. Then why do you hate Him? Why?”. Prof. Radisson replied: “Because He has taken everything from me. True, I hate God. I only have hatred.” Josh Wheaton gave a final question to close the discussion: “How can you hate someone if that person doesn’t exist?” (1:24:30 – 1:25:36)*

In this dialogue, the first person pronoun is juxtaposed with the third person. God is expressed in the third person pronoun which shows an attitude of closeness. In the previous dialogue, God was expressed as God. In the last dialogue, both use the third person singular pronoun.

### 4. Stylistic Structure

The aspect that is emphasized in this element is the choice of words used to construct discourse. The analysis focuses on the style of language used by the author or speaker to convey his meaning. Among the styles of language used is Pastor Jude’s chat with Pastor Dave. Pastor Jude said to Pastor Dave with some sarcasm as well as motivation when their car broke down since morning:

*“David, we’ve spent our whole lives talking about faith. Now I ask you to show that faith.” He replied: “Okay” and tried to start the car. After the car was able to start, Dave said: “Impossible”. Jude immediately refuted it and said: “No. Faith” (1:28:03 -1:29:10)*

The style of irony appears in this dialogue. That is when a Pastor who often talks about faith needs to be asked to show and believe that what happened was the result of a faith.

### 5. Rhetorical

Structure This structure focuses on how and in what way the emphasis is placed. Rhetoric also means a question sentence that does not require an answer. In this film, many rhetorical structures are found in the form of questions to emphasize undeniable information and arguments.

One of the examples of this dialogue is when Josh Wheaton closed the discussion with a striking question to Prof. Radisson:

*“How can you hate someone if that person doesn’t exist?”*

The dialogue is a question that does not require an answer. This is an important discussion of questions and comments about the existence of God. These key questions are used as the core of each film episode in accordance with the context of the problems of each film.

The dialogues above show that the Christian faith is still alive in Europe and the United States. The common view that the West (Europe and America) is secular, depends on the spirit of capitalism, and does not completely make the Catholic and Protestant spirit completely true. In Western countries, contrary to accusations, the Christian belief is still accepted and persists in public.

The film "God's Not Dead" represents the Christian faith in Western countries, namely Europe and America. This film represents a socio-cultural reality that is not widely known by many people. The content of the film itself is a recording of the reality that grows and develops in society and is projected into audiovisual format. Films cannot be separated from the reality that actually exists. Like this film, it is an answer to those who believe that God has died in Western countries and, contrary to scientific and empirical facts, reaffirms to Christians that their beliefs are timeless. Another message that the third film should convey is that no matter how Christians show faith in their lives, there can be no low self-esteem and mutual respect without love for fellow creatures and humans. Your real actions in morals, attitudes and actions are much more important in this life and are also a leap of faith in the heart.

### 4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that screenwriters and film directors want to convey that religion is legal in the West. There are some difficulties, but the Christian faith can still exist. Regardless of the social situation of the people who live there, the call of human conscience to religion is a natural thing. According to many opinions about Western secularism, this film is the opposite of the absence of gods and Western religion. This film reveals a reality that is often obscured by various stigmas and negative stereotypes in the West. Researchers try to understand messages and discourses using Van Dijk’s discourse analysis model.

The film "God's Not Dead" shows the Christian faith in Western countries. This film represents a socio-cultural reality that is not widely known by many people. The content of the film itself is a recording of the reality that grows and develops in society and is projected into audiovisual format.

Films cannot be separated from the reality that actually exists. Like this film, it is an answer to those who believe that God dies in Western countries, and, contrary to scientific and empirical facts, reinforces the Christian belief that their beliefs are timeless.

The results of the analysis above show that starting from the macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure levels, all of them shape behavior and discourse. The lecture led the Christian audience to believe that they must continue to strengthen their faith. Audio, vision, and language also lead to the discourse. For non-Christian, non-Western audiences, this film is an anti-secular story about Western countries.

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