

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Novel is a part of literary works in which people can get knowledge and insightful thinking. Kennedy says that,

...a novel is kind of story whose authors try to create the sense while we read, we experience actual life. Obviously, novel gives us many experience, suggestion motivation that we can use to make a better live (Kennedy, 1983, p.180).

A novel contains many values to make readers have imagination through fictitious works; readers can reflect it in their life and they will be wiser. Scott says, "The importance of literature is not merely in its way of saying but also in what it says" (1964, p.23). A novel does not only contain artistic words but also tells about something important to the readers.

Mister God This is Anna is a story about a child, Anna, who is described as an extraordinary child. Anna is always explained by Fynn (the main character from the novel *Mister God This is Anna*) as a great little girl. The setting of the story is in the East End of London in the mid-1930s and starts with Fynn findings a small girl sitting on the grating below a shop window when he is walking in the docks at night. He tries to find out who she is and where she came from but he cannot find any information about this young girl. Fynn decides to take the girl home but when he discovers that she ran away from her home because she was

abused by her mother, he allowed her to be Fynn's friend. Yet, since the day Fynn met her, Fynn's days have never been the same.

Fynn was 19 years old and Anna was 5 years old when they met. They live together in Fynn's house. In their daily interaction, Fynn knows that Anna is not an ordinary child especially because of her understanding about God and religion. Anna's ideas about God can be seen throughout the novel. Anna's understanding about God and religion cannot be understood easily by Fynn such as Anna doesn't want to go to church because she thinks that the way to adore The Lord is not just by going to church but also by taking a good care of other God creatures. However, with Fynn, Anna lives happily. She enjoys her life as a child although as a small girl, Anna has the wisdom to comprehend more than what would be expected from her.

The ending of the book describes Anna's death:

She never made eight years, she died by an accident. She died with a grin on her beautiful face. She died saying, 'I bet Mister God lets me into heaven for this', and I bet he did too (Fynn, 2005, p.4).

Fynn grieves about Anna's death. He visits Anna's grave and sees it full of flowers. At that moment he lets his anger go and disappointment against God. The answer he realizes is 'Anna is in my middle'. Like what Anna always says: "God is part of everybody and everybody is part of God" which means that God is within us, the human being, because human being is created by God thus God is in every aspect of our life as well. With that kind of understanding, Fynn walks away from her graveyard with renewed hope.

Anna's understanding about God and religion is the most interesting part of this book. When she is asked by local people about her faith in God, she says that she acknowledges God. But she does not want to go to church because going to church to meet Mister God was ridiculous.

You went to church to get the message when you were a little. Once you had got it, you went out and did something about it. Keeping on going to church was because you hadn't got the message, or didn't understand it or it was just for swank (Fynn, 2005, p.47).

Keep going to church for Anna is just the sign that people haven't understood the message from God or that people are not capable of understanding the message from God or that people only want to show off about how religious they are.

Anna's understanding about God and religion is unique. As a Christian child, Anna should go to church because going to church is an obligation. Church is God's home. It is the place where people get blessing from God and listen to God's words. But for Anna, God stays everywhere not only at church. People have God in their daily activities. She gives an example,

"The Cross if you are full up, you don't need it because the cross is inside you. If you are not full up, you have the cross outside you and then make it a magic thing." (Ibid, p.280)

"Religion was for doing things, not just for reading things." (Fynn, 2005, p.47). This sentence means that it is more important for people to practice the religion's teaching in their daily life than to understand it only. That is what Jesus in the Bible says: "In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." (Christian Bible James 2:17) When someone has understood about religion teaching or (s)he has strong faith to God but (s)he cannot

implement it, the result is none. In this case, Anna believes that it is more important for her to be good in her doings although she does not go to church rather than going to church but still doing things that hurt people.

As a child, at her very young age, Anna has her own understanding about God and religion. The fact that she has no parents as her role models makes Anna's own understanding about God and religion compelling. She is a personal friend and helper of Mister God. She is an extraordinary little girl. This girl always cares about other people who have different experience with her. She grows up by reflection to her own experience. She never forces her ideas to other people. She just shares her knowledge and her point of view to other people.

In analyzing this novel, the writer will focus on Anna's understanding of God and religion. The writer will start from the development of Anna's understanding about God and religion based on the psychological theories of Kohlberg's and Fowler's development of Piaget's stage-development theories of cognitive developments. It is the development of faith based on life-span. Those theories will be used to understand whether Anna's understanding about God and religion is different or similar to that of children of her age. Later the writer will try to explain using Thomas O'Dea's sociological concept on why religion as an institution is criticized by people, as it is represented by Anna. So, the approaches used in this thesis are psychological approach and sociological approach.

The topic about religion and the relationship between God and human is one of the writer's interests. Therefore, this novel which talks about religion and human's understanding about God is very challenging for the writer to be

analyzed. This is why the writer writes this thesis entitled “Anna’s Understanding of God and Religion in Fynn’s *Mister God This is Anna*.”

1.2. FIELD OF THE STUDY

Field of the study is literature especially novel.

1.3. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The writer limits the scope of the study to a child’s, in this case Anna’s, understanding about God and religion. The writer uses psychological approach to analyze the stage of people’s development in understanding God and religion based on their age. The writer also uses sociological approach to analyze why people criticize the institution of the religion.

1.4. PROBLEM FORMULATION

- 1.4.1. What is Anna’s understanding of God and religion?
- 1.4.2. Is Anna’s understanding about God and religion different or similar to that of other children of her age?
- 1.4.3. What is Anna’s Criticism towards Religion Institution based on Thomas O’Dhea Theory?

1.5. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- 1.5.1. To find out Anna’s understanding about God and religion.

1.5.2. To find out whether Anna's understanding about God and religion is different or similar to that of other children of her age.

1.5.3. To find out Anna's Criticism towards Religion Institution based on Thomas O'Dhea's Theory.

1.6. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This is a study about literature, especially novel, therefore, this study will analyze the literary values of the understanding about God and religion as well as the criticism toward religion as an institution. By psychological approach the writer will explain to the reader about the stage development of someone's understanding about God and religion based on life age, his/her age. By sociological approach the writer will explain about the reason people criticize institution of religion. The writer expects that this thesis will give more understanding about how people understand God and religion as well as the criticism about it.

1.7. DEFINITION OF TERMS

1.7.1. Institution of faith is institutionalization of trust, hope and belief in the goodness, trustworthiness or reliability of a person, concept or entity in an organization (Tyron, 2005, pp. 1-10)

1.7.2. Objectification is the process by which an abstract concept is made as objective as possible in the purest sense of the term. It is also treated as if it is a concrete thing or physical object (Nussbaum, 1995, pp. 279-83).

1.7.3. Alienation refers to objective conditions, to subjective feelings, and to orientations that discourage participation. And remarks that in modern sociology, alienation is a term which refers to the distancing of people from experiencing a crystallized totality both in the social world and in the self (Kalekin-fishman, 1998, p.6).

