

## *The Role of Religion in Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe*

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### **Abstract:**

Religion has a reproductive power, and the effect of its ideas should be dealt with in areas unrelated to its divine principles. Being shipwrecked and due to the feelings of loneliness, Robison Crusoe's relationship with God and religion became very strong. Christian belief became the center of life on that deserted island. Therefore, everything that occurs has a connection with Christianity. Consequently, this paper sets itself the task of investigating the religious atmosphere and the main pillar's that make up the religious background underlying Daniel Defoe's novel 'Robinson Crusoe'. Accordingly, the present paper opens by highlighting certain points in the political and religious situation during Daniel Defoe's life. After that, the paper endeavors to discuss what is meant by religion and whether it is a vague or clear concept. Then, the paper expounds the innate linkage between the above mentioned novel and Max Weber's monograph that uncovers the critical relation between the Protestant religion and the enterprise of Capitalism. Next, the paper moves to illustrate the utilization of certain religious ideas in the novel such as sin and punishment. Then, an attempt is made to explain what Defoe wants to show by portraying Crusoe as a religious teacher teaching Friday about Christianity. Finally, an effort is made to present certain religious Opinions on authority expressed in this novel.

**Keywords:** Robinson Crusoe, religion, sin, punishment, Christianity, .Protestantism.

### **1. Introductory Remarks**

During Daniel Defoe's lifetime the political and religious situation in England was developing rapidly. An important event for the establishment of Protestantism and Calvinism was the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688. The arrival of king of William of Orange was a turning point through which Great Britain became a United Kingdom in 1707 after Scotland and England have united. This increased the power of the English monarchy. Additionally, in 1714 the king George I came to throne and declared himself as the head of the Protestant church and embodied the religion in his policy to insure his

dominance. Due to his religious "dissent", i.e. refusal to accept the established church with its hierarchy and appeal to ancient authority, Defoe lived under the threat of oppression most of his life during which he was against the established Church and interested in politics.

## 2. The Concept of Religion

Generally speaking, the word 'religion' is somehow vague and elusive in that it could mean different things to different people. In Mercer and Wanderer's (1970: 264) words, religion is "a matter of... the feelings, acts, and experiences of the individual men in their solitude... as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider as divine."

Pescke (1999: 256), conversely, defines religion as an organized approach to human spirituality which encompasses a set of narrative symbols, beliefs, and practices. It may be expressed in the form of prayer, rituals, or mediations.

In line with Pescke, Naeem et al. (2014: 40) elucidate that religion is a set of beliefs, cultural systems, and world views that relate to an order of existence. It, also, incorporates a set of values and social norms that gives people a proper code of life to live according to.

## 3. Max Weber's Thesis and Robinson Crusoe

The famous monograph of Max Weber basically sets the main pillars of the linkage between the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. In this monograph, Weber asserts that there is a close relationship between Protestantism (including Lutheranism and Calvinism) and Capitalism. This religious approach, typified by Luther's definition of secular work as a "calling", is, Weber argues, particularly suited to modern capitalism. The new economic system arose from a religious outlook of spiritual minimalism and reductionism (asceticism), work as a calling, and the concept of saving for future reward.

Weber quotes Defoe many times and Robinson Crusoe serves well in illustrating his points, as does his use of passages from Benjamin Franklin's journal. For Crusoe, the link between Protestantism and working in the island is clear: In his planting and planning we see the characteristic sacrifice of present comfort for future gain which also is the basis of personal banking. Next to his ledger book is his Bible, which tells him of Providence. God has an individual plan for Crusoe, in other words, and we have already noted the connection between Industrial Capitalism and individualism.

Calvinism puts great emphasis on a spiritual trade of sins for salvation through a payment through the crucifixion. Life before the intervention of salvation is worthless, and faith involves a new start. Weber refers to this aspect of Robinson Crusoe (Weber, 1905: 83- 84).

Crusoe confesses after some time that this idea of his was horrible and says:

"I looked back on my past life with horror, and my sins appeared so dreadful, that my soul sought nothing from God but deliverance from the load of guilt that bore down upon me (81).

The God of the novel evaluates the world according to whether it is useful to His creature. He occasionally intervenes in the form of providence. Crusoe, like Christian in The Pilgrim's Progress, has a complicated past, but is given a new beginning with the chance to prove himself through work on the island. Luther's doctrine of the worldly "calling" is represented in practice.

Most importantly, in Calvinism and Crusoe's life, we see a drive to make profits. Material success or failure is for Crusoe a sign of Providence or divine disfavour, and he is always convinced that he is part of an individual divine plan. For example, Crusoe on some occasions castigates God, and he says, for example, "Why has God done this to me? What have I done to be thus used?" (78). God's favour is seen as evident in the fortunes of the present.

The same need to claim divine interest is part of Calvinist doctrine and experience. According to the predestinarians, faith has no relation to good works, and its reasons are buried in the unknown will of God. Measurable worldly success was defined as prosperity, seen as God's favour. Crusoe also needs to measure his property, and this is his source of happiness:

I was now master, all on a sudden, of above five thousand pounds sterling in money, and had an estate, as I might well call it, in the Brazils, of above a thousand pounds a year, as sure as an estate of lands in England: and, in a word, I was in a condition which I scarce knew how to understand, or how to compose myself for the enjoyment of it (245).

In many respects Defoe has produced a book which reflects Bunyan's spiritual allegory The Pilgrim's Progress in an almost purely material way. Here is the outworking of Calvinism in the worldly realm.

Crusoe's thriftiness with regard to storing his corn is a further example of the Protestant work ethic. On one occasion he finds that corn has begun to sprout in the place where he emptied a bag with the remnants of chicken food. Of

course he does not promptly eat the corn, but stores it and replants, and will take great pleasure in this growing 'wealth'.

[He] carefully saved the ears of this corn [...] and laying up every corn, [he] resolved to sow them all again, hoping in time to have some quantity sufficient to supply me with bread. (65: 66).

He is willing to wait four years before he allows himself to eat even a single grain of corn. This shows self-restraint, sensible behaviour and thriftiness, all of which are listed as typical of the Protestant work ethic by Max Weber. Crusoe does not use his 'wealth' in the short term (as a typical Catholic might have), but leaves himself with always enough corn to replant, so that he uses the seeds to generate a more sizeable crop. This eventually will provide him with plentiful cereals for the rest of his stay on the island. It is no less than the Protestant tendency to reinvest and regenerate wealth, and refusal to waste the wealth, and relates to the belief in future reward.

#### 4. Religious Ideas of Sin and Punishment

It is frequently pointed out that Crusoe commits his first, "original" sin by disobeying his father's advice in escaping to sea. His being stranded is like a punishment for his rebellion and his chance to show that he is redeemed by organization and hard work. Crusoe, with his "original sin," considers everything, including man, as the material to be exploited for redemption. While this novel is adventures in its external structure, people are seeing outside of their deep structure of Western imperialism and it is a moral and religious version, which states that Crusoe's story instructs people in God's wisdom of being repenting man's sin.

This confession marks a turning point in Crusoe's spiritual consciousness, and increases his experience. He starts read the books which are biblical version every day and keeps gratitude God for being saved him. Furthermore, he makes a calendar and lists all of his remarks in his journal. Nevertheless, no one is a companion to him or shares with him in his opinion while he lives on a deserted island. The story begins with Crusoe's rebellion: the confrontation of his father's plan for him, which is framed as challenging the authority of God himself. Crusoe then lives a bad condition on the island. Once there, he must atone for his faults and repent. It is not sufficient just to express grateful to God, but Crusoe requires to learning more repentance. Crusoe's dream is the angelic figure that comes to him during a feverish hallucination and says:

"Seeing all these things have not brought thee to repentance, now thou shalt die." (74)

Ironically, this repentance is a needful view which ends up justifying sin, because Crusoe may not ever has learned to regret if he had never disobeyed his father in the initial place. Thus, as influential as the repentant theme in the novel motivate for convertibility that Crusoe had being a very religious man. Eventually, the novel develops to be a combination of religious observations. Similarly, the tension between belief and disbelief, and some material considerations regarding religion, can also be discussed in Robinson Crusoe. R. West observes that Daniel Defoe was a Protestant Dissenter, quoting his words:

I cannot belong to the Church of England because it is not entirely reformed: and for this reason I dissent, believing every Christian to be obliged to worship God in that manner or from he finds most agreeable to the will of God declared in the Scriptures, and to join in Communion with those that he thinks do so, and upon these reasons I separate (West, 1995: 151).

Western rationalism has the particularity of engagement with its economic conditions in either direction. Namely; the linking between the spirit of modern capitalism and the rational ethics of ascetic Protestantism has been influenced by certain religious ideas on the development of an economic life. Therefore, the function of the sociology and history is to analyze all of the occasional relationships because of reactions to environment. In accordance, Defoe was seeking an individualistic way of worshipping, free from external upheavals; and it is through this simplicity that his protagonist was able to fight against isolation and despair on the island. It also explains his individualistic behaviors. In this sense, Defoe reflects his society at the age through his hero as a capitalist man who carries the bourgeois thought on the island. Defoe adds more Christian morals as Crusoe goes deeper into his sin. He is the disobedient son, then the regretful castaway, and finally the very religious man, who swallows his repentance away after his first encounter with a storm. Through the experiences of one man, we can observe the progression of religion from the private realm to the public realm. The conflicts are inherent in such a progression, and the resolution to these conflicts is Crusoe throws away the natural of father's authority, and he must be father of himself while he notes for self- determination. Yet the image of Crusoe's father continues, and the "Middle Station of Life" that Crusoe achieves is always involved by his father of narrative fiction. Criticizers also explore the possible functionality of the world outside the literary fictional

text. Many matters and actions give the reader an impression of overall reality that whatever happens to Crusoe is true.

When Crusoe is rescued and his luck revives many times, he compares himself to others who died, stops this thinking and thanks God for His miracles. The protagonist's conflict with nature and his shifting mood are the results of such transition during his age. He sees every need that he describes the way of life for many years. Through the unsettled personage of Crusoe and since he transform everything into profit, Defoe unintentionally depicts the natural human fault in human being which forms the essence of the capitalist culture.

Christianity represents the virtue and the right path to fidelity toward God. This fact indicates that the God of heaven presents the guidance that will convince them theologically. This tells us that the right path goes through the Bible, which is the only book that will connect Friday with the context of exploitation. This is shown so that the peace inside Friday will only be found with the Bible itself. Friday's god is not the god that has a devil vision. The God of Friday totally enhances the idea of being good and clean. Robinson's speech becomes Christian and more religious man later on, particularly after he convinces Friday. The saved man kneels at Crusoe's feet as if to swear to be Crusoe's "slave forever" (172). because Christianity to the natives there, are to tell them the gods and will inform them about reality concerning the naturalism of the world. The orientalist's western imperialism-oriented mentality can be seen clearly in this novel. We can clearly see in this novel the mentality codes of western imperialism. Therefore, the question must be examined from this point of the novel itself. The British nation represented the upper class of imperialism through adopting Protestant religion to their superiority over others as a dominating phenomenon at the age. Crusoe discovers that he master of his own world, despite of his suffering of a hard fate which becomes positive after Friday's arrival. The unfair relationships between humans indicate that nations are humiliated, colonized, and how they are used religion as influential power to enslave the mentalities.

The central point was to persuade people on the subject that their souls must be saved by God and that is why the Bible is considered to play a key role in the story. The religious ideas are played a role in creating the capitalistic spirit. Religion is explored as a major cause of the modern economic conditions. Exploring Crusoe's experience on the island can be depicted as a reflection of the civilized and social prosperity of the eighteenth century in London. The modern spirit of capitalism sees profit as virtue that ends in

capitalism and supposes to pursue it, because God has previously specified who is saved and damned. It is the prominent role of religion which is expressed in the Robinson Crusoe and it would be required to examine the progression of religious and political thought in Crusoe's world. In order to form a type of slave arrangement on the lands that the Empire possessed, they attempted to influence the people whom they colonized by spreading religion for their own purposes. In observing the phenomena of influential domination, the relationship between the morals of moderate Protestantism and the emergence of the spirit is modern capitalism become clear, in other words, the imperialism of this age. Eventually, Crusoe shifts to be a religious teacher clearly, as he succeeds to convert Friday to Christianity when they meet each other. Therefore, Crusoe begins living together with Friday on the island. However, Crusoe takes the position of being the lord of Friday. And the Lord endeavors to shape Friday as he wishes him to be. Crusoe makes Friday learn English, namely: the English culture and Christianity. He also uses religion in the way the Empire uses it. Similarly, to the Empire, he makes Friday a Christian and makes him a great servant. With regard to the term 'domesticate' Crusoe conducts as if Friday new born and gives him a new name and a new religion.

### 5. Teaching Friday about Christianity

Crusoe convinces Friday of his reality as human and civilizes him by deriving new identification for his personality. He informs Friday about the reality of the atmosphere that God and Christianity is over everything. They were listening to them, and the information sent by Jesus as their Redeemer. We cried out to God, and He is even heard from heaven our great pride and our wishes will send Providence. We can easily understand why Christianity is fertilization and facing rapidly increasing missionary work. Naturally determines the direction of the relationship in the work is a kind of slavery. "Lord" Crusoe wants to ensure the loyalty of his slave. The establishment of nationality, religion and identity are got rid of the return to the essence of slavery and leave his personality. This is a process of flourishing the imperialist masters in order to release the difficulties of enslave people. Therefore, Friday will forget the religious matter and have a new nation perhaps he requires participation in the new society in his life.

Crusoe convinces everyone comes to his "Kingdome" with his notions to be Crusoe's fellow and they must be avoided their souls by God. They must thank Crusoe and listen to his order since he is the master of this island and he products them from dangerous such Friday's case. Because of Crusoe is a

Christian he will enforce his religion in the island and spread the Christianity among the natives. As Crusoe reflects the English society in the eighteenth century, he has a completely different function rather than religion; however, after a while, these materials are the tools that lead to the exit from the island.

## 6. Religious Opinions on Authority Expressed in Robinson Crusoe

In attempting to comprehend the connection between religion and the spirit of capitalism, it can create wider social values and be involved in the creation of social institutions totally dissimilar to its own aims and ends. Religion has a reproductive power, and the effect of its ideas should be dealt with in areas unrelated to its divine principles, just like the creation of commercial institutions. Mastership and slavery are the main idea which this novel dealt with in addition to religious indications. The Protestant values are no longer necessary as soon as capitalism emerges, and the ethic takes on a life of its private. Indigenous imperialism, religious and national values are an enslavement to the system. People are now directed into the spirit of capitalism because it is suitable for recent economic action. The process of being Crusoe teaches Friday some Christianity it showed the importance of religion and depicted the characters that were enslaved in colonization. For instance, through religion and a master-slave relationship between Crusoe and Friday reflect colonization. This also shows us Friday's enslaved character with religion.

Preparation is the first stage of the process of colonization. The story is giving out a dimension of thought that starts the transition after the second stage. As a result, Crusoe provides his own security. At this point, the Bible plays a most important role in the construction of the plan views. Crusoe says:

"Also, I found three very good Bibles, which came to me in my cargo from England, and which I had packed up among my things" (53).

On the island, due to feelings of loneliness, the relationship with God and religion eventually becomes stronger, and as a Christian religious follower, the feelings become very strong. Christian belief becomes the center of life on the deserted island. Therefore, everything that occurs has a connection with Christianity. Thus, Crusoe's life is completing now, so that a removal of the candidates avoids a major accident. After the brutality and violence, the tone moves to the island from the necessary shipwreck to exploit most debris as tools to be able to continue his life on the island. Eventually, he confronts his God and discovers religious brutality and violence on shore which is a



place of savage feast. Crusoe has to start new stage after completing his internal mind in order to apply the just of God and fight their way on such place to dominance against hostile forces. Colonialism is a great system that forces the individual to play by its rules in order to survive as a kind of individual foundation with religious motives through the spirit of capitalism. Crusoe, from this duality, slowly becomes the lord and the governor on the deserted island. This individuality involves a Christian sitting in a managerial or equivalent position. Crusoe begins to think:

I fancied myself able to manage one, nay, two or three savages, if I had them, so as to make them entirely slaves to me, to do whatever I should direct them, and to prevent their being able at any time to do me any hurt. (172)

Accordingly, Crusoe seeks for a community to obey him and to manage them whom that people in undiscovered world. These "savages" give the opportunity to realize their dreams to Crusoe. They are no longer an item or a desired shape itself. In fact, Crusoe sees them as objects.

Defoe portrays through Crusoe an ideal self. James Sutherland mentions in his criticism of the novel that Defoe "believes an honest Englishman is hard to beat" (1970) Hence, Defoe made his hero as a gentleman who behaves truly, full of energy and enjoying both the practical side which enables him a direct relation with God. After becoming a religious man, Defoe's description of Crusoe is great: "I saw a man descend from a great black cloud, in a bright flame of fire, and light upon the ground [...] when he stepped upon the ground with his feet, I thought the earth trembled" (73). Because of this, Defoe has a supposed divine intervention and Crusoe is placed on the island for two reasons. Initially, Crusoe is a sinner and refuses to submit to what was clearly the will of God. Next, he was sent to the island as he is prepared for fate. He could not stop it. By adopting his story to fit the religious issue of the time, Defoe assures himself of the approval of an important religion and social group. This is the major force in the founding of national character. Crusoe is not a very profound religious thinker, however; religion is part of his education and transformation. Nevertheless, the religious dimension is central to Crusoe, a man's discovery of himself, Civilization and God. The man is shipwrecked without resources on a desert island, survived for many years by depending on his own wits. Therefore, he employs everything around him to be familiar with the nature there, except for the fact that no one shares his life on the isolated island. In order to fulfill his desires in finding company, Crusoe chooses to devote his life in the island to worshipping God

to be his companion spiritually in such place, by continue reading the Bible and learns Christianity. In this way, Defoe appears to be a very strong believer in God, so much so that he believes that God's Will shapes the lives of human beings. Crusoe would also have been saved by having noticed a footprint of a man in the sand of the beach one day thereby knowing that there were other inhabitants there and there was hope of salvation. This discovery of a footprint makes Crusoe happy, but fear troubles him for the next couple years because of that footprint, and it pushes him to forget about the Divine Providence to be saved. Once he saves Friday from the savages, he believes that Friday is a gift. Throughout the novel, the effect of isolation on Crusoe's life gives him plenty of time to allow Friday to learn many skills, even read the Bible, and later with the study becomes a good Christian.

The first stage of completion is done with the help of divine power and coupled with the uncertainty of the armor firearms. The "wild" are killed, but Crusoe also wins a prisoner at the same time. He has divine power to be able to kill the enemy without ever even touching him from a distance. It was part of God's design. Crusoe is a professional in shooting. He derives his power during the hunt, on the mountain of goats. In fact, one can see that the full economic effects of these religious motives are coming after the high of religious eager. Crusoe, with his gun, passes the second stage that gained the victory. Firearms and resistance broken by Friday will interfere with the cultural values of the colonial power that he will continue in his obedience. Crusoe has been saved from being fed to him as well as killing a cannibal. It is necessary to investigate how religion itself influenced on the social conditions. Now Friday is completely submissive in the face of power and has become a passive object. He promised to be Crusoe's servant forever. Because of what we call centers began to be perceived as cultural formation, Crusoe explains this issue to Friday later on.

Crusoe explains to Friday "true God" concept and the Prophet of understanding. After the diagnosis, Crusoe attempts to introduce Jesus to Friday. Crusoe's description of God acknowledges that God is glorious to them. Friday is given the culture of Crusoe and his culture is taken away from him so that he is now a part of Crusoe. Each of them is foreign to their humans by the alienation. Friday and Crusoe's contradictory manner of happiness according to this change and alienation is the assurance line for their companions. Crusoe enforces Friday with the Western culture. The precondition for this experiment to be successful is to show the loyalty of Friday. Friday shows that loyalty towards Crusoe is more than that of a

servant. In this sense, after his religion, cultural dominations have been uncovered and the theme of his life is near the end. Crusoe, in the end, is faced with a second prototype in an interesting way. As mentioned earlier, Crusoe is the prototype of British imperialism, that is, to colonize. Second, he was the prototype of those who were to colonize Friday. (Koç .98)

## 7. Conclusion

To conclude with, it is convenient to say that Defoe was concerned with religious toleration for more than selfish reasons; he saw religious toleration as a moral responsibility of all Christians, including Catholics and Protestants, and as the only resolution to the conflict between the personal and public realms of religion. So Robinson Crusoe turns out to be just as concerned about toleration in general as it is about the virtues of Protestantism. At least in Robinson Crusoe, Defoe turned out to be fairly open-minded (Morillo, 2012: 168).

Defoe used religion in his novel to reveal that colonialism was the exploitation of religion as an excuse to reach its targets. The target of colonialism was to enslave people, exploit them and confiscate their lands under the cover of religion.

Crusoe's perception of God is filled with more information from the society. According to him, the creator of all living things is God. Therefore, he can judge the circumstance- phenomenon in the universe, even at the free hand of the causes of the events at the beginning. Moreover, he thinks that when things go wrong and you thank God, it would be the worship itself. According to Crusoe's daily work plan, his worship begins by reading the Holy books. He learns about Friday's native religion (his worships "Benamuckee") and decides to convert him to Christianity (182).

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#### مستخلص البحث:

للدن قوة انتاجيه، ويجب التعامل مع تأثير أفكاره في مجالات لا علاقة لها بمبادئه الإلهية. فبسبب غرق السفينة وبسبب الشعور بالوحدة ، أصبحت علاقة (روبسون كروزو) بالله والدين قوية جداً. أصبح الإيمان المسيحي مركز الحياة في تلك الجزيرة المهجورة. لذلك ، كل ما يحدث له علاقة بالمسيحية. وبالتالي ، تحدد هذه الورقة لنفسها مهمة التحقيق في المجال الديني والأعمدة الرئيسية التي تشكل الخلفية الدينية التي تقوم عليها رواية (دانيال ديفو) "روبسون كروزو". وبناءً على ذلك ، تبدأ الورقة الحالية بإلقاء الضوء على بعض النقاط في الوضع السياسي والديني خلال حياة (دانيال ديفو). بعد ذلك يسعى ملخص بحثي إلى مناقشة المقصود بالدين وهل هو مفهوم غامض أو واضح. ثم ، يشرح الملخص الارتباط الفطري بين الرواية المذكورة أعلاه ودراسة (ماكس ويبر) التي تكشف عن العلاقة الحاسمة بين الديانة البروتستانتية ومشروع الرأسمالية وبعض الآراء الدينية حول السلطة المعبر عنها في هذه الرواية. بعد ذلك ، ننتقل بهذه الورقة لتوضيح استخدام بعض الأفكار الدينية في الرواية مثل الخطيئة والعقاب. ثم ، جرت محاولة لشرح ما يريد (ديفو) إظهاره من خلال تصوير (كروزو) كمدرس ديني يعلم (فرايدي) عن المسيحية. أخيراً ، تم بذل جهد لتقديم بعض الآراء الدينية حول السلطة المعبر عنها في هذه الرواية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية :** روبسون كروزو ، الدين ، الخطيئة ، العقوبة ، المسيحية ، البروتستانتية