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**EVERYMAN AND GOD : DANIEL DEFOE'S
ROBINSON CRUSOE AS AN EXPANDED ALLEGORY**

*Dissertation submitted to Mahatma Gandhi University in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS in
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this project entitled "Everyman and God : Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* as an Expanded Allegory", is the record of bona fide work done by me under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Beena Job, Lecturer-in-charge, Department of English.



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Chapter 1

Introduction

Daniel Defoe (1659 - 1731) is the link between the great essayists of the earlier years and the great novelists of the middle years of the eighteenth century. Defoe was the son of a tallow chandler by the name of James Foe who lived in the parish of Cripple Gate in the city of London. This was the time when Cromwell's commonwealth had just ended and monarchy in England had just been restored with Charles II ascending the throne. His father James Foe was a Dissenter so far as his religious faith was concerned. The times were dangerous for Dissenters because the religious beliefs of the people were associated with the beliefs of the commonwealth which had recently ended and to which the new king was firmly opposed. The only religious worship permitted by law was that according to the prayer book of the Church of England. Therefore, men like James Foe had to perform their duties of religious worship in secret.

The children of Dissenters were not admitted to the grammar schools and to universities, thus making it necessary for the Dissenters to provide their own private schools for their children. One such school was Morton's Academy at Stoke Newington, and Daniel was sent to this school at the age of twelve or thirteen. Here he learnt French, Dutch, Italian and Spanish, besides studying natural science, geography, astronomy and short hand. However, he did not want to become a Non-Conformist minister. Instead, he took to trade. He dealt in stock-selling and tile making. He got married in 1684.

Daniel now began to take an active interest in politics. He defended the accession of William of Orange after the deposition of James II in *The Born Englishman* (1701), a poem satirizing those who objected to the king's foreign birth. He was a speculator, as bankrupt, a traveller and a journalist. Queen Anne started to persecute the Dissenters all over and Defoe who was now in the opposition, wrote and published a pamphlet entitled *The Shortest Way*

with Dissenters (1702), which was an ironical attack on Dissenters but which was taken literally, and therefore misunderstood by both the Dissenters and their opponents. Thus he got arrested but later he was released on the recommendation of the politician Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford.

In this way Defoe became Robert Harley's supporter and follower. He had now no means of supporting himself and his large family except by his pen. Under the patronage of Harley, he started a newspaper which proved a great success and which continued to be published for nine years. To the public, this newspaper seemed to be the expression of Defoe's own opinions on politics and other matters, but in fact it was a vehicle of propaganda in support of Harley's policies. Defoe was now writing not only for this newspaper but also publishing pamphlets, one after the other. And besides being a writer who supported the government, he was also working as a government spy or secret agent.

Thus life went on for Defoe. He had yet to go through many ups and downs. If he had a patron in Harley, he had also made many enemies. Materially he was successful enough, having a decent house and a garden at Stoke Newington; but life had its difficulties for him also. He was now aging and he was beginning to feel disillusioned with politics. In 1713, his enemies got the better of him; he was arrested and taken to prison. He was soon released on bail; but there were other difficulties which now arose for him. The Queen died, and the Elector of Hanover ascended the throne as King George I. Harley fell from power and Defoe was in trouble again. The newspaper which he had been editing had come to an end, and he was now managing another newspaper, the role of which was somewhat dubious. In 1718, a rival newspaper published a long poem which was a blunt and undisguised attack on Defoe and his political activities.

Despite his active participation in politics, Defoe had never ceased writing. Much of his writing was of course political, but he found time also for writings of a non-political nature. And in 1719 appeared his most famous

book, *Robinson Crusoe*. This was followed during the next five years, by a handful of

novels scarcely less remarkable: *Captain Singleton* (1720), *Moll Flanders* (1722), *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722), and *Roxana* (1724). In these novels one prominent theme was simulation and dissimulation, which had been part of Defoe's own life.

Defoe had now retired from politics, and was living in his house at Stoke Newington. He kept himself busy by writing. But he also took part in some business activities, having started a brick and tile business in which he is believed to have cheated his partner. At the same time, his novels were pouring from the presses, and the same was the case with his other miscellaneous writings. Infact, he proved to be the most prolific of writers. Some of his miscellaneous writings showed how far ahead of the opinions of his time he was, with his plans for a university in London, his scheme for the proper supervision of lunatic asylums, and his plea for the control of the sale of gin. His old age was by no means peaceful. In 1730, at the age of seventy, he disappeared from Stoke Newington. He went into hiding somewhere near Greenwich, because he was being sued by a woman for the debts which he had been owing to her during the past twenty five years. From his hiding place, where he was isolated from his family and wife, he wrote pathetic letters to his son-in-law. And at the end he was all alone. He died on April 1731 in a lodging house, not far from where he was born.

Robinson Crusoe was published on 25th April, 1719. Defoe must have read the allegories like Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, Milton's *The Pilgrims Progress* before he wrote his own allegory. *The Pilgrims Progress* is almost a religious theology, a purely spiritual journey to the House Beautiful. *Robinson Crusoe* has come to be a more complex and rich work. It is more than allegory. It can be read as an adventure story, an autobiography, a moral

fable, a parable of the Prodigal son, a religious sermon, a spiritual voyage, a conquest over nature, an economic advancement and colonial expansion.

Robinson Crusoe is regarded by some to be the first novel in the history of English fiction. It is primarily on the basis of this book that Defoe is considered to be the precursor of English fiction, if not the father of the English novel. *Robinson Crusoe* has an autobiographical flavour because it is written in the first person singular pronoun, as if the writer were recording his personal experiences, though the experiences described in the book are by no means personal.

This study entitled "Everyman and God: Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* as an Expanded Allegory" proposes to examine the spiritual themes, religious symbols and biblical allusions that abound in the novel in order to establish that the work is an expanded allegory. The character of Crusoe comes across as the universal man whose struggle with the vicissitudes of life and with scepticism and doubt leads to a realization of the working of divine providence and to his subsequent spiritual transformation.

There is much allegorical significance in the book. In the first place, this novel is an allegory of Defoe's own life in so far as Defoe had to experience many hardships, defeats and humiliations in his life even though he won many victories and triumphs also. Secondly, this novel is allegorically the story of the spiritual development of a man who is faced with unusual afflictions and misfortunes. Crusoe experiences a spiritual crisis on the desolate island, and he undergoes a spiritual transformation. His experience on the island leads him to a realization of the working of providence and he is thereby led to put complete faith in God. This religious conversion imparts considerable weight to the novel. The novel may also be regarded as an allegorical treatment of the prodigal son which is itself an allegorical story. Another way of looking at this novel is to regard it as an allegorical expansion of the idea of man's isolation and loneliness in this

universe. These allegorical interpretations show the profundity of the novel. Thus the novel has a strong and compelling moral tone and a deeply religious and spiritual quality and may be considered as an expanded allegory.

It is not only the story in *Robinson Crusoe* which casts a spell upon the mind of the reader. The novel also possesses the interest of characterization. Of course, the number of characters in this novel is very small, but, even so, the interest of character portrayal is not lacking. Crusoe's own character is elaborately portrayed, and this portrayal impresses us greatly. It is not only the incidents of the story which are memorable but also the character of Crusoe. Crusoe impresses us largely by his ingenuity and inventiveness; but he also creates in us the impression that he is the universal man. In other words, Crusoe is in a sense Everyman. At the same time Crusoe embraces both the elements of the Puritanism of his time - the adventurous elements and the domestic element. This union of the two elements is presented to us by Defoe with consummate skill. Indeed, no character in eighteenth century fiction is so all embracing as Crusoe.

Another reason for the popularity of this novel is the charm of its style. Defoe's style in this book is marked by a rare simplicity and fluency. It is a spontaneous style entirely unforced, not at all laboured. This style is without any flourishes and embellishments, it is without any artificial devices intended to produce dramatic effects. Lucidity and simplicity are, indeed, the hall mark of this style. It is a straight forward and simple style; but it is by no means devoid of grace and charm. Defoe did not make any conscious effort to achieve grace; nor did he seek polish. He combined clarity with correctness. Through this transparent style, he portrayed life exactly as he saw it.

Robinson Crusoe tells the story of a man who, contrary to his father's advice and exhortation, leaves home to go the sea. After several preliminary adventures this man, whose name is Robinson Crusoe, is cast away on an -

uninhabited island where he is doomed to lead a solitary existence for many years. The major portion of the book recounts Crusoe's experiences and doings on this island. The sufferings and hardships, which Crusoe undergoes on the island, are attributed by him to his 'original sin' which, in his opinion, consists in his having disobeyed his father's advice. This novel by Defoe is regarded as his masterpiece, and a great book. Crusoe finds himself on the island in a desperate situation in which he survives only by his good luck and by his native wisdom and ingenuity. On this island, Crusoe is a man against nature. He triumphs, and the triumph is heroic. One reason, therefore, for the appeal of this novel, is that each one of us can put himself in Crusoe's position and regard himself as a sort of hero of the same calibre as Crusoe. But there is another and deeper reason also for the enduring appeal of this book. Defoe claimed that this novel was an allegory of his own life; but actually, it may be regarded as an allegory of every man's life. In the last analysis, each one of us is alone in this world; each one of us is condemned to solitariness. We do manage most of the time to forget that this is so, but it is essentially our fundamental condition. This condition is symbolized in the novel by the situation in which Crusoe spends twenty eight years of his life, alone, with himself, and with God. This novel, is then, a dramatization of universal experience. In a sense we are all Crusoes, because to be Crusoe is the fate of every human being.

Several sources for the story of Defoe's novel have been identified by scholars. However the principal source is a book called *A Cruising Voyage Round the World* written by a sea-captain by the name of Alexander Selkirk who spent four years all alone on an uninhabited island called Juan Fernandez. Alexander Selkirk had been put ashore on the island of the Juan Fernandez by the captain of the ship called the Cinque Ports which he had boarded as a sailor. It was because Selkirk had entered into a heated argument with his captain and had virtually quarreled with him that he was put ashore with all his belongings. Selkirk spent a little more than four years

on this island, leading a solitary life. Eventually, a ship under the command of Captain Woodes Rogers dropped anchor off this island and rescued Selkirk from his solitary existence. Captain Rogers took Selkirk to England aboard in his ship. As was but natural, Selkirk related to Captain Rogers all his experiences on the island. He also told his story to another sea captain whose name is Edward Cooke. Captain Rogers then wrote a book, already named above, in which he narrated Selkirk's story. Now, there is such a close resemblance between the experiences of Selkirk as narrated by Captain Rogers and the experiences of Crusoe as narrated by Defoe that it is impossible to escape the conclusion that Defoe based his novel on the account given by Captain Rogers in his book. We may therefore confidently affirm that Captain Roger's account constitutes the nucleus which inspired Defoe to write his immortal novel known as *Robinson Crusoe*. At the same time, we must also recognize the fact that Defoe had read many other works in which writers had narrated their experiences of travelling to distant lands. Defoe must definitely have drawn some of his material from these accounts of travel and exploration. These accounts must have provided him with the geographical background and other details which helped him in the writing of his novel.

The study has been divided into four chapters. The first chapter introduces the author, the rich allegorical significance and the deeply religious and spiritual quality of the novel. Chapter 2 - "A Conversion Story: Crusoe's Spiritual Crisis" examines the various stages in the spiritual development of Crusoe. Chapter 3 - "Christian Themes, Symbols and Allusions" delineates the religious themes, symbols and allusions that help unfold this drama of universal significance. Chapter 4 - "Conclusion" sums up the findings of this study, providing pointers to what gives the novel its universal value.

Chapter 2

A Conversion Story : Crusoe's Spiritual Crisis

God, divine providence, and the human soul are among the major concerns of the author and the protagonist in the novel *Robinson Crusoe*. In fact, we can categorically affirm that God is very much present in the world of this novel, and so is the human soul. Ultimately Crusoe's soul united with God, the almighty. If this novel had been no more than a story of exciting and even sensational adventures, it would not have been the masterpiece of fiction which it undoubtedly is. What imparts weight and profundity to this novel is the spiritual biography which it contains. The novel is a record of the reflections and cogitations of Crusoe, and of the spiritual development which takes place in him. Having embarked upon his adventurous career very much against the wishes of his father, Crusoe is overtaken by fear and remorse during his very first voyage when his ship is caught in a storm. In this state of fear, he begins to regret his decision to leave his house against his father's advice. He thinks that the storm has been sent from Heaven as a punishment to him for his wicked action in leaving his father's house and his paying no heed to his father's tears and mother's entreaties. His conscience begins to reproach him for this breach of his duty to God and to his father. In this agony of mind, he forms many resolutions to the effect that, if his life is saved, he would go directly home to his father and never again get into a ship. Such thoughts running through Crusoe's mind, show that he is not a hardened man. He may at this time be regarded as a juvenile delinquent who, at the first sign of a catastrophe, begins to feel sorry for his having taken the rash step of leaving his parental home. However, soon afterwards, when he finds himself safe in London, he forgets all his vows and resolutions, and goes abroad a vessel bound for the coast of Africa. This means that, although Crusoe's conscience had been awakened by the first sign of disaster, it falls asleep again when his circumstances seem to have improved.

The wonderful thing about this novel is that God and the importance of the human soul come into prominence quite naturally as the story progresses. Crusoe is blessed with good fortune in Brazil where he becomes fairly prosperous. He finds himself in the middle station of life which his father had strongly recommended to him. But he does not feel content with this middle station. His middle station does not satisfy him in England, and it does not satisfy him in Brazil. He now wishes to pursue a rash and immoderate desire to rise faster than the nature of the thing admitted. After staying in Brazil for four years or so, he is overcome by his "rambling thoughts and designs" to go on another voyage. This voyage also ends in another disaster.

God first enters Crusoe's thoughts in a big way when he is swept ashore after his ship is wrecked, and he finds that all his companions have perished. This time is perfectly natural for Crusoe to thank God for having saved his life. When all his companions were drowned in the sea. While thanking God for having saved his life. Crusoe also tells us that it is impossible to express what the ecstasies and transports of the soul are when a man's life had been saved in such difficult conditions. Then Crusoe again offers his thanks to God when he finds that, during the night, the wrecked ship has been driven by the waves quite close to the shore so that it is possible for him to swim to it and obtain from it a large number of articles which can prove useful to him. In thirteen days he makes eleven trips to the stranded ship, each time obtaining a large number of useful articles. Of course, he feels miserable at the thought that he is all alone on a desolate island, and he even feels that God had done an injustice to him in putting him in such a predicament. In a mood of protest, he asks why providence should thus completely ruin it's creatures and render them so absolutely miserable and abandon them completely. He even thinks that it would hardly be rational to be thankful for such a life. However he quickly checks such impious

thoughts, and reminds himself of his good fortune in being a survivor of the shipwreck in which all others have been lost.

When he compares his blessings with his misfortunes, he finds that the blessings outweigh the misfortunes. He finds himself alive while all his companions had been drowned. God had miraculously saved him from death, and the same God can deliver him from his present condition also. He is not starving on a barren island, but is able to feed on the meat of animals and birds. He is on a warm island where he does not need much clothing. There are no wild beasts on this island to hurt him. God had wonderfully sent the wrecked ship near enough to the shore so that he was in a position to obtain all the necessary and useful things from there. The realization, that the positive side of his life on the island is weightier than the negative side, makes him feel quite cheerful. This is an important stage in Crusoe's spiritual development.

Later, Crusoe finds that God has miraculously caused some ears of corn to appear on the ground close to his habitation. He feels that God has performed this miracle in order to feed and sustain him on this wild, miserable island. However, soon it occurs to him that the sprouting of this crop is not a miracle performed by God but directly due to his own action in having casually shaken out some grains and husks from a bag. The grains of barley and rice, having got scattered on the ground, soon afterwards sprout into plants. Having found a rational explanation for this growth, Crusoe pushes his acknowledgement of God's miraculous powers into the background, thus committing a sin. His faith in God is slightly undermined by his feeling of scepticism. Then the island is shaken by an earthquake. But even at this time of danger, he does not utter any serious or ardent prayer, apart from the common words which every human being utters as a matter of routine: "Lord, have mercy upon me!" (90). When the earthquake has ended, even this routine kind of prayer is forgotten. This is a backward step, from the spiritual point of view.

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The real transformation in Crusoe occurs when he falls ill. He develops high fever and experiences a severe headache. For a week or so his condition remains almost critical. On one occasion he sees a frightening dream in which a man, having descended from a cloud, threatens to kill him with a spear. On waking up from his dream, Crusoe recalls the excellent advice which his father had given him, but to which he had paid no heed. He now feels that during these eight years he had not looked upwards to God with any sincerity of feeling even once. Nor had he ever looked inwards to reflect upon the kind of life he was leading. During these eight years he had been guilty of a certain "stupidity of soul", without any desire for goodness and without any awareness of evil. He had hardly ever been afraid of God when he was facing any danger, and he had hardly ever expressed his thankfulness to God when he had been delivered from any danger. Throughout these eight years he had never perceived God's hand behind anything that had befallen him. He had never realized that his miseries had been a just punishment to him for his rebellious behaviour towards his father or for his subsequent wickedness. When he had been rescued by the Portuguese Captain on the sea, he had not felt the least thankfulness towards God. When he had been shipwrecked for the second time, and might have been drowned, he yet remained far from remorse. In view of this Crusoe now begins to reproach himself with his past life. He thinks that by his wickedness he has proved the justice of God who is now dealing with him in a vindictive manner. Tears begin to flow from his eyes because of his feeling of distress and he exclaims: "Lord ! what a miserable Creature am I ! (100) He thinks that his father's warning has taken a visible shape. So he cries out: "Lord, be my help, for I am in great distress" (101) . In this cry we have according to Crusoe, the first prayer which he had ever addressed to God for many years.

The development described above marks a spiritual crisis in Crusoe's life on the island. It marks Crusoe's religious conversion. From a man who had hardly ever thought of God, Crusoe has become a genuine believer in

God. From this moment onwards, Crusoe begins to have a hope that God would listen to him. From now on, he begins to read the Bible and also pray to God regularly. The dream, which he saw, shows something mystical in his nature. The illness which overtakes him is responsible for bringing about a welcome transformation in him. In illness, a human being has no recourse but to turn to God. When medical science has failed, a man sees no alternative before him but to pray to God, whether it is his own illness or the illness of a near and dear one, he seeks helps from God. Even sceptics and atheists have been known to turn into believers on such occasions. The above mentioned incidents constitute the most important episode in Crusoe's spiritual life. Of course, Crusoe's achievements in subduing his physical environment are marvelous and memorable; but from the spiritual point of view his illness and the change which it brings about in mind and soul, is the most outstanding episode of the novel.

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, " [...] Conversion is not just a human work. It is the movement of a "contrite heart" drawn and moved by grace to respond to the merciful love of God who loved us first" (398). We see then, that from this point onwards the novel describes the movement of Crusoe's "contrite heart" in response to the love of God.

It is in a religious mood that Crusoe observes the first anniversary of his arrival on the desolate island. He keeps the first anniversary of his landing on the island as a day of fasting, as a day of confessing his sins to God, as a day of acknowledging God's righteous judgments upon him, and as a day of praying to God to show mercy to him through Jesus Christ. Thus Crusoe is now a devout Christian, an ardent believer in God and Christ, and also a believer in the efficacy of repentance and prayer. Subsequently, he observes every anniversary in the same devout and pious manner. In fact, he never deviates from this procedure on the occasion of any anniversary during his eight years of stay on the island. On the occasion of his second anniversary, for instance, he tells us that he spent the whole day in humble

and thankful acknowledgement of the many wonderful mercies with which God had blessed him. He gave humble and hearty thanks to God for having made up all the deficiencies of his solitary state and the want of human society by His own presence on the island and by the communication of His grace to his soul. Nor do we have any doubt about the sincerity of Crusoe's gratitude to God. This sincerity is proved by the fact that Crusoe is now feeling much happier in life than he had been during the past ten years. He says that his life during those ten years had been "wicked, cursed and abominable", while his present life is perfectly satisfactory despite all its miserable circumstances. This, however, does not mean that he is completely free from all disturbing thoughts.

One morning, being very sad, Crusoe opens the Bible and reads the following words of Christ. "I will never, never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (125). After reading these words, he begins to feel that it is possible for him to be more happy in this solitary condition than he could have been in any other particular condition in any other part of the world. He now offers sincere thanks to God for having opened his eyes, and for enabling him to realize the blessedness of his present mode of existence. One important item in the routine of his life is to read the scriptures thrice everyday. Thus we find that the spiritual progress, which Crusoe had made during his illness, is being sustained and has not suffered any setback or decline, even though Crusoe does have his moods of despondency. Moods of despondency should not be regarded as a sign of spiritual decline because, in the human state, despondency is something natural and unavoidable. In fact, we marvel at the mental and spiritual equilibrium which Crusoe has achieved on a desolate island. As he himself tells us, he has now acquired a different notion of things. He even begins to look upon the world as a thing remote from him, as a thing with which he had nothing to do and from which he should have no expectations. Indeed he thinks himself lucky because he is now removed from all the wickedness of the world. He writes the following lines: "I had --

neither the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, nor the pride of life. I had nothing to covet, for I had all that I was now capable of enjoying" (142).

Crusoe always sits down to his meal with thankfulness, and he admires the providence which has thus spread his table in the wilderness. The grace of God now makes him think that his repentance has been accepted, and he begins to believe that God has yet more mercies in store for him. He feels that he should never again complain against God, especially because whatever punishment he has received is much less than what he deserved on the basis of his sins. He now comes to the definite conclusion that he should never again complain about his condition but should rejoice and that he should give daily thanks for that daily bread which is available to him. He now feels that he has been fed through a miracle as great as that through which Elijah was fed by the ravens.

This is not to say that Crusoe's trust in God and his contentment continue uninterrupted during the rest of his stay on the island. There are occasions when his faith is some what shaken. For instance, on seeing a footprint in the sand, he is filled with great fear. This fear is partly of a supernatural kind, and he plainly says that this fear banished all his religious hope. In this context he frankly admits that all his former confidence in God has now vanished. However this mood of doubt and scepticism does not last very long. Soon afterwards he picks up his Bible and on opening it, finds the following words: "Wait on the Lord, and be of good cheer, and He shall strengthen thy heart" (174). These words prove to be a source of great comfort to him; and he thankfully lays aside the book and feels no more sad, at least for the time being.

Having stayed on the island for eighteen years, he one day discovers that his island is sometimes visited by cannibals who come here to feast upon the flesh of human beings whom they bring as prisoners. Cannibalism is abhorrent to Crusoe. He would like to destroy as many of the cannibals as he can. But he is restrained from doing so by the religious thought that he has no

right to sit in judgment upon the cannibals. He has no right to defend himself against an attack by them, but he cannot play the role of a judge, and sentence them to death for eating human flesh. In fact, Crusoe is averse to killing any human being unless it becomes absolutely unavoidable.

As already pointed out, Crusoe is something of a mystic. He thinks that a human being often receives secret hints from providence as to what he should do and which path he should follow. Crusoe's attaching much importance to such mysterious, inexplicable suggestions shows that he believes in some kind of communication between the human spirit and the spirit of God. In his twenty third year on the island, Crusoe once again recalls the excellent advice of his father, and says that his failure to act upon that advice was his 'original sin'. He also says that his original sin and his subsequent mistakes of the same kind had been the means of his coming into his miserable condition on the island. Once again he realizes that if he had settled permanently in Brazil where he had already become prosperous, he would have been by now one of the most important planters in that country. This realization too may be regarded as a step forward in Crusoe's spiritual development. Another important stage in this development is reached when Crusoe begins to teach Friday, a savage whose life he saves from the clutches of cannibals, the Christian religion. By a laborious effort he is able to introduce Christian beliefs into Friday's mind. He is able to convert a heathen into a Christian, and, as he himself says, he had not only saved Friday's life but also Friday's soul. Here Crusoe plays the role of a Christian missionary.

In the final phase of Crusoe's stay on the island, there are very few references to God; but that is because this section of the novel is concerned with Crusoe's battles, first with the cannibals, and then with the mutinous crew of an English ship. In this part of the novel, action and adventure supersede religious concerns. But this pushing of religious concerns into the background is also necessary because no further spiritual development in Crusoe is either necessary or even possible. We certainly do not want that

Crusoe should develop into a saint or a hermit or a recluse devoting himself completely and entirely to prayer, fasting, and religious meditations. Whatever spiritual development is desirable in a human being, who has to spend his life in the midst of human society, has already taken place and the religious side of Crusoe therefore needs no further emphasis in the final section of the novel wherein we have a whole series of actions and deeds which Crusoe accomplishes, undoubtedly under the guidance and direction of God.

Chapter 3

Christian Themes, Symbols And Allusions

Sin, punishment, repentance and reconciliation go to make an important theme of *Robinson Crusoe*. They are the themes in the last plays of Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*. In these last plays of Shakespeare we see the culprits committing sin, suffering punishment, repenting and then getting reconciled. Defoe seems to have been inspired by these romances of Shakespeare. Crusoe commits the sin of disobeying the mandate of his father and the dictates of God, meets the misfortunes on sea and the island, which he regards as his due punishment, repents for having done wrong and then ultimately gets reconciled to his afflictions bestowed upon him by providence.

Crusoe is foolishly and obstinately inclined to wander abroad and to see the whole world on ship. His parents entreat him not to leave them lonely by wandering away. His father says that if he disobeys him, he would not cease to pray for him but if he goes away for the sea-faring life without his consent and the blessing of God, God will not bless him. But ignoring all the persuasions and the entreaties of his parents Crusoe runs away to London, thus committing sin both against God and against his parents. He does not consult either his father or mother. As soon as the ship begins to move, the storm rages furiously and the sea rises mountain high in a frightful manner. Crusoe thinks that he is overtaken by the judgment of God for his wickedness in leaving his home and leaving his parents in tears. The ship is about to wreck and Crusoe is terrified. He makes many vows. He swears that if it pleases God to spare his life, he will return home and will never set his foot on the ship. But as the weather improves and there is calm around, he forgets all his vows. When he reaches London he thinks of going back home, but the sin of pride overtakes him. He fears that if he returns home, his neighbours will laugh at his failure. Thus he commits the sin of disobedience and pride.

When he sails to Guinea the second time he is taken prisoner by the Moorish pirates. Whenever he suffers afflictions he reflects and concludes that he is overtaken by Nemesis. It is his pride that leads to further adventures and further sorrows. He had already committed the sin of pride and disobedience. And now when he is flourishing in Brazil he commits another sin. He abandons the middle station of life and adheres to the obstinate foolish wandering inclination. He commits the sin of pursuing a rash and immoderate desire of rising faster than the nature of things permit. He aspires to grow wealthy overnight. Thus he becomes the willful agent of his own miseries. Crusoe committed the sin of disobedience, pride, immoderate desire and also went against the will of God. He regards his "opposition to the excellent advice of his father as his original sin" akin to Adam's and Eve's first disobedience of God. This biblical reference also suggests that Crusoe's exile from civilization represents Adam and Eve's expulsion from Eden.

Crusoe regards his every affliction as a due punishment for his sin. When the ship bound for London is beaten by the turbulent waves and his life is in danger, he thinks he is overtaken by the judgment of Heaven. When he is cast upon the desolate island, he feels that he has been punished for his sin. He regards himself as the author of his own woe because he disregarded the advice of his father for embracing the middle station of life. Now he is the willful agent of all his miseries. Again and again he recollects his father's advice, admonition and prophecy. He says: "[...] through all the variety of miseries that had to this day befallen me, I never had so much as one thought of it being the hand of God or that it was a just punishment for my sin: my rebellious behaviour against my father, or my present sins, which were great, or so much a punishment for the general course of my wicked life" (98). He feels that he has offended God, and therefore God has the right to condemn him to whatever punishment He thinks fit. He considers it his duty to bear his indignation because he has sinned against God.

Crusoe's experiences constitute not simply an adventure story in which thrilling things happen, but also a moral tale illustrating the right and wrong ways to live one's life. This moral and religious dimension of the tale is indicated in the preface, which states that Crusoe's story is being published to instruct others in God's wisdom, and one vital part of this wisdom is the importance of repenting for one's sins. While, it is important to be grateful for God's miracles, as Crusoe is when his grains sprouts, it is not enough simply to express gratitude or even to pray to God, as Crusoe does several times with few results. Crusoe needs repentance most, as he learns from the fiery angelic figure that comes to him during a feverish hallucination and says the following words: "Seeing all these things have not brought thee to repentance, now thou shalt die" (97). For Crusoe, repentance consists of acknowledging his wretchedness and his absolute dependence on the Lord. This admission marks a turning point in Crusoe's spiritual consciousness, and is almost a born-again experience for him. After repentance, he complains much less about his sad fate, and views the island more positively. Later, when Crusoe is rescued and his fortune restored, he compares himself to Job, who also regained divine favour. Thus, as powerful as the theme of repentance is in the novel, it is nevertheless complex and ambiguous.

Morality is another important theme in the novel. Friday is a heathen but he is in due course converted to Christianity through Crusoe's regular instruction. During these religious sessions, Crusoe tells Friday all about the Christian beliefs regarding God, the Devil, and Christ. Friday shows a lot of interest in these religious lessons, and asks his preceptor numerous questions which shows his intelligence. As a result of Crusoe's painstaking efforts, Friday ultimately becomes an earnest believer in the Christian faith and learns all about the redemption of mankind by Christ the saviour and about the need of repentance on the part of human beings. Now Crusoe has the pleasure of thinking that he had not only saved Friday's life but Friday's soul also.

Regarding the symbols in the novel, Crusoe's encounters with water are often associated not simply with hardship, but with a kind of symbolic ordeal, or test of character. First, the storm off the coast of Yarmouth frightens Crusoe's friend away from a life at sea, but does not deter Crusoe. Then, in his first trading voyage,, he proves himself a capable merchant, and in his second one, he shows he is able to survive enslavement. His escape from his Moorish master and his successful encounter with the Africans both occur at the sea. Most significantly, Crusoe survives his shipwreck after a lengthy immersion in water. But the sea remains a source of danger and fear even later, when the cannibals arrive in canoes. The Spanish shipwreck reminds Crusoe of the destructive power of water and of his own good fortune in surviving it. All the life testing water imagery in the novel has subtle associations with the rite of baptism, by which Christians prove their faith and enter a new life saved by Christ. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains, "It is by faith in the Gospel and by Baptism that one renounces evil and gains salvation, that is, the forgiveness of all sins and the gift of new life (398). On a scouting tour around the island, Crusoe discovers a delightful valley in which he decides to build a country retreat or "bower". This bower contrasts sharply with Crusoe's first residence, since it is built not for the practical purpose of shelter or storage, but simply for pleasure. Crusoe is no longer focussed solely on survival, which by this point in the novel is more or less secure. Now, for the first time since his arrival, he thinks in terms "of pleasantness". Thus the bower symbolizes a radical improvement in Crusoe's attitude towards his time on the island. Island life is no longer necessarily a disaster to suffer through, but may be an opportunity for enjoyment, just as, for the Presbyterian, life may be enjoyed only after hardwork has been finished and repentance achieved.

Crusoe is concerned that he will lose his reckoning of time and he marks the passing of days with his knife: "I cut it with my knife upon a large post, in capital letters, and making it into a great cross, I set it up on the shore

where I first landed" (71). The large size and the capital letters he uses show us how important this cross is to Crusoe as a time keeping device and thus also a way of relating himself to the larger social world where dates and calendars still matter. But the cross is also a symbol of his own new existence on the island just as the Christian cross is a symbol of Christian's new life in Christ after baptism, an immersion in water like Crusoe's shipwreck experience.

The symbolism is clustered around Crusoe's religious conversion. The peculiar effectiveness of the descriptions of the shoots of barley and the making of the earthen pots is probably due to their symbolic value in the religious context. Crusoe sheds tears of joy at the realization that the stalks are perfect green barley, and for the first time he begins to reflect seriously on God's providence. Clearly, they are the seeds of grace stirring in his heart and sending forth their first tender sprouts. In other words, these sprouts are symbolic of Crusoe's success in making an earthen pot after several unsuccessful efforts is similar to his ultimate success in attaining a spiritual goal. In a sense Crusoe is the pot himself, made by God the potter. Several times he has been brought to the fire, but nothing had come of it. Finally however, his efforts are multiplied, he glows red and emerges as a serviceable small earthen pot in the hands of the Lord.

Crusoe made clothes using the goat skin. And these goat skin garments, which Crusoe makes after his old clothes wear out, can be regarded symbolically as a new armour of faith. And the elaborate system of defence which Crusoe establishes around his habitation on the island can be regarded symbolically as the invincibility of the man who truly believes in God and in God's supreme wisdom. The fertile region in which melons, lemons, grapes and other fruits grow in abundance is a symbol of the earthly paradise in which Crusoe is now living.

Crusoe's ardent life on the island is a symbol of Defoe's own labours and toil in life, and Crusoe's vicissitudes and sufferings, punctuated by —

feelings of relief, contentment and joy symbolize the experience of all humanity. Crusoe's life has been treated as a voyage. The novel is not only about the outer voyage over the sea but also an inner voyage towards God.

We also find symbolic significance in Friday, the name which Crusoe gives to a savage whose life he has saved from the clutches of cannibals. Friday is a symbol of the "noble savage" who possesses some of the basic virtues of human nature: he is industrious, he is honest; he is reliable, he is grateful, he is a devoted friend.

A dream Crusoe has when he falls sick is also symbolic. Crusoe develops high fever and gets a severe headache. This illness lasts many days. During his illness, Crusoe sees a dream or a nightmare in which a man, after descending from a cloud, advances towards Crusoe with a spear to kill him. The dream is significant. It is a token that Crusoe is being punished with illness for his disobedience to his father's wishes. The dream thus symbolizes Crusoe's sense of guilt in having left home against his father's advice and counsel. The effect of illness is to bring about a transformation in the mental and spiritual life of Crusoe. We know from our personal experience that illness draws a human being closer to God. Even those of us who normally do not believe in God, begin to pray to God for help when we have fallen ill. And this is exactly what happens to Crusoe.

The whole novel gives us the idea of Crusoe's transformation. Crusoe loses twenty eight years of sinful life, but he gains an eternal bliss. At the moment of his conversion, he cries aloud in a kind of joyous ecstasy. "Jesus, Thou son of David, Jesus, Thou exalted prince and saviour, give me repentance" (107). He is at first under captivity in sin, and he is then liberated from sin and the consciousness of sinfulness through repentance and devotion to God. Thus the account of Crusoe's victory over nature on the desolate island is allegorically his victory over himself and also the establishment of a close relationship between him and God.

Crusoe's story calls to mind the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 1:11-32. Crusoe himself makes an explicit reference to this biblical story when he says at the end of his initial voyage, that if even now he were to return home, his father would forgive him and give him an enthusiastic and joyous welcome. In other words, Crusoe is the prodigal son who leaves his father's house against his father's advice who ruins himself not by his dissolute living, but by his roaming disposition, who is then left solitary and desolate, repents of his disobedience to his father, and eventually returns to God the Father. On the island God the Father as it were kills the fatted calf, blessing Crusoe with an abundance of everything, and restoring him to favour and to a sense of proprietorship of property. Crusoe remarks: " Had I now had the sense to have gone back to Hull, and have gone home, I had been happy, and my father an emblem of our blessed saviour's parable, had even killed the fatted calf for me" (15).

The climax of divine benevolence comes when Crusoe recognizes the fact that he has been treated by the creator most mercifully, and that God has sweetened his bitter life on the island with his generosity. "What a table was here spread for me in the wilderness; where I saw nothing at all but to perish for hunger" ! (164) He goes on to say, "I must confess, my religious thankfulness to God's providence began to abate too upon discovering that all this was nothing but what was common" (87). Elsewhere, his gratitude is expressed thus:

I ought to have been as thankful for so strange and unforeseen providence as if it had been miraculous, for it was really the work of providence as to me, that should order or appoint, that ten or twelve grains of corn should remain unspoiled (when the rats had destroyed all the rest), as if it had been dropped from Heaven. (87)

Robinson Crusoe is grateful for God's miracles. When the grain sprouts, he believes that it is the blessing from heaven like God giving manna

to the Israelites. He then thinks that the climate was not proper for corn, nor the rain adequate during the season. And he believes that it is "God who miraculously caused these grains to grow without any help of seed sown and that it was so directed purely for my sustenance on that wild miserable place" (87).

Exodus 16: 16-36 describes the incident of God miraculously giving manna to the Israelite community. The Lord commanded Moses to guide the Israelites to Canaan but on their way they had to face many difficulties and people began to revolt against Moses and God. They raised their voice against Moses. In this traumatic situation Moses pleaded with God for help. God blessed the Israelites with food from Heaven. The people of Israel called the food Manna. It was like a small white seed and tasted like biscuits made with honey. Thus in the time of difficulty God blessed the Israelites with food and water from heaven. Likewise Robinson Crusoe was also blessed by the Almighty, who provided him with comfortable living conditions even though he was surrounded by crises.

The Book of Jonah 1:1-17, tells the story of Jonah the prophet. God asks Jonah to go to Nineveh with a message, but at first he doesn't obey God's words. So he was punished by God and he had to pass through many difficult situations. His crisis reached to such an extent that on his journey to Spain in a ship, he was thrown out of the ship by the sailors and was swallowed by a large fish. Finally he obeyed God's commands. Like the prophet, Crusoe too set out on his journey. And a young man says to him: "[...] this is all befallen us on your account, like Jonah in the ship of Tarshish (16)". Crusoe set out for the journey without listening to his father's voice. Apart from that he didn't care to get God's blessings as is very evidently borne by the following lines:

I consulted neither father or mother anymore, nor so much as sent them word of it; but leaving them to hear of it as they might, without asking God's blessing, or my father's, without

any consideration of circumstances or consequences and in an ill hour, God knows, on the first of September, 1651, I went on board a ship bound for London . (8)

Jonah had to pass through many crises, when he disobeyed God's words. Eventually he submitted to God's wish. Likewise, Crusoe also had to pass through many frightening situations when he followed his own will. It took him a long time to realize that God is the ultimate truth, and when he realized this, he fully surrendered himself to God.

In Genesis 3: 17-19, God pronounces judgment for the first disobedience of man. The first man Adam listened to his mate Eve and ate the fruit which God had told him not to eat. As a result of this he was cursed to work hard all his life and to produce enough food from the earth for himself. God said to man - "You will have to work hard and sweat to make the soil produce anything". This event is reflected in the life of Crusoe. He lived a very calm and peaceful life when he was with his father. But when he disobeyed his father's words and set out for the journey, he had to undergo many disasters. Like Adam he had to toil hard for his living. After facing many negative circumstances at sea he managed to safely reach on a island. However the circumstances on the island were not good enough to provide him with food and shelter. Even the climatic condition was a great hindrance for Crusoe, when he tried to grow barley for his living. In order to survive he started to depend upon tortoises for egg and meat. Apart from that he depended upon the she goat for its milk. So like Adam who depended upon nature for his living, Crusoe too had to depend completely on nature for his survival. The following lines depicts his pathetic condition on the island :

All this time I worked very hard, the rains hindering me many days, nay, some times weeks together; but I thought I should never be perfectly secure till this wall was finished, and it is scarce credible what inexpressible labor everything was done with, especially the bringing piles out of the woods, driving

them into the ground, for I made them much bigger than I need to have done. (85)

In Matthew 9:20-22, a miracle done by Jesus is given. A woman who had suffered from severe bleeding for 12 years came up behind Jesus and touched the edge of his cloak. The woman believed that if only she touched Jesus' cloak, she would get healed. Jesus was surprised by her faith and told her, "Your faith has made you well". Like the woman in the Bible who suffered from severe disease for many years, Crusoe too had to undergo many difficult situations. Deep in her mind the woman had a great faith that only Jesus could save her from from this situation. So during her period of suffering she eagerly waited for Jesus to heal her. Likewise Crusoe, when he was deserted on the island realized that his first and last refuge was God. While on the island he had with him a copy of the Holy Bible which he dearly kept with him. He toiled very hard on the island and he also eagerly read the Bible. Through nature, through the Gospels, through his experience and through his broodings about himself, he found God. He believed that God was with him in the times of difficulties and he found himself closer to God. He believed that his present situation was the result of his disobedience to God and he believed that by changing himself he would be nearer to God and God would ultimately heal him He says: "I went, directed by Heaven no doubt; for in this chest I found a cure both for soul and body" (103). So also at another time Crusoe says, "[...]now I have difficulties to struggle with, too great for even nature itself to support, and no assistance, no help, no comfort, no advice. Then I cried out, Lord, be my help, for I am in great distress" (101).

We read in Psalm 91: "Whoever goes to the Lord for safety, whoever remains under the protection of the Almighty, can say to him; you are my defender and protector, you are my God, in you I trust". This verse describes Robinson Crusoe's experience. God was with him in the time of crises. In Crusoe's own words: "I kneeled down and prayed to God to fulfill the

promise to me, that if I called upon Him in the day of trouble, He would deliver me" (105).

The Book of Job is the story of a good man who suffers total disaster. Job is a prosperous and thoroughly upright man favoured by God. Satan seeks God's permission to tempt Job by striking him down with poverty and affliction. As a result he is riddled with painful sores from his head. But Job welcomes his suffering for it is sent by that very God who had blessed him once with peace and prosperity. Crusoe's case is very similar to this. He says:

I began to conclude in my mind that it was possible for me to be more happy in this forsaken solitary condition than it was probable I should ever have been in any other particular state in the world; and with this thought I was going to give thanks to God for bringing me to this place. (126)

Crusoe is not a hero, but an "Everyman". He begins his life as a wanderer aimless on a sea. He does not understand the meaning of his life but at the end of the novel he is portrayed as a pilgrim crossing a final mountain to enter the promised land. The book tells us the story of how Crusoe becomes closer to God not through listening to sermons in a church but through spending time alone amongst nature with only a Bible to read. Defoe was himself a puritan moralist, and wrote books on how to be a good puritan Christian, such as *The New Family Instructor* (1728) and *Religious Courtship* (1732). The very name Crusoe may have been taken from Timothy Crusoe, a classmate of Defoe's who had written guidebooks himself, including *God the Guide of Youth* (1685) and died at an early age. It has even been suggested that this book had inspired Defoe because of a number of passages in that work that are closely tied to the novel; and because it also shares many of the same themes and theological and moral point of view.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

The novel *Robinson Crusoe* is not just an adventure story appealing to the juvenile mind. It is very much a book for the adult reader also. Apart from being an exciting account of a solitary man's adventures on an uninhabited island, this book has been found to possess a profound allegorical significance. The novel is not only about the outward voyage over the sea. It is also an inner voyage, like that of Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* in which the hero moves towards God. On the surface the novel is only an adventure story. Really speaking, it is a religious allegory. Inwardly it is a spiritual adventure in which Crusoe explores himself and God. It is utterly absurd to say, as Virginia Woolfe remarks, that God does not exist in the novel *Robinson Crusoe*. As Milton himself is in every line of *Paradise Lost*, there is God almost on every page of the novel *Robinson Crusoe*. Defoe himself declared that the book was an allegory of his own life. The book contains the difficulties and hardships experienced by a man on a desolate island as also the victories won by him.

Crusoe's life has been treated as a voyage in the novel. He sees God's blessedness everywhere when he does not find it where he seeks it, he asks for it. He feels blessed on the desolate island because here he is removed from all the wickedness of the world. He thinks that he has neither the lust of the flesh, the lust of eye, or the pride of life. He feels blessed because he enjoys life on the island as much as he can. He feels that even in the miserable condition he has been comforted with the knowledge of himself and the hope of his blessing. He feels blessed because his condition is far from miserable, compared to that of others, and also he is kept serene and calm by having the events of things hid from his eyes. And that is why his heart overflows with gratefulness and thankfulness to God. Thus he realizes the real love of God. Thus the island of dreadful afflictions becomes the place of ecstasy. He gets reconciled to God. His soul is saved and he has received the spiritual -

salvation he sought for. The most important episode in the spiritual life of Crusoe takes place when he falls sick. The effect of this illness is to bring about a transformation in the mental and spiritual life of Crusoe. He tells us that through all the miseries of his life, he had never thought that the hand of God had been at work, but now it seems to him that his illness is a punishment which he deserves for his sin. This episode marks a climax in his spiritual life on the island. It is also regarded as the conversion of Crusoe from scepticism or non-belief to religious affirmation and faith. On the basis of all this, we can safely come to the conclusion that the hand of God is working everywhere in the novel.

The novel can be regarded as an allegorical account of Defoe's own life which was a life of toil, setbacks, humiliations, defeats and also great achievements, victories and triumphs. Defoe was fond of parading his personal misfortunes before other people and it may have occurred to him after he had finished writing the book that his hero's misadventures had in some respects an allegorical resemblance to those of his own life. Besides if the novel had been only an allegory of the author's own life and no more, it would not have been treated as a masterpiece of universal value. Actually it is an allegory of the souls of the people who have to go through trying, taxing, tormenting, harrowing and agonizing experiences in life or who are doomed to solitary lives devoid of all fellowship and companionship. One may conclude therefore, that *Robinson Crusoe* is an allegorical expansion of the idea of Everyman's engagement with God.

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