

DELIVERANCE IN "ROBINSON CRUSOE"

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ABSTRACT

This paper first studies the concept of deliverance in "Robinson Crusoe," written by the 18th century English novelist, Daniel Defoe, in comparison with three Hebrew figures in the Bible and then refers to the author's two writing styles to examine the value of the novel for Japanese readers whose society is not based on a monotheistic god.

INTRODUCTION

This paper studies deliverance in "The Life And Adventures Of Robinson Crusoe" by Daniel Defoe, the 18th century English novelist. Robinson Crusoe, the protagonist, is physically delivered from death to life when he is shipwrecked by a storm. Out of the water, the English man lands on an isolated island, where he is delivered from death to life not only physically but also spiritually. In terms of deliverance, the paper deals with three stages of restoration experienced by Robinson: one with God, one with humans, and one with his native country, England. The restorations involve two explorations: first how Robinson's deliverance from hardships relates to his religious salvation, and second how Robinson's return to his home country is connected with the spiritual deliverance of Friday, a young man with a different cultural background. The two explorations can be explained by comparing Robinson's experiences to those of three Hebrew figures in the Bible: Jonah and Elijah, two Old Testament prophets, and Peter, one of Jesus Christ's twelve Apostles in the New Testament. Finally the paper examines the value of "The Life and the Adventures" for the general readers in Japan by referring to two different writing styles adopted by Daniel Defoe: one journalistic, and one literary.

1. RESTORATION OF ROBINSON'S RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD: COMPARISON WITH JONAH

There is a similarity in life choices between Jonah, the Israeli prophet of the 8th century B.C., and Robinson Crusoe, the English

sailor of the 18th century. Jonah sails in an opposite direction when he rejects God. The Israeli is unwilling to follow God's call. The prophet is instructed by God to go warn the city of Nineveh of its impending destruction, but instead heads for Tarshish "to flee from God." (Jonah I :3) Nineveh was an ancient Assyrian city on the Tigris River, opposite the present-day Mosul, Iraq. Tarshish is thought to have been a port city in Spain. The two cities are in opposite directions from Israel. Jonah proceeds just in the exact opposite directions, heading west Tarshish, instead of east, for Nineveh. Like Jonah, Robinson also ships out. He thinks that he should not set sail, but leaves port out of remorse for going to sea against his father's wish. He considers his father's wish as a duty to God, but instead takes a contrary direction, because his covet for victorious career exceeds what he thinks it right to do. That means successful career goes against what he believes is right. "...my conscience... reproached me with.... the breach of my duty to God and my father." (31) Robinson longs to be successful in business abroad by following the path of his ambitious contemporaries. His decision reflects the spirit of the 18th century. Dr. G.M. Trevelyan calls Defoe the embodiment of his contemporary ethos because the English merchant "welcomes the coming of commercial prosperity." (245)

Robinson pursues his earthly desires of success in business, instead of the heavenly mission of following the will of God as his father wishes. He knows what he should do, but he not do it. His disobedience suggests Original Sin in the Old Testament. The Chapter Three of the Old Testament describes how Original Sin arises from Adam and Eve's refusal to follow the words of God. Adam and Eve, the first two humans created by God, know that they must follow God's decrees or they will invite death, but the

couple make the opposite decision. The man and woman decide not to follow their Creator, but to satisfy their own interests. They eat "the tree of the knowledge of god and evil," forbidden by God. (Genesis 3:6)

Like Adam and Eve, both Jonah and Robinson first resist following God's will which they fully acknowledge and then attempt to run away from God, but the Lord never forsakes the sinners, Jonah and Robinson. The sovereign Creator uses the same means to fetch back both of them. The Almighty controls natural forces by harnessing a fierce wind to turn the two men back to Him. A fish swallows Jonah and deposits him on dry land. In the same way, God sends a storm to wreck Robinson's ship. Jonah spends three days inside the fish. In the complete isolation from the world, he accepts his imperfections and calls to God for salvation. Once out of the fish, Jonah immediately obeys the word of the Lord and goes straight to Nineveh. Robinson also feels helpless in the terror of wild waves, but this experience is not enough for him to admit his imperfections. Unlike Jonah, out of the storm and onto the dry land, Robinson does not fulfill "his duty to God." (31) Unlike Jonah, Robinson is not inside the fish, but on an isolated land where he experiences a spiritual change from disobedience to commitment. On the deserted island, Robinson has to spend not, Jonah's three days but more than 20 years alone with nothing but God to depend on, and this is where he learns how to trust the Almighty. "I had a dismal prospect of my condition, for as I was not cast away upon that island without being driven, as is said, by a violent storm quite out of the course of our intended voyage, and a great way, viz. some hundreds of leagues, out of the ordinary course of the trade of mankind, I had great reason to consider it as a determination of Heaven," (80)

Robinson's attitude toward God in his homeland is rather self-centered. He believes in God but has no experience with Him as his personal God. The Englishman calls to God only when he is in distress, but he has no intention of fulfilling the will of God nor of following Him. He lives his life as he wishes, believing that he has the right to control his own life. He has no vision based on the words of God in the Bible. He lacks in understanding God as a Person who gives him daily guides and advice. That is why Robinson embodies the main philosophy of the 18th century England, called "Deism." Deism is an 18th century belief in natural religion, affirming the existence of God while denying the validity of revelation. Robinson, the man of deism, on the desolate island, starts considering, for the first time in his life, the message of the Scriptures, that is, what the words personally mean to him. The direct experience with the word of God helps his faith to grow. The deist gradually makes a religious transformation on three occasions: shipwreck, the sight of crops and sickness.

Robinson experiences his first spiritual change in the shipwreck, even though it is a slight step. When he is on a ship in the Caribbean Sea, the ship is hit by a storm. His inability to save himself out of the storm makes him feel helpless as to his "own deliverance."⁽⁶⁵⁾ It is the first experience in his life to leave him "senseless", because the Deist who has always depended on his own abilities and reason is not able to use his own powers nor sense for the first time.

The great change for Robinson in accepting God comes when he sees crops grow on the isolated island. He is touched by the plants, because he believes "God had miraculously caused this grain to grow without any help of seed sown, and that it was so directed purely for my sustenance on that wild miserable

place."(94) and "for it was really the work of providence as to me... that 10 or 12 grains of corn should remain unspoiled ..as if it had been dropt from heaven." (95) Robinson is more affected by Providence's existence and omnipotence than before, even though this means an incomplete trust in God. Even so, Crusoe shows progress toward the final stage. When he sees the crops, Robinson regards God as someone who works miracles without a personal relationship with a mankind. Therefore Robinson is emotionally moved when he sees the crops. But when he realizes God has used him to produce crops, Robinson's flirtation with religion begins to flag. "and I must confess, my religious thankfulness to God's providence began to abate too, upon the discovering that all this was nothing but what was common;... "(95) This experience, however, works as the turning point in his acceptance of the Lord.

His faith further deepens when he is, weak with sickness. That is the most crucial moment for the development of his belief, because it is the first time that he puts his trust in God as a personal God. In the shipwreck, Robinson asks God for His help but regards Him as the deity who controls nature but has no interest in Robinson's personal life. When he is in despair of physical weakness, he is, for the first time, conscious of God as the Supreme Ruler of his life. Robinson handles the situation with prayers by asking God to help him to respond to this anxiety supernaturally: "Lord, be my help, for I am in great distress." (106) That is the first stage of restoration in his relationship with God. In his physically feeble condition, he accepts himself humbly as a created human being who should depend on the Creator. Psalm 50:15 is the first Scripture which Robinson mediates in his physical pain: "Call on me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver, and thou shalt glorify me." (108) This is the song sung to God by

King David, founder of Israel and Judah when he is betrayed by a fellow associate. In spite of his disappointment, David turns to God to heal his grievance. In the same way, Robinson looks up at God in his hopelessness.

Robinson spiritually changes not in a prominent but in an inconspicuous way. Robinson's faith in God is cultivated by reading the Scriptures on a daily basis. He opens the Bible during his daily routine. At the same time, he farms and hunts on fine days and works wood and makes implements such as baskets on rainy days. It means that his daily life is based on reading the words of the Bible, whatever are the circumstances. His spiritual life and physical life are complimentary and inseparable. That is how Robinson comes to have an increasing trust in God. His faith grows by reading the Bible and applying each verse to his life. Concerning Robinson's spiritual development in solitude, John J. Richetti refers to the change as "from religious indifference to a sense of heightened awareness, both of himself and of God's role in his fate." (55) Experiencing his own imperfections in loneliness, Robinson comes to know God personally and experiences a spiritual deliverance. That is how Robinson restores in his relationship with God. The restoration sets the next stage for the Englishman's deliverance in human relationships.

2. RESTORATION OF ROBINSON'S RELATIONSHIP WITH PEOPLE: COMPARISON WITH PETER

In the beginning of the story, Robinson has extreme racial prejudice against people of different cultures and religions. He lacks in tolerance to accept those people whose ways are anomalous to him. But he changes his mind, because he realizes

ethnocentric arrogance of his own views. He realizes his superiority complex, scornfulness and pride. When he sees cannibals in the distance, he jumps to the conclusion that he has a right to kill them, not because he physically feels danger from them but because he feels emotional discomfort from them. He is not in peril of his life and is not attacked. But Robinson comes to feel ashamed of his attitude when he remembers how God has protected him from "unseen dangers." (181) He thanks God for His protection when he survives storm, shipwreck and sickness: "How wonderfully we are delivered when we know nothing of it." (181) It does not mean he accepts the practice of cannibalism, but he changes the direction of his gaze. Instead of looking at the cruelty of barbarians, Robinson turns his eyes to God's mercy on him. Robinson identifies those cannibals not based on how he feels toward them, but by on how God handles them. He comes to understand that it does not matter how he sees it but it matters how God does. That is how Robinson surrenders his European bias to the hands of God, and instead begins channeling his views into God. For Robinson to further overcome his prejudice against different values, he must become personally acquainted with another savage, Friday who is to play a key role in Robinson's developing restoration.

Robinson saves Friday, a cannibal, from his enemies, then gives him food and teaches him from the Bible. Friday serves as a mirror for Robinson. Like Robinson, Friday is also delivered not only physically but also spiritually. The young man learns how Robinson lives. He follows Robinson's life style, farming and hunting as well as reading the Bible. Like Robinson, Friday believes in Jesus Christ as his Savior. He decides to live a new life by getting rid of his old custom of man eating. This is how Friday

serves not only as an image of Robinson but also as living evidence to conflicts of discordant cultures and religions. Friday's role here can be likened to that of Peter, one of twelve disciples chosen by Jesus to preach the gospel of eternal redemption by Jesus Christ.

The Jewish man Peter carries in him centuries of deep-seated prejudice between Jew and Gentile, but he changes his views when he accepts God's Words. The Jewish people have traditionally no social acquaintance with the non-Jewish. Peter would rather die than sit at the same dinner table with gentiles. God, however, gives Peter a thrice-repeated vision to break down the cycle of prejudice, setting the stage for the expansive phase of the gospel's advance to the remotest corners of the known world. He regards the vision as the will of God and accepts it as His guidance. "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right." (Acts 10: 34) Through the vision, Peter admits that the gospel is fairly and equally given to every kind of people, even to his enemy.

This is the way Peter, a man of prejudice, overcomes his hatred to opposing cultures. In the same way, Robinson accepts Friday as he is. He learns to live together with the savage without rebuking the young man's old customs of man eating.

By accepting the savage, Robinson starts a new life with Friday. The Englishman shares his way of living: not only farming but also living by reading the Bible. Friday listens to Robinson and accepts what Robinson believes: faith in Jesus Christ as his Savior. Robinson is delighted with the simple process of Friday's salvation. That is the first time Robinson feels a great pleasure of living on this isolated island: "a secret joy run through every part of my soul, and I frequently rejoiced that ever I was brought to this place,..." (222) Robinson is convinced that

living for someone else's salvation is the ultimate happiness for him. Robinson may be sure that Friday will serve as a solution to religious conflicts in his homeland. That can be one reason why Robinson brings Friday to his homeland at the end of the novel. Robinson is confident that Friday, as proof of spiritual salvation from idolatry, will be a delight for his native country England as the young man with different ideas is a delight for Robinson.

3. RESTORATION OF ROBINSON'S RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS HOMELAND: COMPARISON WITH ELIJAH

By presenting Friday, a young cannibal, Daniel Defoe, suggests solutions to the conflicts in England in the form of a novel. Defoe, a journalist and novelist of 17 and 18th centuries, was directly involved in political and religious conflicts between Conformists and Dissenters in England: those who accept the religious doctrine of the Established Church versus those who refused to accept that church. Defoe, a dissenter, struggled to work out solutions to the confusion. In "Robinson Crusoe", Defoe describes Robinson as a man who returns to his home town 27 years after leaving his native country to avoid "his duty to God" (31), but who now comes back to his homeland. His return can be interpreted as repentance for not fulfilling his original duty. By returning and starting again from the original area, Robinson experiences the final stage of restoration in his relationship with God. Robinson's choice suggests a biblical parallel with Elijah, the Old Testament Hebrew prophet of the ninth century B.C..

Elijah's experience in the Old Testament illustrates how he restores himself from depression and gains spiritual strength. The Hebrew prophet goes into seclusion after his victory over the

battle with King Ahab of Israel, since he is extremely filled with self-pity after victory due to loss of his spiritual balance. Elijah, however, gets up and goes out of hopelessness when he realizes his role before God. He stands up to preach the gospel as his mission. "Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel- all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all those mouths have not kissed him." (I King 19:18) Robinson also has seclusion in which he makes a spiritual restoration. He partially restores himself in solitude but he completely revives himself when he returns to his homeland. England is the place where Robinson should be and where he should return. There are two purposes in his return. One is indicative of human's ultimate return to the Heavenly home. The other is suggestive of his Earthly mission to preach the gospel. The return is evocative of what Defoe hopes for his England. The author can be sure that his country will be restored from deadly feuds between Conformists and Dissenters if the nation re-realizes its heavenly mission to preach the gospel to people of different cultures.

In the conclusion of the novel lies hope for everybody in the world, not only for the English but also for global citizens including the Japanese. The message is universally available because of Friday. He used to be a cannibal but is now delivered from his separation from God. He is lost but found by God. The fact is a delight for not only Robinson but also his homeland. The same delight can be possible for all of the people in the world including the Japanese. However it is not certain how the message will be accepted by Japanese readers. The society has little if any understanding of the Deity as a monotheistic deity or a creator of the universe. "Robinson Crusoe" is read in Japan as a book on how to take an economic advantage of human capacity and natural

environments. It is not a book of spiritual deliverance. That is why it is of interest and value to explore how much it will be possible for Japanese readers to read "The Life and the Adventures" from a perspective of deliverance.

4. THE VALUE OF "THE ADVENTURE OF ROBINSON" FOR THE JAPANESE: IN COMPARISON OF TWO WRITING STYLES

Finally the paper studies the value of "Robinson Crusoe" for Japanese readers by examining the difference between Defoe's writing styles: journalistic and literary. Defoe is a writer of two different styles. Defoe started his career as a journalist writing in prose of the facts of life, mainly the visible world. On the contrary, Defoe the novelist, however, writes fiction in verse, impressions of facts, an invisible activity. There is a gap between the first style and the second one. It generates Defoe's intricate style. Arthur Wellesley Second describes Defoe "genius for verisimilitude secured by the judicious selection of details." (11) In "Robinson Crusoe", however, Defoe proficiently crosses over the split. Readers of the novel are able to make an imaginative adventure if they see the literary approach through the filter of journalistic style. In the journalistic style, Defoe describes Robinson who is preoccupied with actions.

"Robinson Crusoe" consists of a double construction: a journalistic upper layer and a literary lower part, or actions in the foreground and philosophical implications in the background. The author makes no explanations of the character's series of movements. In the beginning of his life on the island, Robinson keeps his journal starting from September 30, 1650. (87-102) It looks as if it is only a record of insignificant daily activities, but it

actually works as the groundwork for worshipping God. The account is at first made up of details of his attempts to sustain his life, such as his efforts to make a lamp. He gets tallow after killing a goat "and this gave me light, tho' not a clear steady light like a candle."(93) In his struggle to make the candle, he happens to find a bag with husks of corn and unintentionally throws the coverings on the ground. He unexpectedly sees the sprouting of the stuff. That is the first time when Robinson is touched by the existence of God. In this way Robinson's human but limited efforts eventually lead to results beyond his plan, intention and expectation. Zimmerman calls the integral element "The awkwardness Defoe's use of this structure is expressive of the complications of the book." (p.41) In other words, openness to the complex reality is the key to understanding Defoe's double construction of writing styles. This openness can be called as "adventure" defined by C.S. Lewis. According to Paul F. Ford, C.S. Lewis defines "adventure" as "a metaphor for life in its highest realization. There is no turning away from the adventure, for it is only in leaving the known for the unknown that honor may truly be found."(3) When the definition of "adventure" is applied to Defoe's writing style, "adventure" of "Robinson Crusoe" is interpreted as leaving "the known", or the journalistic way, for "the unknown", the literary. If it is possible, the readers are able to reach the "highest realization" of adventure of "Robinson Crusoe." This realization is what Daniel Defoe aims at in his novel "The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe." The key point depends on whether it is possible for readers to leave the known for the unknown. Leaving the known and traditional way of reading "Robinson Crusoe" as a practical guide is a departure from the conventional custom handed down in 20th century Japan.

Reading the novel from a new perspective should be taken in the new 21st century.

5. CONCLUSION

Daniel Defoe is a dexterous writer of fact and fiction. The author has a full command of the two methods in seeking truth in the form of a novel. He expresses the theme of God's deliverance in "Robinson Crusoe." Readers of the book are expected to cross from fact into fiction in order to achieve the goal. The action of reading in such a way is like boldly breaking out of the old mold and making a fresh start in life. People with no faith in the Creator, including the Japanese are especially encouraged to have this kind of courage in order to advance the literary adventure of "Robinson Crusoe" from a new angle in the new century.

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