

interpretation

a journal of political philosophy

1

summer 1970

page

1	leo strauss	on the euthydemus
21	alexandre kojève	hegel, marx and christianity
43	allan bloom	an interpretation of plato's ion
63	jose a. benardete	macbeth's last words
76	thomas s. schrock	considering crusoe: part 1



martinus nijhoff, the hague

edited at

queens college of the city university
of new york

interpretation

a journal of political philosophy

editors

seth. g. benardete, howard b. white

hilail gildin - *executive editor*

consulting editors

john hallowell, crich hula, michael oakshott, leo strauss, kenneth w. thompson

interpretation is a journal devoted to the study of political philosophy.
its editors welcome contributions from all those who take
a serious interest in political philosophy regardless of their orientation.

all manuscripts and editorial correspondence
should be addressed to the executive editor

interpretation,

939 madison avenue, new york, n.y. 10021, u.s.a.

subscription price

for institutions and libraries \$ 10; for individuals \$ 8;

subscriptions and correspondence in connection

therewith should be sent to the publisher:

martinus nijhoff

9-11 lange voorhout, p.o.b. 269, the hague, netherlands.

CONSIDERING CRUSOE: PART I

THOMAS S. SCHROCK

This is the first half of a two part consideration of the life and thought of Robinson Crusoe, adventurer, narrator, and essayist. It is another payment of that scholarly respect due him for the prominent role he has played in the lore and consciousness of the last centuries.

The claim Crusoe has on our attention will not be exhausted until at the very least scholars dispel uncertainties and misconceptions they themselves have discovered or engendered about him. I have especially in mind the question of Crusoe's genealogy – of the blood in his doctrinal veins so to speak. The prevailing view, indeed the great theme of present day Crusoe studies, is that religion is his vital principle. Crusoe's egregious moralizing and Defoe's known Dissenter affiliations have convinced nearly all critics that Crusoe was meant to be a sincere, though of course sinful and materialistically inclined, Christian. If *Robinson Crusoe* is not regarded as a conscious inference from Puritan premises¹, then it is taken to be the production of an author caught in the grip of the "Protestant ethic," whose work can be subsumed under the categories of a sociology of religion.² I, on the other hand, shall be arguing in this first Part of my presentation, that there is a pronounced anti-religious drift to Crusoe's narrative³ and essays⁴, a drift that

¹ Maximillian E. Novak, *Economics and the Fiction of Daniel Defoe* (1962), pp. 32–48; George A. Starr, *Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography* (1965), pp. 74–125, 185–197; J. Paul Hunter, *The Reluctant Pilgrim: Defoe's Emblematic Method and the Quest for Form in Robinson Crusoe* (1965). Novak here argues that *Crusoe* is Defoe's remonstrance, based upon Puritan social-religious doctrine, against capitalistic individualism. Starr and Hunter regard it as a variation on traditional Puritan literary forms – the spiritual autobiography and the pilgrim allegory. For the most part my differences with these authors are implied rather than stated, although I have occasionally elucidated my own thought by taking explicit issue with one or another of them, usually in a note. I am persuaded by Starr and Hunter that Defoe indeed availed himself of the genres to which they refer. My doubt pertains solely to the intention behind that employment.

² Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), argues that *Robinson Crusoe* is the epic of the Puritan become capitalistic individualist (see pp. 60–92 of the edition of 1962). I differ from Watt not so much in my conclusions about what makes Crusoe run as in my reluctance to interpret the work in the light of the "Weber thesis" or under a hypothesis of "probably unconscious conflict in Defoe himself" (*ibid.*, 81). See also Rudolph Stamm, "Daniel Defoe: An Artist in the Puritan Tradition," *Philological Quarterly*, XV (1936), 225, at 229.

³ Daniel Defoe, *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719), and *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719).

⁴ Daniel Defoe, *Serious Reflections during the Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1720) in *Romances and Narratives by Daniel Defoe*, ed. George Aitken (1895). (Hereafter cited as *Serious Reflections*).

Published about a year after the *Farther Adventures* and fifteen months after the *Adven-*

coincides with the tendency of early modern secular political philosophy.⁵

In an only slightly caricatured version, the generally accepted account of Crusoe's progress goes something like this:

Robinson, the wayward, impious, prodigal, son, disobeys his father's contrary injunction, and runs off to sea where he is buffeted by storms, which he momentarily interprets as warnings from God, soon forgotten however in calmer seas. After desultory adventures he is finally, and hopelessly, shipwrecked. On the island he performs those prodigies of resourcefulness, courage and industry that so thrill youthful readers and adult escapists. He manages to stay alive against all reasonable expectations and even to prosper. Toward the end of the first year he undergoes a spiritual crisis that leads to penitence for his sins, to true Christian resignation, and even to satisfaction with his island situation. The footprint renews the original terror, but his reliance on God pulls him through. He rescues Friday and converts him; they lead a happy, Christian, companionable life. God directs a lost ship to their shores and Crusoe is enabled by Providence and strategy to take command of her, and he and Friday escape from the Island, thereby symbolically accomplishing the deliverance from sin every penitent Puritan craves. We can characterize Crusoe's island saga, then, by combining titles from two of the latest studies, and saying it is the spiritual autobiography of a reluctant pilgrim.

Comment on this synopsis will require some detailed parsing of the narrative. In anticipation of that presentation I shall merely assert that Crusoe's fervor did not, as is said, level-off at a high pitch after his so-called conversion and remain there for the rest of his island experience. He never even confessed, let alone doing penance for, some of his most serious sins. He tells the reader that at best his religious feelings were spurious, and that after the footprint they vanished. All his talk about the blessings of religious deliverance has to be read in the light of his virtually ceaseless endeavor to deliver himself back into what he all along regarded as the only necessary and sufficient salvation – civil society. For him, the fear of God is as nothing next to the fear of man. He relied on his own fear and prudence – not on prayer or Providence – to free himself from the primary evil, which is the state of nature and not the state of sin.

tures, the *Serious Reflections* is a collection of essays that, as the author says, "is not merely the product of the two first volumes, but the two first volumes may rather be called the product of this. The fable is always made for the moral, not the moral for the fable." (*Serious Reflections*, ix ["Robinson Crusoe's Preface"]).

⁵ I am therefore in at least partial agreement with the one prominent truant from the prevailing school of Crusoe interpretation. In a second book, which I find hard to reconcile with his first, Professor Novak has shown more clearly than was known before that Defoe had a pronounced interest in the secular philosophy of the early modern centuries, and has argued that *Robinson Crusoe* is in part at least a display of that interest. (Maximillian E. Novak, *Defoe and the Nature of Man* (1963)). See note 34, *infra*.

The thesis that Crusoe extrapolated from his interpretation of the island experience can be stated as follows: Spiritual salvation presumably depends on Grace; but Grace is powerless before necessity. Yet, the state of nature or the natural condition of man is necessitous. Therefore, if man is to become amenable to saving Grace – if, for example, he is to be sufficiently composed to pray – the state of nature must be overcome. But the state of nature can be overcome only by human power: security or civil society is a strictly human achievement. Spiritual salvation depends on man's doing: the heavenly is as it were based on the earthly city, and salvation on the sin of a single-minded self-dependence. In addition to the requirement that he avoid succumbing to God-dependence, the founder of civil society will be compelled to exploit his fellow man. That is, sin against men, in addition to the sin of ignoring God, is a necessary condition to civil society, which in turn is a prerequisite of salvation. These alleged necessities are presented in such a way as to argue for the justifiability (and not the mere excusability) of the sins in question, which would seem to amount to a contradiction. But sin made justifiable is no less intelligible than Grace made subordinate to necessity, or, than what Crusoe also seems to suggest, a Providence ruled by chance or necessity. In fact, Crusoe renders God superfluous and non-worshipful, if not non-existent.

With this anticipatory account of Crusoe as Christian⁶ in mind, we may

⁶ *Robinson Crusoe* is usually interpreted in the light of what is thought to be known of Defoe's religious position. This involves some circularity, since the Defoe *corpus* is the principal datum from which his views on religion can be inferred, and *Crusoe* is a non-negligible part of that *corpus*. But, supposing Defoe's religious persuasion can be and in fact is known from sources other than *Robinson Crusoe*, we are not justified in assuming his persuasion is expressed in *Crusoe*, or by Crusoe. For all we know, Defoe consciously decided to use "his protean gift" (Stamm, *op. cit.*, 239) to portray a person and/or a doctrine uncongenial to his own religious, if not to his artistic, sensibilities. Keeping an open mind to this possibility would seem to be a counsel of ordinary prudence and common courtesy. Question begging is as bad for the commentator as predisposing background studies are disrespectful of the artist. Accordingly, I have here reversed the usual procedure by beginning with and sticking to the *Crusoe* text.

It may not be ultimately irrelevant that Defoe elsewhere voiced sentiments similar (or dissimilar) to those found in *Robinson Crusoe*, if he did. Penultimately, however, the important consideration would seem to be the context in which any particular sentiment is voiced. And the context here relevant is the *Crusoe* trilogy, about which, since it has not always been regarded as an authentic trilogy, a word seems to be in order.

The *Farther Adventures* is sometimes regarded as sheer afterthought, written, it is said, in haste to cash-in on the popularity of the first volume. And the *Serious Reflections* has frequently been said to have even less to do with the great first volume, the supposition being that it is nothing but a collection of essays Defoe had lying about that, heaped together, made a pot-boiler to sell on the basis of a nominal relation to *Robinson Crusoe*. And even the last part of the first volume, relating Crusoe's return to civilization, is sometimes regarded as superfluous – an artistic lapse that illustrates Defoe's unfortunate incapacity to stop when he was ahead.

I take all these neglected writings seriously – though not with *deadly* seriousness, I hope – because I believe that, when an author presents a work of ostensibly connected parts, all

now present the argument in detail and with the necessary qualifications. One feasible place to start a study of Crusoe's thought about religion is at the beginning of his religious experience, i.e., at his conversion, in the ninth month of his exile.

A. *The Supreme Blessing of Salvation*

Before this event, Crusoe was "all that the most hardened, unthinking, wicked Creature among our common Sailors, can be supposed to be" (I, 101).⁷ In the confession that he interpolates into the narration of his conversion, he reproaches himself for his previous failure to experience "the Fear of God in Danger, . . . [and for his omission] of Thankfulness to God in Deliverances" (I, 101). Afterwards, although he was not noticeably more fearful of God, he entertained notions of being delivered by God.

Crusoe's conversion occurred during a bout of a seventeenth century version of the Hong Kong flu, in the course of which he suffered a terrifying dream. The fever ebbing, he picked up the Bible, and,

having opened the Book casually, the first Words that occurred to me were these, *Call on me in the Day of Trouble, and I will deliver, and thou shalt glorify me.*

The Words were very apt to my Case, . . . [though] as for being deliver'd, the Word had no Sound, *as I may say* to me; the Thing was so remote, so impossible in my Apprehension of Things . . . [I, 107-08].

Presently, however,

I did what I never had done in all my Life, I kneel'd down and pray'd to God to fulfil the Promise to me, that if I call'd upon him in the Day of Trouble, he would deliver me . . . [I, 108].

And, if God was to be his deliverance. Crusoe would open his mind to the varieties of deliverance. A few days after he had the thoughts reported above,

said to come from the mind and experience of the same protagonist-narrator, the presumption – rebuttable to be sure – is that he wants us to read them *as connected*, i.e., as parts of a whole which, as such, are likely to be more reliable guides to the interpretation of each other than are any extraneous documents. *Prima facie*, it is irrelevant whether Defoe wrote the parts at one stretch or at different times, or that he may have had motives in addition to the legitimate artistic or philosophical ones. If the presumption of interrelatedness is then defeated by lack of internal evidence to support it, that would not prove this respectful treatment of the author's possible intentions misguided. On the contrary, it would prove the efficacy of the only method that could give adequate proof of the spuriousness of the alleged connection. But in the case of *Crusoe*, sympathetic reading elicits enough real interdependence in the volumes to justify saying it would be as arbitrarily foolish to ignore the lesser known portions of the work as it would be to interpret the island narrative *mechanically* in the light of those portions.

⁷ Parenthetical citations in the text refer to the volumes and pages of the narrative parts of *Robinson Crusoe* as they appear in the Shakespeare Head Edition of the *Novels and Selected Writings of Daniel Defoe* (1927).

I miss'd the Fit for good and all, . . . [and] while I was thus gathering Strength, my Thoughts run exceedingly upon this Scripture, *I will deliver thee*, and the Impossibility of my Deliverance lay much upon my Mind . . . : But as I was discouraging my self with such Thoughts, it occur'd to my Mind, that I pored so much upon my Deliverance from the main Affliction, that I disregarded the Deliverance I had receiv'd; and I was, as it were, made to ask my self such Questions as these, *viz.* Have I not been deliver'd, and wonderfully too, from Sickness? . . . *God had deliver'd me, but I had not glorify'd him*; that is to say, I had not own'd and been thankful for that as a Deliverance, and how cou'd I expect greater Deliverance [I, 109–10]?

After this Crusoe began serious study of the Bible.

It happen'd providentially . . . that reading the Scripture, I came to these Words, *He is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give Repentance, and to give Remission*: I threw down the Book, and with my Heart as well as my Hands lifted up to Heaven, in a Kind of Extasy of Joy, I cry'd out aloud, *Jesus, thou Son of David, Jesus, thou exalted Prince and Saviour, give me Repentance!*
 Now I began to construe the Words mentioned above, *Call on me, and I will deliver you*, in a different Sense from what I had ever done before; for then I had no Notion of anything being call'd Deliverance, but my being deliver'd from the Captivity I was in; for tho' I was indeed at large in the Place, yet the Island was certainly a Prison to me, and that in the worst Sense in the World; but now I learn'd to take it in another Sense: Now I look'd back upon my past Life with such Horror, and my Sins appear'd so dreadful, that my Soul sought nothing of God, but Deliverance from the Load of Guilt that bore down all my Comfort . . . And I add this Part here, to hint to whoever shall read it, that whenever they come to a true Sense of things, they, will find Deliverance from Sin a much greater Blessing than Deliverance from Affliction [I, 110–11].

God had delivered Crusoe from the “ague,” and could therefore deliver him from the island. But Crusoe no longer needed to escape the island because what had threatened to be a life-long imprisonment had become the occasion for a supremely rewarding freedom. Crusoe goes so far as to suggest that deliverance from the island and from sin were not compatible, since on the island “I was remov'd from all the Wickedness of the World . . . I had neither the *Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eye, or the Pride of Life*. I had nothing to covet . . .” (I, 148); whereas, presumably, “the World” might be the scene of fresh transgressions and a fall from Grace. Crusoe’s structuring of the contrast between the two forms of deliverance suggests he means to say that the authenticity of his conversion will be tested by the extent to which he craves deliverance from the island. But, in any case, Crusoe would no longer pine to leave it, for why should his place of abode or external circumstances matter to a man who has been given what Crusoe calls “the supreme Blessing of Salvation” (I, 181)? “As for my solitary Life it was nothing; I did not so much as pray to be deliver'd from it, or think of it; It was all of no Consideration in Comparison to this” (I, 111).

Nevertheless, Crusoe not only thought of leaving the island; he tried strenuously to leave it. The student of *Robinson Crusoe* must therefore try to understand why Crusoe did not live by the proposition that, as he said,

“Deliverance from Sin [is] a much greater Blessing than Deliverance from Affliction”⁸ (I, 111), or rather, why, if he had the “supreme Blessing of Salvation,” Crusoe still regarded his isolation as an “Affliction.”⁹

⁸ Professor Starr suggests that [1] the island predicament is the culminating metaphorical expression of Crusoe’s – of the individual’s – self-isolation from God (*Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography*, pp. 55–57, 59, 80–81, 84–85, 99, 100); and that “Crusoe’s arrival on the island marks yet another more drastic stage in God’s efforts to reclaim him. It is at once [2] the most dramatic of his long series of deliverances, and [3] the most effective barrier to his persistent vagabondage” (p. 101). Finally, Starr notes that, after the conversion, [4] Crusoe’s island situation – his isolation from human society – “frequently strikes him as a positive blessing,” seeing as it is coupled with what for Crusoe is an unprecedented “sense of God’s nearness and accessibility” (p. 117; but cf. p. 70). Starr has thus accurately described the shift in the significance of the island situation that Defoe could reasonably have expected attentive readers to detect. In brief, the shift is this: Whereas, at first, isolation from human society stands for Crusoe’s isolation *from* God, later, isolation from human society becomes the occasion for, and something of a continuing prerequisite to, union *with* God. If at first the island situation stands for the *summum malum*, it later becomes the setting for realization of the *summum bonum*. This being the case, we wonder why Crusoe persisted so in his attempts to escape the island, and therewith, apparently to escape God.

Starr writes that “through . . . acquiescence, . . . [Crusoe] learns to find both consolations for and positive benefits in his solitary state,” and that “this aspect of his situation is expressed most forcibly in his series of annual thanksgivings” (p. 116). By way of partially bearing out Starr’s point, we note Crusoe’s second anniversary report that “it was now that I *began* sensibly to feel how much more happy this Life I now led was . . . and now I chang’d both my Sorrows and my Joys; my very Desires alter’d, my Affections chang’d their Gusts, and my Delights were perfectly new, from what they were at my first Coming, or indeed for the two Years past” (I, 129–30). Since Crusoe was converted in the ninth month, the words I have italicized tend to suggest a delay in the acquiescence alleged to stem from that conversion. And Crusoe’s acquiescence seems to have been transient as well as dilatory. For, during the third year, “you may be sure my Thoughts run many times” to finding “some Means of Escape” (I, 143). This desire issued in a boat-building project, a project to which he devoted “infinite Labour,” “hacking and hewing” “many a weary Stroke” of “inexpressible Labour,” only to find that, after more “infinite Labour,” he could not get the boat to water (I, 146–47). At one point Crusoe notes that a certain step in the “Folly” “cost me a prodigious deal of Pains; but who grutches Pains, that have their Deliverance in view [?]” (I, 147). He conceded failure; his report: “This griev’d me heartily, and now I saw, . . . the Folly of beginning a Work before we count the Cost . . .” (I, 147). The next sentence begins as follows: “In the middle of this Work, I finish’d my fourth Year in this Place, and kept my Anniversary with the same Devotion, and with as much Comfort as ever before . . .” (I, 148).

I will belabor the point a bit more by noting that Crusoe soon turned to building a second, smaller, boat and that he says that “though I was near two Years about it, yet I never grutch’d my Labour, in Hopes of having a Boat to go off to Sea at last” (I, 157). And, although at one place he tells us that he knew from the beginning that the new boat was too small to carry him from the island (I, 157), we hear somewhat later that he persisted in hoping it would be his vehicle of escape until the very hour in which it nearly drowned him (I, 163).

Deference to God is not necessarily incompatible with self-help (see citations to Starr,

B. A Canker in the Conversion

Referring to his emotions when he found himself safe on shore in the wake of the shipwreck, Crusoe reports that "I was surpriz'd with a Kind of Extasie, and some Transports of Soul, which had the Grace of God assisted, might have come up to true Thankfulness; but it ended where it begun, in a meer common Flight of Joy . . ." (I, 102). Although the terrors of the sea are presumably God's, on this occasion they were not assisted by God's Grace. Yet at the time of his illness another terror apparently was assisted by, or perhaps assisted, Grace. This other terror was not the sickness itself, as dreadful as that undoubtedly was, but the "terrible Dream" Crusoe had during the illness.

I saw a Man descend from a great black Cloud, in a bright Flame of Fire, and light upon the Ground He was no sooner landed upon the Earth, but he moved forward

note 19, *infra*). But Crusoe has presented the island metaphor, and the modes of deliverance he contemplated while on the island, in such a way as to oppose boat-building self-help to an unmixed enjoyment of God's presence. The lesser and insufficient deliverance (from the island) supersedes the greater and sufficient (from sinful self-centeredness): Crusoe's hankering after the inferior blessing of human society poisons the allegedly supreme blessing of God's society.

I have a similar difficulty with one of Professor Hunter's principal suggestions. He says that critical "emphasis upon the 'realistic' nature of both Defoe's choice of detail and his use of language has obscured the emblematic meaning of Crusoe's physical activities, but Defoe's 'realism' is like that of Bunyan and substantiates the metaphor, rather than weakening it. Defoe, like Bunyan, continually makes his hero express his spiritual condition by physical actions. The fusion of physical and spiritual concerns is implicit throughout *Robinson Crusoe*, and the general pattern of Crusoe's action is emblematic of larger matters" (*op. cit.*, p. 189). And again: "Defoe is able to use the physical to reflect the spiritual quite easily in *Robinson Crusoe*, for the novel's plot follows the comprehensive metaphor which is basic to Puritan tradition and which had taken a fictional form in pilgrim allegory" (*ibid.*, p. 199). Hunter has surely proved the foolishness of denying that Defoe trades on the expectations of those readers who are trained to look for the pilgrim allegory. However, he has not attended sufficiently to the possibility that Defoe or Crusoe might wish to let the metaphor get out of hand, as it were, allowing the "physical" not merely to "reflect the spiritual" but finally to overcome and supplant it.

⁹ Other things being equal, enforced solitude is of course a severe deprivation. Calvin, to say nothing of some other Christian theologians and philosophers, believes that "man is by nature a social animal, . . . disposed, from natural instinct, to cherish and preserve society" (*Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge, II, ii, 13. From the vast Calvinist theological and devotional literature in the light of which *Robinson Crusoe* can be read, I have decided to stick with the original because I think it takes one furthest and fastest into the most significant problems. The *Institutes* are cited and quoted frequently in the notes that follow). And the same Calvin, in company with the vast majority of Christian thinkers, puts enormous stock in the visible Church as God's chosen means of bringing people to life (*ibid.*, IV, i, 4).

But, by hypothesis, at least one of those "other things" was *not* equal for Crusoe. In his case, the greatest need a man has for the ministry of the Church was met otherwise. He was saved! The Holy Spirit had reached out and touched him directly (a possibility Calvin

towards me, with a long Spear or Weapon in his Hand, to kill me; and when he came to a rising Ground, at some Distance, he spoke to me, or I heard a Voice so terrible, that it is impossible to express the Terror of it; all that I can say I understood, was this, *Seeing all these Things have not brought thee to Repentance, now thou shalt die:* At which Words, I thought he lifted up the Spear that was in his Hand, to kill me. No one, that shall ever read this Account, will expect that I should be able to describe the Horrors of my Soul at this terrible Vision, I mean, that even while it was a Dream, I even dreamed of those Horrors; nor is it any more possible to describe the Impression that remain'd upon my Mind when I awak'd and found it was but a Dream [I, 100].

This dream precipitated Crusoe's conversion and repentance. The fear of an impending violent death at the hands of "a Man" is the terror that cooperates with the Grace of God to work Crusoe's salvation. Not the fear of God, but the fear of a visionary man rendered Crusoe's soul amenable to redemption.¹⁰

happily acknowledges: concerning those who would infer a monopoly in salvation for the Church from the Apostle's saying that "hearing is the beginning of faith," Calvin says that Paul was there "describing the usual economy and dispensation which the Lord is wont to employ in calling his people, and not laying down an invariable rule, for which no other method can be substituted. Many he [the Lord] certainly has called and endued with the true knowledge of himself, by internal means, by the illumination of the Spirit, without the intervention of preaching" (IV, xvi, 19)). Calvin would surely say that only perverse obduracy entirely inconsistent with the mentality of the blessed would try "improving" on the earthly state of the soul to which every Christian aspires, by worrying after the comparatively paltry though legitimate matters of society and the external Church. It may of course be that Crusoe *as saved* needed the Church to help forestall lapses (see Hunter, *op. cit.*, pp. 175–82, on post-conversion sin among the Puritans). But balanced against that need is the set of temptations Crusoe had said is such a draw-back to society. I still think Calvin would say, "Leave well-enough alone, Robinson, if everything is as you say between you and God." Perhaps some light will also be shed on the uses to which Crusoe thinks churchly communion should be put by our notice, in the second Part of this study, of his behavior upon returning to England from his exile, and of remarks on the possibility of communion he includes in the *Serious Reflections*.

¹⁰ Professor Starr suggests that Defoe had the story of Balaam (Numbers 22 : 12–35) in mind as he penned the episode of the dream (*op. cit.*, pp. 60, 100–101). It is well to remember, however, that in Numbers the angel is called an angel, and not a man, and that, when Crusoe himself discusses Balaam explicitly, he too refers to "the angel with the flaming sword" (*Serious Reflections* ["A Vision of the Angelic World"], p. 290). See also Hunter, *op. cit.*, pp. 155–64.

There are two ways (each admittedly somewhat tendentious) to interpret the dream: one may assume with Starr and Hunter that Defoe was employing anthropomorphic imagery, as the Bible sometimes does, to a higher purpose (e.g., Ezekiel 1 : 5); or one can do as I have done and, while acknowledging biblical parallels, dwell upon the literal elements of the dream. Either way the expositor must concede that his reading of the dream is decisively affected by what he takes to be the basic action and dominant passion of the whole story. Starr and Hunter believe that action to be Crusoe's evolving relationship with God and the relevant emotion to be the fear of God. I think the basic action is Crusoe's complicated relationship with nature and with other men, absent as well as present, and the relevant emotion his fear of man. If one chooses the Starr-Hunter approach, he must at

To see the bearing of this fact on Crusoe's later religious experience, *i.e.*, to see the crucial defect in Crusoe's conversion, we will notice his response to the famous footprint in the sand. Crusoe is really quite candid that his reliance upon God's protection collapsed under the consternation he felt upon sighting the print. "Fear banish'd all my religious Hope; all that former Confidence in God which was founded upon such wonderful Experience as I had of his Goodness, now vanished . . ." (I, 180).¹¹ He seems to suggest that his "religious Hope" had been sustained by what he took to be God's efforts to deliver his body. And after the appearance of a sign of man he utterly lost that sustenance. What did he "reproach" himself for then? For one thing, his "Easiness, that [he] would not sow any more Corn one Year than would just serve . . . [him] till next Season" (I, 180). He also began "sorely to repent" that he had made an opening in his fortification (I, 186). To remedy these blunders, he "took all the Measures humane Prudence could suggest for . . . [his] own Preservation," "though . . . [he] foresaw nothing at that Time,¹² more than . . . [his] meer Fear suggested to . . . [him]" (I, 187). He admits

I did not now take due Ways to compose my Mind, by crying to God in my Distress, and resting upon his Providence, as I had done before, for my Defence and Deliverance; which if I had done, I had, at least, been more cheerfully supported under this new Surprise, and perhaps carry'd through it with more Resolution [I, 184–85].

But, though he might "perhaps" have been more resolute through prayer, he could not pray:

The Dread and Terror of falling into the Hands of Savages and Cannibals, lay so upon my Spirits, that I seldom found my self in a due Temper for application to my Maker, . . . I must testify from my Experience, that a Temper of Peace, Thankfulness, Love and Affection, is much more the proper Frame for Prayer than that of Terror and Discomposure; and that under the Dread of Mischief impending, a Man is . . . [not] fit for a comforting Performance of the Duty of praying to God . . . [I, 189].¹³

least consider the significance of the fact that, as Hunter himself notes (p. 155), storms and earthquakes did not "convert" Crusoe; the vision did. And the vision is a testimony to some kind of primacy for the fear of man in Crusoe's mind. The fear of man is never expressed metaphorically; the fear of God is, in the figure of a man. A sense of the fear of God is expressed as derivative from or parasitic upon an underived, "aboriginal," fear of man. Also, cf. note 80, *infra*.

¹¹ And see Novak, *Nature*, pp. 34–36; but see I, 202 and 211.

¹² The time in question would seem to have been about two years, for Crusoe writes in the same context that "all this Labour I was at the Expence of, purely from my Apprehensions on the Account of the Print of a Man's Foot which I had seen; for as yet I never saw any human Creature come near the Island, and I had now liv'd two Years under these Uneasinesses, which indeed made my Life much less comfortable than it was before; as may well be imagin'd by any who know what it is to live in the constant Snare of the *Fear of Man*" (I, 188–89; emphasis original).

¹³ Extended, and not elided, the passage reads, "that under the Dread of Mischief impending, a Man is no more fit for a comforting Performance of the Duty of praying to God,

Crusoe's discussion of "necessity" in the *Serious Reflections* contains the following assertion:

Necessity is above the power of human nature, and for Providence to suffer a man to fall into that necessity is to suffer him to sin, because nature is not furnished with power to defend itself, nor is grace itself able to fortify the mind against it.¹⁴

It is written large in the trilogy that the most fearful and therefore the most necessitous circumstance that a man can face is that in which he thinks his life is threatened by other men.

Well does the Scripture say, *The Fear of Man brings a Snare*;¹⁵ it is a Life of Death, and the Mind is so entirely suppress'd by it, that it is capable of no Relief; the animal Spirits sink, and all the Vigour of nature, which usually supports Men under other Afflictions, and is present to them in the greatest Exigencies, fails them here [III, 139].

Is it peculiar that Crusoe should use the Scripture as his authority for the intensity of man's fear of *man*? Not at all, for this usage is in perfect accord with his almost total ignorance of the fear of God. Crusoe did not even mention the possibility of damnation in the long discourse on his repentance.¹⁶ And the vision that horrified Crusoe was not one of eternal torture, but of "a Man" who "moved forward towards me, with a long Spear or Weapon in his Hand, to kill me." The vision of this man is more real to Crusoe than the vision of God. This is the principal¹⁷ defect in Crusoe's conversion. It took the fear of a visionary man to drive Crusoe into religion, and yet the fear of "Mischief impending" at the hands of man renders him unfit "for a comforting Performance of the Duty of praying to God": were a man driven into Grace, "grace itself [would not] . . . fortify the mind against" a recurrence of the fear that drove him into it. And Crusoe was in the grip of his fear of man for a long time after he sighted the footprint.¹⁸

than he is for Repentance on a sick Bed: For these Discomposures affect the Mind as the others do the Body; and the Discomposure of the Mind must necessarily be as great a Disability as that of the Body, and much greater, Praying to God properly an Act of the Mind, not of the Body." This passage might be thought to suggest a defect in Crusoe's conversion, considering that it occurred virtually "on a sick Bed."

¹⁴ *Serious Reflections*, p. 35; cf. Novak, *Nature*, p. 70.

¹⁵ Proverbs 29 : 25 continues, "but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe."

¹⁶ Elsewhere Crusoe relates that he expected to be "preserv'd to repent and be pardon'd"; the *Devil*, on the other hand, "*is to be cast into the Bottomless-Pit, to dwell with everlasting Fire*" (II, 4; italics original).

¹⁷ Cf. note 13, *supra*.; see also I, 102: "and all the rest of my life was like it"

¹⁸ Professor Starr minimizes the post-conversion Crusoe's susceptibility to discomposure. He writes, for example, that after the conversion Crusoe "becomes better able to confront new hazards, and to dispel their terrors, for he gains security from the conviction that he is an object of Providential care. In other words, it is not that his belief shields him from further vicissitudes, but that such vicissitudes either fail to discompose him or else agitate him only when he forgets he is under divine protection" (*Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography*, p. 113). But the question is, of course, whether Crusoe does not tend to forget more often than he remembers. While conceding that confirmation of the "forgetful" hypothesis would require more discussion than will fit into this note, I will nevertheless

I have sketched Crusoe's religious life from his initial oblivion to God, through his apparent enthusiasm for God, to the point where fearful necessity forced him to sin against God by placing all his reliance on "humane Prudence."¹⁹ Crusoe took the whole thing into his own hands. We shall postpone to the second Part of this study our examination of some of the sins or crimes against men various forms of "necessity"²⁰ compelled or induced Crusoe to commit. It must suffice here to give a short answer to the question posed at the end of Section A, *viz.*, Why would an isolated man, possessed of the greatest spiritual riches, try so hard to augment his circumstances by endeavoring to end that isolation? The answer is that there is no reason to believe that a man thus hypothesized would do any such thing, but that Crusoe was not such a man. His spiritual deliverance was illusory, and his striving was all along for the only kind of deliverance that seemed real to him, *i.e.*, *from* the "State of Nature"²¹ (I, 136) *to* the security of civil society.

suggest that, if Crusoe's attitude ever becomes "one of composure" (Starr, p. 116), it does not become so because of a confidence in Providence.

Now, Starr goes so far as to say the "evidence of . . . [the security Crusoe gains from the conviction that he is an object of Providential care] is to be found in Crusoe's discovery of the footprint in the sand" (p. 113-14). He quotes from the tributes to Providence that Crusoe incorporates into his narrative of the footprint episode – just as he quotes tributes from the early anniversary celebrations (see note 8, *supra*). In the case of the annual thanksgivings, Professor Starr failed to note that, during the four years in which Crusoe tells us he was perfectly resigned to the island and to Grace, he was actually undertaking "inexpressible Labour" to "deliver" himself from the island. In the case of the footprint, Starr neglects to observe that, while Crusoe tells us from time to time that he depended upon and got consolation from his belief in Providence, he also tells us that he relied *entirely* upon his own prudence and fear for a period of at least two years. See note 12, *supra*, and accompanying text.

¹⁹ *I.e.*, Crusoe had returned, in a more sober mood to be sure, to the posture of his pre-conversion self: "thoughtless of a God, or a Providence" (I, 101). That thoughtlessness was *the* sin he confessed in the narration of his conversion. It should be considered in the light of a remark from the *Serious Reflections*, p. 191: "I take a general neglect of . . . [Providential cautions, warnings, and instructions] to be a kind of practical atheism, or at least a living in a kind of contempt of Heaven, regardless of all that share which His invisible hand has in the things that befall us." This from Calvin is also pertinent: "God has pronounced a curse upon all who, confiding in themselves or others, form plans and resolutions, [and] who, without regarding his will, or invoking his aid, either plan or attempt to execute (James iv. 14; Isaiah xxx. 1; xxxi. 1)" (*Institutes*, III, xx, 28). Consider also the verses he cites from James and Isaiah, and the ones he could have cited from Jeremiah: "Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord . . . Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is" (17 : 5,7). See also Starr, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-66, 77-78, 187-93, for some extremely helpful remarks on the seventeenth and eighteenth century Puritan view of the proper blend of trust in Providence and self-help. I differ with Starr by thinking that Crusoe abandoned that view. See also Novak, *Nature*, p. 144.

²⁰ Cf. Novak, *Nature*, Chap. III.

²¹ Crusoe uses the term only once in the trilogy.

C. *Grace and Necessity; Providence and Prudence*

It has been truly said that “Crusoe is not a saint.”²² But Crusoe does not rest with a description of himself as sinner: he says in effect that the sinless life is impossible for any man threatened as he was.

I am of the opinion that I could state a circumstance in which there is not one man in the world would be honest . . . For Providence to suffer a man to fall into . . . necessity is to suffer him to sin, because nature is not furnished with power to defend itself, nor is grace itself able to fortify the mind against it.²³

“Necessity”, or at any rate the greatest necessity, will necessarily overcome religious hope, and therefore religious practice, for reasons that “any who know what it is to live in the constant Snare of the *Fear of Man*” (I, 189) will understand.

The assumption behind Crusoe’s assertion seems to be that, whatever the “theoretical” power of God to save whomever He wishes, in practice only those souls that are at peace with their material environment are eligible for saving Grace. If Grace is potentially equal to necessity, this potential is never actualized, because Grace either does not appear or disappears in the face of necessity. Crusoe does not deny the joys of the converted; his point is only that composure is a prerequisite to the institution and maintenance of the state of salvation. His memoirs form a study of the sources from which man may expect to derive the security necessary to that composure. Crusoe’s books are the record of an experiment: in this upsidedown Job, Crusoe is testing God, saying, “Can God deliver me?” and in a matter-of-fact way implying that if God cannot, then Crusoe, like any other man so situated, must look elsewhere for deliverance, not because Crusoe is fickle, but because, as is the case with all men, his body *must* be secured before his soul can be saved.²⁴

²² Novak, *Nature*, p. 33.

²³ *Serious Reflections*, p. 35; partially quoted in text accompanying note 14. We must acknowledge the massive conceptual difficulties involved in the terms “necessity” and “sin” as Crusoe uses them here. And perhaps allowances should also be made for hyperbole. Nevertheless, the drift of Crusoe’s thought is clear enough. There is a species of “sin,” not accounted for at all in the wrangling of the Augustinians and Pelagians, or of the Calvinists and Arminians, that is traceable to something other than the original transgression – to something other than predestined evil or gratuitous malice – and that is conquerable by neither the unaided nor the aided human spirit. “Necessity” as here used really means a “sufficiency” of conditions for “sin.” A significant portion of man’s “wrong-doing” – especially that occurring in “state of nature” conditions – is compelled by the harshness of those circumstances. Crusoe’s proposition is at once an implicit excuse for brutish conduct in the war of all against all and an indictment of the natural state and of nature’s God.

²⁴ It would be impious of man, amalgam of body and soul that he is, to affect, contrary to his nature, angelic indifference to the care of his body. The questions are only the degree of emphasis to be given bodily safety, and the temporal order in which one should expect the two forms of deliverance to transpire. A similar question was asked by Socrates:

The question is this: Will "Providence . . . suffer a man to fall into . . . necessity[?]"²⁵ Will God provide a man with the bodily security necessary to that mental composure which in turn is requisite to a religious life? God might have justified the affirmative either by having designed His creation with a view to man's security, or, in lieu of this, by assuring each man that he is in the care of particular Providence. Concerning the first alternative, the reader does not have to consider Crusoe's view of the allegedly most hostile part of the environment – other men – to see that he did not consider himself beholden for composure to God's mere creation. Although Crusoe "could hardly have nam'd a Place in the uninhabitable Part of the World²⁶ where I could have been cast more to my Advantage" (I, 153); although indeed his island has aspects of Eden, still,

if the good Providence of God had not wonderfully order'd the Ship to be cast up nearer to the Shore, where I not only could come at her, but could bring what I got out of her to the Shore, for my Relief and Comfort; . . . I had wanted for Tools to work, Weapons for Defence, or Gun-powder and Shot for getting my Food.

I spent whole Hours, I may say whole Days, in representing to my self . . . how I must have acted, if I had got nothing out of the Ship . . . That I should have liv'd, if I had not perish'd, like a meer Savage. That if I had kill'd a Goat, or a Fowl, by any Contri-

"Then [Glaucou] you do not listen to Phocylides, when he says that as soon as a man has got a means of livelihood he ought to practice virtue.' 'I think he should begin even before that,' he said." (Plato, *Republic*, 407 a-b [Lindsay, trans.]). The counterpart Christian view is that livelihood follows faith and not *vice versa*. See Calvin, *Institutes*, I, xvii, 9–11; III, ii, 37; viii, 2, 8; xiii, 3; xx, 2, 11–13, 16. Even when a Christian thinker seems to grant or urge the temporal priority of bodily security he will typically recognize God's Providence in the very passage, as Hooker here: "destitution in [food and raiment] is such an impediment, as till it be removed suffereth not the mind of man to admit any other care. For this cause, *God assigned Adam maintenance of life*, and then appointed him a law to observe" (*Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, I, x, 2; emphasis added). Consider also *ibid.* V, xlvi, 6: "If we . . . have not . . . the promise of God to be evermore delivered from all adversity, what meaneth the sacred Scripture to speak in so large terms, 'Be obedient, and the Lord thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thy hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of the land for thy wealth.' Again, 'Keep his laws, and thou shalt be blest above all people, the Lord shall take from thee all infirmities.' 'The man whose delight is in the Law of God, *whatsoever he doeth it shall prosper*.' 'For the ungodly there are great plagues remaining; but whosoever putteth his trust in the Lord mercy embraceth him *on every side*.' Not only that mercy which keepeth from being *overlaid* and *oppressed*, but mercy which saveth from being *touched* with grievous miseries, mercy which turneth away the course of 'the great waterfloods,' and permitteth them not to 'come near'" (emphasis original). See also note 19, *supra*.

Quotation from Hooker may make the reader wonder just what orthodoxy I think Crusoe should be judged by. But on the subject of this note there is little if any difference between Hooker and Calvin, and that goes for many other points on which the great Anglican and the Genevan would be united in opposition to the attitudes and ideas with which Crusoe indulges himself.

²⁵ *Serious Reflections*, p. 35.

²⁶ Cf. Proverbs 8 : 31, "rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth."

vance, I had no way to flea or open them, or part the Flesh from the Skin, and the Bowels, or to cut it up; but must gnaw it with my Teeth, and pull it with my Claws like a Beast [I, 150–51].²⁷

Crusoe credits the “particular Providences [that] had attended . . . [him] since . . . [his] coming into this Place” (I, 152), rather than the place itself, for his survival. In short, Crusoe gave “daily Thanks for that daily Bread, which nothing but a Croud of Wonders could have brought . . . [He] had been fed even by Miracle; even as great as that of feeding Elijah by Ravens; nay, by a long Series of Miracles . . .” (I, 152–53).

Crusoe’s “Confidence in God . . . was founded upon such wonderful Experience as . . . [he] had had of his Goodness . . .” (I, 180). Second only to the ship’s appearance, the chief miracle was God’s introduction of barley into the inadequate island economy. Without “Corn” he claims he would have starved (I, 134). But Crusoe’s narrative of his discovery of the grain helps us to understand why even his confidence in particular Providence deserved him at the crucial moment.

Crusoe tells us that

it is impossible to express the Astonishment and Confusion of my Thoughts on this Occasion; . . . After I saw Barley grown there, in a Climate which I know was not proper for Corn, and especially that I knew not how it came there, it startl’d me strangely, and I began to suggest, that God had miraculously caus’d this Grain to grow without Help of Seed sown, and that it was so directed purely for my Sustenance, on that wild miserable Place.

This touch’d my Heart a little, and brought Tears out of my Eyes, and I began to bless my self, that such a Prodigy of Nature should happen on my account . . . [I, 89].

But since this episode took place before his conversion, he began to reconsider.

At last it occur’d to my Thoughts, that I had shook a Bag of Chickens Meat [meal] out in that Place, and then the Wonder began to cease; 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 . . . [I, 89–90].²⁸

Commenting on this behavior from the viewpoint of the converted, Crusoe writes as follows:

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 10 or 12 Grains of Corn should remain unspoil’d, (when the Rats had destroy’d all the rest,) as if it had been dropt from Heaven . . . [I, 90].

“As if it had been miraculous,” but not miraculous; rather, “nothing but

²⁷ Cf. Calvin, *Institutes*, I, xiv, 22: “How impious were it to tremble in distrust, lest we should one day be abandoned in our necessity by that kindness which, antecedent to our existence, displayed itself in a complete supply of all good things!”

²⁸ The non or at any rate less blasphemous New Testament parallels that come to mind here are the parables of the sower and of the mustard seed, and the miracle of the feeding of 5000. Consider also Matthew 1 : 18–25 and Luke 1 : 26–27.

what was common.”

The suggestion has been made that “Defoe’s Providence works entirely through nature and is often indistinguishable from nature,” and that “if any of Defoe’s fictional characters fall into difficulties, Defoe will present a variety of natural causes to explain the situation”²⁹ Indeed, Crusoe scrupulously gives almost every event narrated in the trilogy a “natural” or “common” explanation, even if it is an uncommon event. Consider as examples the parentheses around his island experience: of the ship that wrecked and later sustained him there, he says “the good Providence of God . . . wonderfully order’d . . . [it] to be cast up nearer to the Shore . . .” (I, 150). He also asks, “What would have been my Case if it had not happen’d, *Which was an Hundred Thousand to one*,³⁰ that the Ship floated from the Place where she first struck and was driven so near to the Shore . . . [?]” (I, 71). Twenty-eight years later, when Crusoe was preparing to embark for England, “[he] forgot not to lift up . . . [his] Heart in Thankfulness to Heaven; . . . from whom every Deliverance must always be acknowledged to proceed” [II, 68]. Earlier he had called the appearance of the ship that bore him away, “a strange and unforeseen Accident” (II, 39). In *Robinson Crusoe* providential acts are especially hard to distinguish from accidents.^{30a}

Nevertheless, the fact that an event looks to some people like an accident does not prove that it *is* an accident.³¹ Crusoe was justified in regarding events which had a “common” explanation as if they were “the Work of Providence as to me” – as “particular Providences” attending him, or, if we may say so, as friendly accidents. Yet the reader may wonder how much conviction he generated by looking at these events “as if” they were miraculous. In the grip of the terror inspired by the footprint he seems to have had no reservoir of faith to draw on, no clear recollection of an unmistakable intervention of God to sustain his spirit. Or, if he was confident that what he had previously experienced were more than mere accidents, after the footprint he was unsure that this would be his future experience; if we may say so, the thought of *unfriendly* accidents crossed his mind. He imagined now a “casual accidental Landing of Stragging People from the Main” (I, 185). And, “my Fear banish’d all my religious Hope; . . . I reproach’d my self with my Easiness, that would not sow any more Corn one Year than would just serve me till the next Season as if no Accident could intervene to prevent my enjoying the Crop that was upon the Ground . . .” (I, 80).

In the crucible of fear and imagined necessity Crusoe reverted to the explanation of events that had informed his understanding when he had “acted upon no religious Foundation at all” (I, 89): he now regarded the events that

²⁹ Novak, *Nature*, p. 6, 7.

³⁰ Italics original.

^{30a} Consider, for example, III, 86: “by mere Accident or Providence.”

³¹ Calvin, for example, acknowledged that many events seem to be accidental (*Institutes*, I, xvi, 9); this being due in part to the fact that “the providence of God does not interpose simply; but, by employing means, assumes, as it were, a visible form” (*ibid.*, I, xvii, 4).

befell him as, to use his earlier expression, nothing “otherwise than as a Chance” (I, 89). It is because he could not convince himself that God was in control that he ceased to rely on His Providence.

Thus I took all the Measures humane Prudence could suggest for my own Preservation; and it will be seen at length, that they were not altogether without just Reason; though I foresaw nothing at that Time, more than my meer Fear suggested to me [I, 187].

For the record, and partially in anticipation of the second Part of this study, Crusoe’s formula of the relationship between bodily and spiritual deliverance is this. Bodily security must precede deliverance of the soul; but that security can be wrested from nature by and only by men who are willing both to rely entirely upon themselves, leaving God out of it, and to exploit other men: to the extent that there is such a thing as the state of Grace, it must rest on foundations laid in sin; proximately in the case of a founder (i.e., one who has himself like Crusoe experienced and triumphed over some manifestation of the natural condition of man) or remotely in the case of the beneficiaries of the founding act.³²

Of course, it would be hard for anyone to take this formula seriously in its entirety. The Christian could not: he could only be seriously offended by the impiety of it;³³ and Crusoe would not: as such the *means* to spiritual salvation were not of interest to him because of his profound disinterest in the state of Grace as an *end*. To be sure, Crusoe may have experienced some religious feelings during his illness. But his last word on sickbed conversions is that a man is not “fit . . . for Repentance on a Sick Bed” (I, 189). More to the point, salvation from sin was not again in the running as an object of Crusoe’s desire after the full necessitousness of the state of nature had impinged on his sensibilities. Never mind that the formula by which he expressed his disaffection with God contains a *non sequitur* – that it is nonsense to allege that the Grace of the necessarily all-powerful God cannot overcome “necessity.” What Crusoe means to communicate, in the clearest and crudest of terms, is that he had learned to his own satisfaction which side a man’s bread is buttered on: he had learned to question and finally to deny the omnipotence of God. From the moment this doubt set in, he ceased to take the spiritual side seriously, reserving thenceforth his juxtaposition of the two forms of deliverance for merely polemical or satirical purposes.

We may now turn to Crusoe’s out and out polemic. It is most intense in the *Serious Reflections*, which has been characterized by one commentator as “more orthodox” than the narrative volumes.³⁴ The accuracy of that charac-

³² Cf. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, vi, xvii, xviii, xix; and *The Discourses*, I, vi, ix, xviii, xxvi, xxxvii; II, viii.

³³ Cf. notes 24 and 27 *supra*.

³⁴ The commentator is Professor Novak (see note 5, *supra*). His argument for degrees of orthodoxy within the *Crusoe* trilogy (cf. note 6, *supra*) needs to be seen in the perspective of the larger thesis of his second book (*Defoe and the Nature of Man*). There, he refers the

terization can be conveniently tested by examining, as we shall here, Crusoe's treatment in the *Serious Reflections* of God's justice, of His power, and of a well-known New Testament miracle.

D. God's Justice

Crusoe's discussion of God's justice centers on the divine dispensation for the heathen, especially the natives found in the New World by the Spanish conquistadores and by Crusoe himself. Concerning the fate of those peoples

reader to a passage in *A Collection of Miscellany Letters* for an indication of "Defoe's knowledge of the 'wise Machiavel' and his doctrine of necessity" (Novak, *Nature*, p. 58, n. 2. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 58, and Novak, *Economics and the Fiction of Daniel Defoe*, pp. 10, 11, 34, 50); and he contends that "not only is Defoe's position [on necessity] extreme, but it places him in company with such suspect thinkers as Hobbes, Spinoza, and Mandeville" (Novak, *Nature*, p. 67). Novak also thinks Defoe was with Hobbes, to say nothing of Spinoza and Mandeville, on a number of other issues – although of course he does not allege he was simply Hobbesian.

Like Locke, Defoe was strongly influenced by the two main streams of political thought in England during the latter half of the seventeenth century: the doctrines of Hobbes and his disciples and those of their opponents . . . [*ibid.*, p. 14].

As a child of his age, Defoe formulated his own scheme of natural law, and by borrowing, combining, and emphasizing various concepts in the writings of Grotius, Hobbes, Locke, and many other philosophers, he was able to achieve a certain eclectic originality [*ibid.*, p. 2].

Lest we be misled, however, into thinking that Defoe's ideas and beliefs stem from only one source, Novak adds a rather decisive *caveat*: Whereas Defoe

kept abreast of all the new ideas of his day, . . . [he also] retained his faith in his conscience and the Bible. And while he defended the Bible against the attacks of the deists, he apparently felt free to use concepts like primitivism, a voyage to the moon, or even deism for special effects [*ibid.*, p. 8].

The heterodoxy in Defoe's writing is a matter of "special effects." Furthermore, one can distinguish between Defoe's sincere utterances and his special effects simply by asking whether a particular statement is made on Defoe's authority or on that of his narrator. At least Novak seems to proceed this way in his analysis of *Robinson Crusoe*. He risks his criterion in the course of a discussion of Defoe's views of the heathen.

Crusoe . . . defends the cruelty of the Spaniards towards the natives of Mexico and Peru: "We have heard much of the cruelty of the Spaniards in destroying such multitudes of the inhabitants there, . . . but as I am for giving up all the actions of men to the government of Providence, it seems to me that Heaven had determined such an act of vengeance should be executed, and of which the Spaniards were instruments, to destroy those people, who were come up (by the influence of the devil, no doubt) to such a dreadful height, in that abhorred custom of human sacrifices, that the innocent blood cried for it . . . [*Serious Reflections*, p. 214]." [And, Novak continues,] This passage contradicts Crusoe's attack on the cruelties of the Spaniards in the first volume and suggests that the closer Defoe's name became associated with *Robinson Crusoe* the more orthodox he became in religious matters. The most bitter attacks on what might have been considered ideas favouring deism and primitivism occur in the

with whom the Spaniards met, Crusoe opines that “Heaven serves itself of men’s worst designs, and the avarice, ambition, and rage of men have been made use of to bring to pass the glorious ends of Providence, without the least knowledge or design of the actors.”³⁵ And again:

we have heard much of the cruelty of the Spaniards in destroying such multitudes of the inhabitants [of America] . . . but as I am for giving up all the actions of men to the government of Providence, it seems to me that Heaven had determined such an act of

Serious Reflections, where the distance separating Crusoe from Defoe has been erased by the author’s contention that the work was allegorical [Novak, *Nature*, pp. 45–46].

Novak’s general proposition that the *Serious Reflections* is “more orthodox” than the narrative volumes is disputed in the text. The passage just quoted is, however, open to the following additional objections:

1. In saying that “the distance separating Crusoe from Defoe has been erased by the author’s contention that the work was allegorical,” Novak presumably has in mind “Robinson Crusoe’s Preface” to the *Serious Reflections*, where it is said that “the story, though allegorical, is also historical,” and “that there is a man alive, and well known too, the actions of whose life are the just subject of these volumes, and to whom all or most part of the story most directly alludes; this may be depended upon for truth, and to this I set my name” (*Serious Reflections*, p. x). This language does not divorce the *Serious Reflections* from the narrative volumes. There may indeed be such a “man alive” but the “allegory” of his life is contained in “these volumes.” In any case, however, the identification of that man as Defoe is sheer conjecture (see Hunter, *op. cit.*, pp. 120–21); and accordingly the passage does not afford the flimsiest of excuses for reading Defoe’s supposed orthodoxy into any portion of the trilogy.

2. Crusoe does not here “defend the cruelty of the Spaniards.” Nor does he “contradict” here his former characterization of the Spaniards as cruel. Neither did he formerly make a practice of denying, explicitly at any rate, what here he asserts, that the fate of the natives whom the Spaniards assaulted can be traced ultimately to God. (See *e.g.*, I, 106 and 199). Accordingly, it is difficult to see the respect in which Novak thinks the Crusoe of the *Serious Reflections* “contradicts” or is at odds with the narrator Crusoe, or why Novak thinks the passage he quotes is more “orthodox” than the corresponding passages in the first volume.

3. The passage quoted seems to suggest that it would be a piece of orthodox Puritanism to defend Spanish cruelty. I doubt, however, — though I stand to be corrected — that Novak can cite a single Puritan defense of cruelty *per se*, Spanish or otherwise. Severity, yes; cruelty, no. What he could plausibly argue is that some Puritan might have entertained the notion that the Spaniards were God’s instruments of vengeance, as Crusoe suggests. And what he should have stated in addition is that God’s employment of the Spaniards would in no way diminish their guilt for murder. As Calvin says, it will not do “in the case of theft or murder, . . . [to] palliate it under the pretext of Divine Providence, . . . [for] in the same crime . . . the justice of God and the iniquity of man is separately manifested” (*Institutes* I, xvii, 9). The “defensibility,” the guilt or innocence, of the Spaniards, depends, not upon God’s inscrutable choice for them, but upon the state of their minds and their motives. God’s employment of homicide does not entail God’s approval of murder. There are two distinct issues: one between God and the victim, the other between God and the executioner. God’s having willed the death of the native Americans would not exonerate the Spaniards for breach of the Sixth Commandment (*ibid.*, 5).

³⁵ *Serious Reflections*, p. 222. This proposition is in accord with Calvin’s teaching. See, *e.g.*, *Institutes* I, xvii, 5; xviii.

vengeance should be executed, and of which the Spaniards were instruments, to destroy those people, who were come up (by the influence of the devil, no doubt) to such a dreadful height, in that abhorred custom of human sacrifices, that the innocent blood cried for it. . . .³⁶

Crusoe seems to imply here that the Spaniards would not be excused their sins or crimes, even though God appointed and employed their acts to punish the natives of Mexico and Peru. But, though consistent with the pertinent orthodoxy, this resolution is difficult to uphold in argument.³⁷ Accordingly, one wonders why Crusoe voluntarily took it upon himself to suggest that God was involved in the Spanish atrocities. One wonders, that is, why Crusoe repeatedly drew attention to an issue that, as it taxes the best theological minds, perhaps ought to be left to them, and passed over in silence by other Christians. We may discover what Crusoe is driving at by focusing on the native practice Crusoe thought especially aroused God's wrath, i.e., "that abhorred custom of human sacrifices." Human sacrifice being a Canaanite abomination,³⁸ it may have been one of similarities between the American natives and the Canaanites that prompted Crusoe to the following remark.

The cruelties of the Israelites, in destroying the nations of the land of Canaan, was commanded from heaven, and therein Joshua was justified in what was done.³⁹ The cruelties of the Spaniards, however abhorred by us, was doubtless an appointment of God for the destruction of the most wicked and abominable people upon earth.⁴⁰

But, it is one thing for the Holy Scripture to ascribe genocide to God, and quite another for Crusoe, with a facile "doubtless," to make the same attribution – *and to vouchsafe the divine reason therefore*.⁴¹ Consider the reason Crusoe assigns to God for loosing the Spaniards, as stated in a passage as yet unquoted: "it seemed [to Heaven] to be time to put a stop to that crime [i.e., human sacrifice], lest the very race of people should at last be extinct by their own butcheries."⁴² By "the very race of people," does Crusoe mean the whole human race? Does he think that God thought the custom of human sacrifice would spread from Mexico to, e.g., Turkey and England, and that the Turks and English would allow themselves to be sacrificed?

³⁶ *Serious Reflections*, p. 214.

³⁷ Even in Calvin's presentation the argument is difficult to follow. Cf. note 34 (item 3), *supra*, where I state my understanding of *Institutes*, I, xvii, 5.

³⁸ Deuteronomy 18 : 9–10.

³⁹ See, e.g., *ibid.*, 7 : 1–5.

⁴⁰ *Serious Reflections*, p. 216.

⁴¹ Calvin's doctrine that every event must be traced to God's active and immediate willing does not entail that we may casually assume knowledge of God's reasons (see *Institutes*, I, xvii, 1–2; III, ii, 39; xxi, 4; xxiii). This is not to assert, of course, that Calvin always refrained from interpreting particular providences (see, e.g., *ibid.*, I, xvi, 9: David, Saul, and the Philistines in I Samuel 23 : 26–27).

⁴² *Serious Reflections*, p. 214.

There is no biblical record of God thinking the physical survival of the human race was endangered by the peculiar custom of the Canaanite. But if, by “the very race of people,” we take Crusoe to mean the native American race, then the humor in the passage comes out when it is juxtaposed with other passages occurring in the same discussion. For example, we find Crusoe acknowledging that

it is hard to say whether the paganism is much abated [in America] except by the infinite ravages the Spaniards made where they came, who rooted out idolatry by destroying the idolaters, not by converting them; having cruelly cut off, as their own writers affirm above seventy millions of people and left the country naked of its inhabitants for many hundred miles together.⁴³

In short,

this abomination [human sacrifice] God in His providence put an end to by destroying those nations from the face of the earth, bringing a race of bearded strangers upon them, cutting in pieces man, woman, and child . . .⁴⁴

Crusoe has God wielding the Spaniards to exterminate the Americans for the purpose of shielding the Americans from extinction. He has the Spaniards fulfilling the unfulfilled commission of the Israelites as they defeat the alleged purpose of their own commission.⁴⁵

Consider also the reasoning that Crusoe attributes to God in part of a passage already quoted. Crusoe says “the innocent blood [of the victims] cried out for [vengeance].” But, first, the Spaniards killed innocent victims and sacrificers alike;⁴⁶ and second, this argument from innocence has no analogue in the biblical account of the Israelites and the Canaanites – God seems to have considered all Canaanites and related peoples guilty.⁴⁷ It is Crusoe’s argument, or one that he learned from some source other than the pertinent part of the Old Testament. But it is not necessarily his complete thought, since innocence of the victims does not necessarily imply guilt of the sacrificers. What does Crusoe think are the necessary conditions of guilt in the sacrificers?

He says relatively little about sacrifice, but of course he relished talking about cannibalism. What then does Crusoe say about the guilt of the cannibals? His constant major premise is, no guilt without *scienter*. *Once*, and in the

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

⁴⁵ “And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them” (Deuteronomy 7 : 2). The Israelites did not slay all the inhabitants of Canaan. See, e.g., Joshua 9 : 14–15 and Judges 3 : 1,3.

⁴⁶ “The poor wretches the Indians in America, . . . when they were talked to of the future state, the resurrection of the dead, eternal felicity in heaven, and the like, inquired where the Spaniards went after death, and if any of them went to heaven; and being answered in the affirmative, shook their heads and desired they might go to hell then . . .” (*Serious Reflections*, p. 231).

⁴⁷ Deuteronomy 20 : 16–18.

supposedly less orthodox first (narrative) volume, he imputes knowledge of their turpitude to the cannibals.⁴⁸ Elsewhere in the first volume, however, Crusoe quotes himself as having said to himself that

it is certain these People . . . do not commit this as a Crime; it is not against their own Consciences reproving, or their Light reproaching them. They do not know it be an Offence, and then commit it in Defiance of Divine Justice, as we do in almost all the Sins we commit, they think it no more a Crime to kill a Captive taken in War, than we do to kill an Ox; nor to eat humane Flesh, than we do to eat Mutton [I, 198].

And this proposition is ratified in the supposedly *more* orthodox *Serious Reflections*.

It is evident . . . [that the cannibals] eat no human creatures but such as are taken prisoners in their battles, and, as I have observed in giving the account of those things [i.e., in the first narrative volume], they do not esteem it murder, no, nor so much as unlawful. I must confess, saving its being a practice in itself unnatural, especially to us, I say, saving that part, I see little difference between that and our way, which in the war is frequent in heat of action, viz., refusing quarter; for as to the difference between eating and killing those that offer to yield, it matters not much.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ This imputation is not unequivocal, however, inasmuch as it is made more in the service of saving the justice of God, or the apparent orthodoxy of Crusoe, than as a convincing proof of the essential minor premise. The italicized portion of the following passage is one of the quotations Novak uses to substantiate his contention that Crusoe condemned the cannibals: "I . . . was led . . . [to] arraign the Justice of so arbitrary a Disposition of Things, that should hide that Light from some, and reveal it to others, and yet expect a like Duty from both: But I shut it up, and check'd my Thoughts with this Conclusion, . . . That we did not know by what Light and Law these should be condemn'd; but that as God was necessarily, and by the Nature of his Being, infinitely Holy and Just, so it could not be, but that if these Creatures were all sentenc'd to Absence from himself, it was on account of sinning *against that Light which, as the Scripture says, was a Law to themselves, and by such Rules as their Consciences would acknowledge to be just, tho' the Foundation was not discover'd to us* . . . [I, 243–44]"

Calvin, for one, does not always condition divine justice on the "acknowledgment" of human conscience. "Where calamity takes precedence even of birth, our carnal sense murmurs as if God were unmerciful in thus afflicting those who have not offended. But Christ declares that, provided we had eyes clear enough, we should perceive that in this spectacle the glory of his Father is brightly displayed. We must use modesty, *not as it were compelling God to render an account . . .*" (*Institutes*, I, xvii, 1 [emphasis supplied]). Nevertheless, Calvin adheres to Crusoe's sometime scriptural authority (Romans 2 : 14–15) and insists that the Gentiles *do* know when they do wrong. See, in fact, *Institutes*, II, ii, 22, where Calvin, while discussing Romans 2 : 14–15, concludes that conscience or natural law "served . . . [the Gentiles] instead of the law, and was therefore sufficient for their righteous condemnation. The end of the natural law . . . is to render man inexcusable, and may be not improperly defined – the judgment of conscience distinguishing sufficiently between just and unjust, and by convicting men on their own testimony, depriving them of all pretext for ignorance."

⁴⁹ *Serious Reflections*, pp. 115–16; cf. Novak, *Nature*, pp. 44–45.

And indeed, the Crusoe of the *Serious Reflections* is not content merely to deny the cannibals' *mens rea*, thereby exonerating them. He also returns to the related theme, the theme he had introduced in the first volume, the justice of God's dispensation for the Pagans:

If all those [pagan] nations are included under the sentence of eternal absence from God, which is hell in the abstract, then what becomes of all the sceptical doctrines of its being inconsistent with the mercy and goodness of an infinite and beneficent Being to condemn so great a part of the world, for not believing in Him of whom they never had any knowledge or instruction? But I desire not to be the promoter of unanswerable doubts in matters of religion; much less would I promote cavils at the foundations of religions, either as to its profession or practice, and therefore I only name things.⁵⁰

Although God seems to have forsaken the heathen utterly, the *Serious Reflections* does contain a kind of suggestion for their redemption: as has been noted by another, Crusoe maintains that "only a Christian Crusade, . . . can save these people from damnation."⁵¹ Crusoe indeed visualizes such a project, but his vision is more in the spirit of *The Shortest Way with Dissenters*⁵² than in a mood of either charitable solicitude or truly pious severity. Yet, whatever might have been his opinion on salvation by the sword, Crusoe affects, again in the allegedly more orthodox *Serious Reflections*, to be uncertain about the good to be wrought by dissemination of Christian doctrine among the heathen, however it is spread.

What the Divine wisdom has determined concerning the souls of so many millions, it is hard to conclude, nor is it my present design to inquire; but this I may be allowed here, as a remark: if they are received to mercy in a future state, according to the opinion of some, as having not sinned against saving light, then their ignorance and pagan darkness is not a curse, but a felicity; and there are no unhappy people in the world, but those lost among Christians, for their sins against revealed light; nay, then being born in the regions of Christian light, and under the revelation of the Gospel doctrines, is not so much a mercy to be acknowledged as some teach us, and it may in a negative manner be true that the Christian religion is an efficient in the condemnation of sinners, and loses more than it saves, which is impious but to imagine.⁵³

Indeed. But still, Crusoe does not "desire . . . to be the promoter of unanswerable doubts in matters of religion."

E. God's Power

The subject of the previous discussion – God's treatment of the pagans – involves a special class of events. In what follows, we shall discuss Crusoe's

⁵⁰ *Serious Reflections*, p. 111. Needless to say, Calvin had rejected these "sceptical doctrines." See, e.g., *Institutes*, II, viii, 20; III, xiv, 1–5; xxi, 1; xxii, 11; xxiii; xxiv, 15–17.

⁵¹ Novak, *Nature*, p. 45.

⁵² Available in the Shakespeare Head Edition of the *Novels and Selected Writings of Daniel Defoe* (1927).

⁵³ *Serious Reflections*, pp. 110–11.

adversions, in the *Serious Reflections*, to God's disposition of *all* events. This subject comes up when Crusoe affirms his belief in particular Providence.

If it be true, as our Savior Himself says, that not a hair falls from our heads without the will of our heavenly Father, then not a hair ought to fall from our heads without our having our eyes up to our heavenly Father in it We ought to . . . be resigned to Him in the event, and subjected to Him in the means; and he that neglects this lives in contempt of Providence, and that in the most provoking manner possible.⁵⁴

Nevertheless, our author feels constrained to enter a *caveat*.

I am not answerable for any extremes these things may lead weak people into; I know some are apt to entitle the hand of God to the common and most ridiculous trifles in Nature; as a religious creature I knew, seeing a bottle of beer being over ripe burst out, the cork fly up against the ceiling, and the froth follow like an engine, cried out, "O! the wonders of omnipotent Power!"⁵⁵

This listening to the voice of Providence is a thing . . . hard to direct It is true, an ill use may be made of these things, and to tie people too strictly down to a rule, where their own observation is to be the judge, endangers the running into many foolish extremes, . . . and tacking the awful name of Providence to every fancy of their own.⁵⁶

In some cases at least, a man's "own observation is to be the judge." Crusoe's model is the man who will "listen to the voice . . . [of Providence and] obey . . . [its] secret dictates, as far as reason directs, without any over-superstitious regard to them any more than a total neglect."⁵⁷ In short, "it is not for me to dictate here to any man what particular things relating to him Providence is concerned in, or what not . . ."⁵⁸

But if Crusoe wavers in his estimation of the degree to which a man should consider the events affecting him as the work of a Providence particularly interested in him, he seems confident nevertheless that the Deity in some aspect determines or has determined the manner in which events will occur. He affirms the "unchangeableness of the Eternal decrees,"⁵⁹ even though he is aware of their possible implications for human freedom.⁶⁰ The immutability

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 195–96.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

⁶⁰ Providence decrees that events shall attend upon causes in a direct chain, and by an evident necessity, and has doubtless left many powers of good and evil seemingly to ourselves, and, as it were, in our hands, as the natural product of such causes and consequences, which we are not to limit and cannot expressly determine about, but which we are accountable for the good or evil application of; otherwise we were in vain exhorted and commanded to do any good thing, or to avoid any wicked one. Rewards and punishments would be incongruous with sovereign justice, and promises and threatenings be perfectly unmeaning, useless things – mankind being no free agent to himself, or intrusted with the necessary powers which those promises and threatenings imply [*Ibid.*, p. 182].

he ascribes to the decrees cuts also in another direction – toward God Himself.

It would be an ill account we should give of the government of divine Providence in the world, if we should argue that its events are so unavoidable, and every circumstance so determined, that nothing can be altered . . . I think it would take from the sovereignty of Providence, and deny even God Himself the privilege of being a free agent . . .

People that tie up all to events and causes, strip the Providence of God which guides the world of all its superintendency, and leave it no room to act as a wise disposer of things.⁶¹

Crusoe avoids thus “stripping” God by the following expedient:

It seems to me that the immutable wisdom and power of the Creator, and the notion of it in the minds of men, is as dutifully preserved, and is as legible to our understanding, though there be a hand left at liberty to direct the course of natural causes and events. 'Tis sufficient to the honour of an immutable Deity, that, for the common incidents of life, they be left to the disposition of a daily agitator, namely, divine Providence, to order and direct them, as it shall see good, within the natural limits of cause and consequence.⁶²

Now since Providence, viewed as “a daily agitator,” must work within “the natural limits of cause and consequence,” one would suppose that its works would be indistinguishable from natural cause and consequence, and that accordingly Crusoe would be tolerant of those men who confuse the two. But this expectation is unwarranted for two reasons: the tendency of men to equate the natural course of events with chance; and Crusoe’s apparent animus toward the very notion of chance.

Crusoe relates, in their own words, the story told him by two “wretches.”

They were riding from Huntingdon towards London, and in some lanes betwixt Huntingdon and Caxton, one happened, by a slip of his horse’s foot, which lamed him a little, to stay about half a mile behind the other, was set upon by some highwaymen, who robbed him, and abused him very much; the other went on to Caxton, not taking care of his companion, thinking he had stayed on some particular occasion, and escaped the thieves, they making off across the country towards Cambridge.⁶³

Calvin rejects “a necessity consisting of a perpetual chain of causes” (*Institutes*, I, xvi, 8). And according to him, the only person to whom the necessity of “events” is “evident” is God, who makes each separate event necessary by willing, and not merely permitting, it so (*Ibid.*, I, xvi, 8; xviii, 1). Calvin means that even human acts are decreed by God: “men . . . cannot even give utterance except in so far as God pleases . . .” (*Ibid.*, I, xvi, 6). He denies that man is a free agent (e.g., *Ibid.*, I, xvi, 4; xviii, 2; II, ii-v), and yet argues that God’s punishment for man’s divinely appointed acts is not “incongruous with sovereign justice” (e.g. *Ibid.*, I, xvii, 3, 5). He denies that exhortation is in vain (e.g., *Ibid.*, II, v; III, xxxi, 4).

⁶¹ *Serious Reflections*, p. 198.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 198–99. It will be observed that within this passage the role of Providence shifts from “direct[ing] the course of natural causes and events” to disposing of “the common incidents of life” “within the natural limits of cause and consequence.”

⁶³ *Ibid.*, P. 202. For the positing of a remarkably similar example, see Calvin, *Institutes*, I, xvi, 9.

When Crusoe interviewed them afterwards, he found that the first, he who escaped, had “not the least sense of the government of Providence in this affair.”⁶⁴ When asked “how came you to escape?” he replied by using such words as “happened” and “good luck.”⁶⁵ Crusoe is likewise provoked by the fellow who was robbed, for his remark that his “horse chanced to slip,”⁶⁶ Crusoe calls chance an “empty idol of air, or rather an imaginary, nonsensical nothing . . . a mere phantasm, an idea, a nonentity,” and a “mock-goddess.”⁶⁷ As for the victim’s alternative explanation, that it was “as the devil would have it,”⁶⁸ Crusoe thinks that

though it may be true that the highwaymen were, even by their employment, doing the devil’s office of going to and fro, seeking whom they may plunder, yet ’twas a higher Hand than Satan’s that delivered this poor blind fellow into their power.⁶⁹

And Crusoe has authority for his assertion:

We have a plain guide for this in Scripture language, in the law of manslaughter, or death, as we call it foolishly enough, by misadventure; it is in Exod. xxi. 13, in the case of casual killing a man; it is expressed thus: “If a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand.” This was not to be accounted murder, but the slayer was to fly to the city of refuge.

Here it is evident that God takes all these misadventures into His own hand; and a man killed by accident is a man whom God has delivered up, for what end in His providence is known only to Himself.⁷⁰

The Providence of God may be stripped of some superintendency, because kept within the “natural limits of cause and consequence” or within a “direct chain [of causes],” and yet have a place as a “daily agitator.” For, “direct chains” contain links that, though forged by nature or chance, and looking like mere “misadventures” or “accidents”, are nevertheless susceptible of being taken by God “into His own hand.” Then, for all we know, it is true that “a man killed by accident, is a man whom God delivered up”; and we are left standing irresolutely somewhere between God and Fortuna, like the Philistine soothsayers who, according to Calvin, “attribute[d] the adverse event partly to God and partly to chance.”⁷¹

Consider an atheist’s experience as narrated by Crusoe in his *Vision of the*

⁶⁴ *Serious Reflections*, p. 202.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* He could also have said, “by being a negligent, if not faithless, companion.” Crusoe does not elicit all the morals one could possibly draw from his parable. Calvin, when he told essentially the same story (see note 63, *supra*), went out of his way to eliminate the kind of moral ambiguity Crusoe introduces into his rendition.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 202–03.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 203–04.

⁷¹ *Institutes*, I, xvi, 9.

Angelic World, the coda to the *Serious Reflections*. When this atheist called at the house of a friend and fellow-atheist, the door was opened only wide enough and long enough for the main character to hear a voice within, which sounded like his friend's, call out to him for "repentance." Thinking this a rude greeting, he left in shock and anger. Later, when he upbraided his friend for the incivility, the friend replied that at the time when he was supposed to have answered the door he was in another part of the house, abed, and that he had not known of his fellow-atheist's call. On receiving this intelligence the visiting atheist assumed he had heard an "apparition" and *did* repent. Now, as a matter of fact, a third man had come earlier to visit the tenant and had stayed in the anteroom when the latter went off to bed. It was he, unknown to the others, who had uttered the cry.⁷² Crusoe's comment:

It is not to be doubted but that many an apparition related with a great deal of certainly in the world, and of which good ends have followed, has been no more than such a serious mistake as this. But before I leave it, let me observe that this should not at all hinder us from making a very good use of such things; for many a voice may be directed from heaven that is not immediately spoken from thence . . .⁷³

Just as the Crusoe of the first volume had remonstrated with himself for not being "thankful for so strange and unforeseen Providence, as if . . . [the appearance of the corn] had been miraculous" (I, 90), so here Crusoe allows that

doubtless He that made all things and created all things, may appoint instruction to be given by fortuitous accidents, and may direct concurring circumstances to touch and affect the mind as much and as effectually as if they had been immediate and miraculous.⁷⁴

These thoughts suggest themselves. If the redundancy "fortuitous accidents" is taken literally, then Crusoe's God is not directing events, but is depending upon chance for their occurrence: Crusoe may be one of those who, in Calvin's phrase, place God "in a watch-tower waiting for fortuitous events."⁷⁵ But according to Crusoe's other assertions there is no such thing as chance. And this denial places him in perfect agreement with his author, as the latter is generally and perhaps correctly understood. "[T]he God of Defoe's nature is always present in his works. Calvin had contended that 'Fortune and Chance are heathen terms . . . For if all success is blessing from God, and calamity and adversity are his curse, there is no place left in human affairs for Fortune and Chance.'⁷⁶ Indeed, chance is superfluous in a world where, as Crusoe says in the first volume, "nothing happens without . . . [God's] appointment" (I, 106). And, conversely, by giving chance any part

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 296–312.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 313.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Institutes*, I, xviii, 1.

⁷⁶ Novak, *Nature*, p. 7, quoting Calvin, *Institutes*, I, xvi, 8.

in the determination of events, Crusoe would risk its seeming usurpation of the whole.⁷⁷ If chance, which has no place in a universe where nothing happens without God's appointment, is once invited to perform any small task in that universe, it may quickly seem to prove itself capable of doing much more – at least to those men who might “set [it] up in their imagination for want of a will to acknowledge their Maker.”⁷⁸ Chance can acquire such a hold on the imagination of him who gives it entry, that he may begin to assume that *everything* that happens, happens without God's appointment. Perhaps God's intervention in a chancy universe is not impossible, but neither does it seem necessary. And, since it may appear that a persuasive account of events can be given without reference to God, any reference to Him will strike one as gratuitous – and will therefore not augment the faith of the man who has once flirted with the “mock-goddess” chance. Recall how long Crusoe sustained his more fervent religious interpretation of the growth of corn on the island.

At last it occur'd to my Thoughts, that I had shook a Bag of Chickens Meat [meal] out in that Place, and then the Wonder began to cease; 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 [I, 89–90].

This remark is not so far removed in immediate subject matter nor in spirit from one of Crusoe's concluding remarks on the episode of the atheist at the door. He says that episode was

ordered in the same manner as the cock crowing when Peter denied Christ, which, though wonderfully concurrent with what his blessed Master had foretold, yet was no extraordinary thing in a cock, who naturally crows at such a time of the morning.⁷⁹

Although Crusoe could usually explain concurrences, he was not so successful with at least one form of non-concurrence. He puzzles over it during his investigation of dreams as a source of intelligence about the future.⁸⁰ Part of this presentation is our author's eye-witness report of a disputa-

⁷⁷ According to Calvin, Augustine “everywhere teaches, that if anything is left to fortune, the world moves at random” (*Institutes*, I, xvi, 8). Calvin agrees, emphatically.

⁷⁸ *Serious Reflections*, p. 203.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 313–14.

⁸⁰ This investigation is part of a larger inquiry into all kinds of spiritual revelation and prophecy.

Crusoe seems to believe dreams, i.e., “*sleeping* dreams,” prophesy more reliably than do “*waking* dreams,” even though the former may be “nocturnal delusions” or the “mere dosings of a delirious head . . . and relics of the day's thoughts” (*Serious Reflections*, pp. 252, 253). (One must reconsider Crusoe's narration of the dream that precipitated his conversion in light of such remarks as these). The reason for his preference of sleeping dreams is that those of the waking variety are so frequently experienced by “vapourish melancholy people, whose imaginations run this way; I mean, about seeing the devil, apparitions, and the like” (*Ibid.*, p. 247). (The disparaging reference to apparitions is of interest in connection with the subject treated in Section F, *infra*).

tion over the reliability of dreams, between a clergyman and a layman, in which the former urged men to heed dreams, while the latter tried to dissuade them. The layman brought five objections, and

the clergyman gave distinct answers to all these objections, and to me, I confess, very satisfactory; whether they may be so to those that read them, is no concern of mine; let every one judge for himself.⁸¹

The layman's fifth objection was this:

As men were not always . . . warned, or supplied with notices of good or evil [by dreams], so all men were not alike supplied with them; and what reason could we give why one man or one woman should not have the same hints as another?⁸²

And this is the pertinent part of the clergyman's fifth response:

As to the last question, why people are not equally supplied with such warnings, he said, this seemed to be no question at all in the case, for Providence itself might have some share in the direction of it, and then that Providence might perhaps be limited by some superior direction, the same that guides all the solemn dispositions of Nature, and was a wind blowing where it listeth⁸³

This is one of the more enigmatic passages in the *Serious Reflections*. To be sure, it reminds somewhat of Crusoe's own prior rendering of Providence as a "daily agitator", disposing of the "common incidents of life" "within the natural limits of cause and consequence."⁸⁴ It departs from the earlier hypothesis principally in suggesting that Providence "might perhaps" be denied even that ignominious efficacy. As for the "superior direction" here invoked, it is probably impossible to determine with certainty what Crusoe

⁸¹ *Serious Reflections*, p. 255.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 257. Immediately after his report of this exchange, and referring to the clergyman's series of responses, Crusoe says that "I thought it would be much to the purpose to remark this opinion of another man, because it corresponded so exactly with my own . . ." (*Ibid.*, p. 258).

In John 3 : 8, the phrase, "wind blowing where it listeth," refers to the Holy Spirit. The context is Jesus' exchange with Nicodemus, in which the question of Providence, to say nothing of something like a limitation of Providence by Spirit, is not very prominent.

Speaking of the "misfortune" a traveler had to fall into the hands of robbers and be murdered (cf. note 63, *supra*), Calvin writes: "In relation to our capacity of discernment, all these things appear fortuitous. How will the Christian feel? Though he will consider that every circumstance which occurred in that person's death was indeed in its nature, fortuitous, he will have no doubt that the Providence of God overruled it and guided fortune to his own end" (*Institutes*, I, xvi, 9). Calvin also mentions a school "who of old feigned that God rules the upper regions of the air, but leaves the inferior to Fortune" (*Ibid.*, I, xvi, 4). Crusoe could be said to turn this scheme on its head, assigning a non-exclusive, reviewable, jurisdiction in the inferior region, to God.

⁸⁴ See text at note 62, *supra*.

has in mind. But perhaps we could take courage from his boldness, and suggest that he means either the “mock-goddess” Chance, or something like the immutable laws of natural motion. On the one hand, Crusoe may be trying to teach his readers that they, like Crusoe himself on the island, have nothing to rely on but their “humane Prudence” and “meer Fear,” because their true condition is indeed as Calvin said it would be for men living in a world from which Providence had vanished or been expelled: “exposed to every blind and random stroke of fortune”;⁸⁵ “exposed to all possible movements of the sky, the air, the earth, and the water.”⁸⁶ Alternatively, Crusoe may have been preaching-up a science of the laws of “cause and consequence” which would, when matured, send chance a-packing with the now departed providence, thereby making way for the kind of comforting prediction and control that was never available to believers in pre-scientific prophesy. In either case, Crusoe seems to have pushed free-thinking over the line where it becomes atheism.

F. A Miracle

We have been treated to a parade of apparent apparitions, near-miracles, and daily agitators. But our study would be incomplete without mention of Crusoe’s argument for the reality of spirits, in the course of which he also treats of a miracle, while at the same time clarifying the meaning of the term “apparition.”

The miracle is Jesus walking on the water. It comes up in the first few pages of *A Vision of the Angelic World*, where Crusoe, admitting that it will be hard to identify the inhabitants of that “world,” nevertheless assures us that “it is evident that there are such spirits and such a world.”⁸⁷ To buttress this assertion, Crusoe says that “the discoveries in the Scripture which lead to this are innumerable, but the positive declaration of it seems to be declined.”⁸⁸ And in the next sentence he furnishes an example of what he apparently regards as a “discovery” of the spiritual world. “When our Saviour walking on the sea frightened His disciples, and they cried out, what do we find terrified them? Truly they thought they had seen a spirit.”⁸⁹ But since the disciples were mistaken, and since the Bible tells us that they corrected their error quickly enough,⁹⁰ one wonders what commended this incident to Crusoe as a biblical discovery of the reality of spirits. The resolution of the perplexity is not easy because the rest of his discussion is based on what at first appears to be a contrary-to-fact condition. He continues:

One would have thought such men as they, who had the vision of God manifest in the flesh, would not have been so much surprised if they had seen a spirit, . . .

⁸⁵ *Institutes*, I, xvii, 10.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, I, xvi, 3.

⁸⁷ *Serious Reflections*, p. 238.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Matthew 14 : 27 ff.

But what if it had been a spirit? If it had been a good spirit, what had they to fear? And if a bad spirit, what would crying out have assisted them? When people cry out in such cases, it is either for help, and then they cry to others; or for mercy, and then they cry to the subject of their terror to spare them. Either way it was either the foolishest or the wickedest thing that ever was done by such grave men as the apostles; for if it was a good spirit as before, they had no need to cry out; and if it was a bad one, who did they cry to? for 'tis evident they did not pray to God, . . . but they cried out, that is to say, they either cried out for help, which was great nonsense to call to man for help against the devil; or they cried to the spirit they saw, that it might not hurt them, which was, in short, neither less nor more than praying to the devil.

This put me in mind of the poor savages in many of the countries of America and Africa, who, . . . worship the devil that he may not hurt them.⁹¹

While the reader has been wondering what this polemic on the basis of a false hypothesis has to do with proving “that there are . . . spirits,” he may also have noticed that once, unintentionally or otherwise, Crusoe slips out of the contrary-to-fact condition into a simply factual alternative: “or they cried to the spirit they saw.” And this slip is repeated in the first sentence following the last paragraph quoted. “Here I must digress a little, and make a transition from the story of the spirit . . .” “Story” of *what* “spirit?” The only spirit mentioned thus far is that which the disciples mistook Jesus to be.

Before completing an inventory of Crusoe’s usage in this commentary, we should follow him on his digression.

Here I must digress a little, and make a transition from the story of the spirit to the stange absurdities of men’s notions at that time, and particularly of those upon whom the first impressions of Christ’s preachings were wrought; and if it be looked narrowly into, one cannot but wonder what strange ignorant people even the disciples themselves were at first; and indeed their ignorance continued a great while, even to after the death of Christ himself It is true they were wiser afterwards when they were better taught⁹²

In mentioning the last of a series of instances in which the disciples betrayed their “ignorance,” Crusoe returns to what might be interpreted as a hypothetical way of writing about the “spirit:” “Just so in their *notion* of seeing a spirit here, which put them into such a fright.”⁹³ But does he talk as if their “absurdity” was to think they saw a spirit? No, not exactly. Part of their error was their response to the spirit they thought they saw:

[T]heir notion of seeing a spirit here . . . put them into such a fright, and indeed they might be said, . . . to be frightened out of their wits; for had their senses been in exercise they would either have rejoiced in the appearance of a good angel, and stood still to hear his message as from Heaven, or prayed to God to deliver them out of the hands of the devil on their supposing it, as above, to be a vision from hell.⁹⁴

⁹¹ *Serious Reflections*, pp. 238–39.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 239. Another enigmatic suggestion, but not necessarily heterodox: see John 14:26 and Calvin, *Institutes*, II, ii, 21; xvi, 14; III, i, 4; ii, 4.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 239–40 (emphasis added).

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

Matthew 14 : 25-27 reads as follows:

And in the fourth watch of the night he came unto them, walking upon the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a ghost; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

According to Matthew, if the disciples had been in their “senses,” they would have seen Jesus. According to Crusoe, if they had been in their “senses,” they would have reacted more astutely to “the spirit they saw.”

Crusoe begins by searching the Bible for “discoveries” that “there are . . . spirits.” He brings up a “discovery” through an adverbial phrase – “when our Saviour walking on the sea frightened his disciples” – which is respectful of the biblical account, but is no “discovery” of a spirit. In order to introduce the subject of spirits, Crusoe has to mention the disciples’ misapprehension which he proceeds to adopt as the hypothesis upon which to criticize the disciples. But as the discussion advances, its premise loses this hypothetical character, and Jesus is replaced by a spirit, or rather, *by a figure of speech*. In a passage we have not yet quoted in its entirety, Crusoe writes,

One would have thought such men as they, who had the vision of God manifest in the flesh, should not have been so much surprised if they had seen a spirit, that is to say, seen an apparition, for to see a spirit seems to be an allusion, not an expression to be used literally, a spirit being not visible by the organ of human sight.⁹⁵

According to Crusoe, the disciples’ error was not their failure to see it was Jesus walking toward them on the sea. It consisted rather in two “absurdities:” first, reacting in fear and supplication to the spirit “they thought they had seen” and second, thinking they had seen anything – for “a spirit . . . [is] not visible by an organ of human sight.” After his initial concession to the biblical account, Crusoe grants only that the disciples may have had an “apparition” of Jesus, i.e., *seen* nothing. That which the Bible tells us Jesus and the disciples considered an error, is by Crusoe asserted for a truth. The spiritual, i.e., the “apparitional” or metaphorical hypothesis supersedes the biblical, the bodily, the miraculous hypothesis. And this can be taken as Crusoe’s last word on the subject unless one thinks to add what he said about the atheist befuddled by the answer he got at the door: “It is not to be doubted but that many an apparition related with a great deal of certainty in the world, and of which good ends have followed, has been no more than such a serious mistake as this.”

University of California, Santa Barbara

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 238. Here Crusoe recognizes the greatest miracle. So far as I know he never explicitly denies the Incarnation.