# Faith and Economics in *Robinson Crusoe*[i]

We have all read – or have had read to us as a child – some version, often abbreviated and expurgated, of this famous story. First published in 1719 when its author, Daniel Defoe, was fifty-nine, *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* was an immediate success and has been continually republished, reprinted and translated into many languages ever since. It is regarded by some as the first modern novel, in English at any rate. Defoe followed it up in the same year with *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, and in 1720 with *Serious Reflections during the Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*. In 1722 he published a second novel in the form of an 'autobiography' by *Moll Flanders* detailing the prolific marital, sexual and criminal adventures, in Britain and the American colonies, of his eponymous anti-heroine.

Whatever else it might be, *Robinson Crusoe* is a gripping adventure story: which accounts for its perennial success over the past three centuries. But *Serious Reflections* is an indication that the book might also be regarded (and possibly was regarded by Defoe) as something more – specifically, as something of a 'spiritual autobiography', a genre much favored by English Puritans of which Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is the most famous example. As we shall argue, there is a great deal in the text of the original novel to support such a description.

Defoe himself was raised in a Puritan family immediately after the Restoration of Crown, Church and Parliament, that followed the death of Cromwell in 1660. At that point, Puritans were compelled to choose: either conform to the Anglican liturgy and order, which they had hated and resisted for a century, or quit the Church of England. About 2,000 ministers with their congregations chose not to conform. Defoe's Presbyterian parents were among these 'Nonconformists' or 'Dissenters'. They were granted toleration of their religion in 1662 but excluded from public life. As a young man, Daniel himself gave evidence of his Puritan convictions by joining the Monmouth rebellion of Protestant Dissenters in 1685 against the Roman-Catholic King James II. Daniel was granted a pardon and thus escaped the 'Bloody Assize' of Judge Jeffrey; and indeed, after the Glorious Revolution (1688-89) he became a faithful subject and secret agent of the new king, the decidedly Protestant William III.

Much of Defoe's adult life was spent as a merchant and entrepreneur, and also as a political pamphleteer and secret political agent. But, notwithstanding the evident moderation in later life of his ancestral hatred of the Church of Rome, there is no reason to doubt the strength and sincerity of his religious convictions and more particularly their significance in understanding and interpreting *Robinson Crusoe*.

## I Robinson Crusoe's Many Lives

At the same time, it is no secret that *Robinson Crusoe* leads an independent life in the study of economics. Many economists seem to have thought that the hero of Defoe's novel affords a telling exercise in the analysis of rational choice/behavior – and seem to have thought so precisely *because* Crusoe is unencumbered by complications associated with the presence of other persons. The catalogue of economists in this connection is impressive: Carl Menger (1871); and following Menger, Bohm-Bawerk (1889); and then Lionel Robbins (1935); and a host of

modern textbook writers. Marx (1867) also has some lessons to draw from Crusoe – though they are not quite the same lessons as have been drawn in the mainstream tradition. For Marx, the significant fact about Crusoe's predicament is that all the artefacts that Crusoe produces are valued by him according to their usefulness. There is none of the "value in exchange" that Marx thinks is the source of the 'commodification' (and alienation of the worker from his output) that characterizes the interdependent structure of the market economy.

However, the fitness of Crusoe for deployment in economics has not gone unchallenged — most particularly by those who conceive the discipline more in terms of catallaxy than of economizing. Richard Whately (1832) declared that Crusoe is in a situation of which political economy "has no cognizance". For Whately, and more recently for Buchanan (1964), economics is centrally concerned with *exchange*; and analysis of an individual in solitary state, whatever else its virtues, simply serves to abstract from what is fundamental. Buchanan (1964) puts the point this way:

> *"Robinson Crusoe on his island before Friday arrives, makes decisions; his is the economic problem in the sense traditionally defined. This choice situation is not however an appropriate starting point for our discipline, even at the broadest conceptual level, as Whately correctly noted more than a century ago. … The uniquely symbiotic aspects of behavior, of human choice, arise only when Friday steps on the island and Crusoe is forced into association with another human being. The fact of association requires that a wholly different and wholly new sort of behavior take place – that of "exchange", "trade" or "agreement". Crusoe may of course fail to recognize this new fact. He may treat Friday simply as a means to his own ends, as part of nature so to speak. If he does so, a "fight" ensues and to the victor go the spoils."*

There is no doubt much in this passage that deserves more extended discussion. Note for example Buchanan's suggestion that exchange and agreement are identical; or his assertion that treating Friday as a means to Crusoe's own ends necessarily leads to fighting; or the suggestion that symbiosis can occur only through inter*personal* (and not interspecies) relations. None of these claims is self-evident. But here, our object is simply to underline Buchanan's doubts about Crusoe-economics, and more generally about the questionable idea of an essentially 'a-social' social science.

What seems to be at stake here is a methodological claim about which aspects of the 'economic way of thinking' (to use Paul Heyne's (1991) apt phrase) is more foundational — whether scarcity or agent rationality or the positive sum potential in human interactions can make claim to be THE basic notion. One might think that this is a bad question — that all these elements play an important role and that they do so simultaneously. Nevertheless, Buchanan may well have a point — that focusing on Crusoe in his circumstances of solitude tends to occlude features of the 'economic model of social existence' that are indeed indispensable.

It is worthwhile highlighting this issue as one in the understanding of economics because a more or less analogous theological issue arises for Defoe in his treatment of Crusoe's solitude. Part of our object in what follows is to highlight that issue and explore how it is represented in Defoe's text. But that exercise depends on our claim that Defoe's novel can be seen in large measure as a kind of "confessional" exercise — something that we have yet to argue for.

Economists are not the only commentators who have sought to appropriate Crusoe for other purposes. For example, Rousseau (1762) recommended *Robinson Crusoe* as basic reading for the young *Emile.* Rousseau called it a "marvelous book" – one that "brings together so many lessons scattered in so many books" and joins "them in a common object which is easy to see

and interesting to follow and can serve as a stimulant even at this (early) age". It is the *"*most felicitous treatise on natural education." And so, "…this book will be the first that my Emile will read. For a long time, it will alone compose his whole library and it will always hold a distinguished place there. It will be the text for which all discussions on the natural sciences will serve only as a commentary.*"* (All this from a man who self-confessedly "hates books"). For Rousseau, explicitly, Defoe's *Crusoe* triumphs over anything in Aristotle and Pliny.

What is, however, conspicuous in the many appropriations of Crusoe as fodder for other purposes, quite independently of Defoe's seeming intent, is a total failure to incorporate what is a central aspect of Defoe's narrative: namely, its religious aspect. For us, at any rate, the most conspicuous feature of the text is the central role played by religious belief: Defoe's novel reads at least as much as a spiritual autobiography as an adventure story. And it certainly is more aptly construed either as spiritual biography or adventure story than as an illustration of rationality in behavior, along the lines suggested by economists.

It is entirely predictable – and not improper in itself – that those who seek to appropriate Crusoe for their own purposes will abstract from those aspects of the novel that do not suit, or are not relevant for, their various applications. Yet we believe that there is much to be said for taking the novel at face value: for allowing Crusoe to 'speak for himself'; or more accurately, to attend to what Defoe has Crusoe saying and doing.

In some cases, commentators note the violence they are doing to the original. Rousseau briefly retells the basic Crusoe story "disencumbered of all its rigmarole": Emile, it would seem, is simply to attend to Robinson's adventures. Marx is more explicit in dismissing religion: "We do not refer at this time to praying and other such activities, since our Robinson derives enjoyment from them and regards such activity as recreation.*"*

One might make two points about this latter remark. The first is that to treat Crusoe's spiritual engagements as mere "entertainment" is, whatever else, to show considerable disrespect for Crusoe's internal point of view. The second, more economistic, is to note that from a rational choice point of view, the status of Crusoe's religious activities is neither here nor there. Even if reduced to the level of "entertainments", they take time and attention away from other "productive" pursuits — they have an opportunity cost; they have value for those who engage in them, and hence figure in any account of agent behavior that deploys the rationality paradigm, as Wicksteed (1910) explains; see also Iannacone (1998). But in our view, to offer an account of Robinson Crusoe that omits the role that Providence plays in Crusoe's conception of his own unfolding predicament is essentially a case of Hamlet without the prince.

Moreover, it seems clear that, for Defoe, Crusoe's spiritual development is intimately connected with the a-sociality of his situation. In that sense, if we think of Crusoe as an imaginative account of the condition of solitude, we can ask questions about what the benefits and costs of such solitude are – including the narrower 'economic' elements, but also the broader considerations towards which Marx and Rousseau gesture, and the religious aspects with which Defoe himself is manifestly concerned.

In what follows, we shall attend first to the use of Defoe's Crusoe as an archetype of rational choice, as expounded by the economists. This task occupies section II. Then in section III, we will examine the 'dimensions of evaluation' that bear on a-sociality. In section IV, we will focus directly on the spiritual elements in Crusoe's account. Section V will offer some conclusions.

## II Crusoe's Rationality

Does Defoe's account of Crusoe's behavior inform our notions of rational agency in any way? Perhaps we shouldn't expect it to. After all, Defoe was not an economist, and it would seem hopelessly anachronistic to suppose that he had access to the various details of the rational calculus that it would take specialists in economics another couple of centuries to formulate and refine. Subsequent authors' use of Crusoe as a hook on which to hang their discussions are then not to be interpreted as any reference to Defoe's text at all – merely as a vague 'recognition device' such as one might deploy in referring to someone who betrays another as a 'Judas', or a seducer as a 'Lothario'.

But in the case of *Crusoe*, there is perhaps rather more at stake. After all, Defoe's book is a classic precisely because its description of Crusoe's life on the island has rung true enough with generations of readers for a presumption to exist that any alternative account of the conditions of solitude ought not lie too far from the original; provided we are prepared to make an imaginative leap to the effect that Crusoe does not go mad with loneliness – as for example the marooned Ben Gunn does in Stevenson's *Treasure Island* — or fall prey to disease. Put another way, the various refinements that economists offer – equalization of marginal values or of inter-temporal rates of return; or the claim that marginal values are diminishing – should strike the *Crusoe* reader as plausible and significant.

However, as Söllner (2016) has recently argued, Defoe's picture of Crusoe's behavior does not really match the picture of rational man as economists present it – and more to the point, does not strike the reader as being unsatisfactory in not so doing. For example, Crusoe consistently makes mistakes of various kinds. And many of the good things that happen to him occur by 'accident' not design, thereby providing scope for Crusoe's reflections on

"Providence". Crusoe operates by rules and habits that have no obvious rationale in the standard economic account of optimizing behavior. And so on.

Söllner provides several examples, and there are others that might serve equally well. Perhaps the most notable 'mistake' is exemplified by the five months of intensive labor that Crusoe devotes to the construction of a canoe from a tree he selects and manages to fell – only to discover that the craft is too far from the creek, and not sufficiently uphill of it, for him to be able to get it to water's edge. He learns from this episode that one ought to count the cost of activities before becoming committed to them; that one ought to imagine problems that might arise and establish that a solution is likely to be available before undertaking a task that will prove infeasible. This in itself is a good 'rational' lesson – but it is one that Crusoe notes all too late.

'Accidents' abound in Crusoe's survival. The grain that he is able finally to cultivate derives from what he takes to be dust, which he empties on a patch of bare ground in order to clean out a pouch that he had rescued from the ship. That "dust" germinates and provides him with a pleasant surprise: raw material for making bread! The logs of wood that he hews and then drives into the ground to provide a rough fence for his protection, take root and continue to grow to form a solid protective wall that is proof against almost any intrusion (another example of an 'unintended consequence' of a fortuitous kind.) In many ways, Crusoe is lucky. And he knows it.

Whether Defoe's Crusoe is in fact fully 'rational' in the sense(s) that economists deploy that term is a tricky question, and is hardly helped by the fact the economists themselves seem confused as to how exactly rationality is to be defined. [For a catalogue of meanings of the term 'rationality' see Brennan in Schmit and Peter (2007).]

The claim that economists' usage of 'rationality' is not univocal may require some comment. For example, in its 'positive' predictive sense, rationality is simply a consistency

relation between action and desire/preference, subject to belief. The fact that agents are rational in this sense does not imply, as many economists seem to think, that those same agents are also 'rational' in the sense that their actions serve to maximize their well-being (even in an expected sense). The two notions only become equivalent if the maximization of own well-being is the sole object of the agent's desires. Put another way, the collapse of well-being to 'preference satisfaction' is a substantive normative claim — and on its face a highly implausible one. Crusoe, for example, regards his original desire to leave home and pursue adventure as inimical to his own well-being, although there is no question that the pursuit of adventure is a desire of his, and that his actions can be explained in terms of satisfying that desire.

Furthermore, the supposition that an understanding of what rational behavior entails is enhanced by examining an individual in total isolation from human society – and in a setting which he manifestly did not choose (so, in that sense, not itself a 'rational' *setting*) – is perhaps less than totally obvious.

## III Dimensions of Solitude

The fact that Crusoe did not choose his solitude – that it was thrust upon him – does not, of course, mean that it did not have certain benefits; so, it may be useful briefly to catalogue these. Of course, Crusoe laments the lack of human companionship. He yearns to have someone to converse with, and indulges in much self-pity (including episodes of extended weeping) on account of that lack.

Yet it is interesting that in the notable scene in which Crusoe discovers a human footprint in the sand, his immediate response is not one of delight, but one of terror. In a reaction reminiscent of Hobbes's grim account of the 'state of nature', other persons strike Crusoe, first

and foremost, as potential predators rather than as possible companions. Crusoe's solitude is then, at least, freedom from a certain kind of fear.

Solitude is also freedom from the scrutiny of others. It is perhaps in this that we see one aspect of the attraction Defoe's novel had for Rousseau: social esteem, and the *amour propre* to which it gives rise (and which to Rousseau is the primary source of humanity's "chains") is entirely absent on Crusoe's island.

The notion that solitude secures 'freedom' may be generalized. In much of normative social theory, 'freedom' is to be understood in terms of the actions of other human agents. That is, only actions by other *persons* count as rights violations – or more broadly as relevant for freedom. And that has led many theorists to understand the concept of freedom in terms of *independence* – a quality that, as it happens, is maximally realized on Crusoe's island (before Friday arrives). [See for example List and Valentini (2016)].

Philip Pettit's (2007) critique of standard 'liberal' conceptions of freedom focuses exactly on this point. As he puts it, *"*. . . liberalism, at least in its pure form, presents liberty as a condition ideally enjoyed out of society, when there is no one else around." Pettit's alternative understanding of freedom in terms of 'non-domination' certainly clears logical space for the possibility of genuine social relations that can qualify as "free". But it is not so clear that non-domination answers the conceptual challenge. Crusoe would surely qualify as totally 'free from domination' no less than being 'free from interference'. The analytic picture that emerges from 'freedom as independence' is that Crusoe is the archetypical 'free man' – and that he trades off such freedom in return for other benefits of society. But this picture itself raises certain theoretical difficulties. Given that Crusoe is on his solitary island *involuntarily*, it would seem that maximum freedom can only be secured by compulsion: which is neither a happy, nor an

intuitively appealing, conclusion. The moral we are inclined to draw from such observations is that there are good reasons for suspicion about any notion of 'freedom' based on independence.

For economists, 'freedom' is often understood in terms of the size of opportunity sets – the range of goods/circumstances/situations over which the agent can exercise choice. Commercial society, an order based on the predominance of markets, is often defended on the grounds that it maximizes freedom of choice for its participants. In so doing, the market order also maximizes aggregate material well-being; or perhaps more commonly, preference satisfaction. In this tradition, Crusoe's predicament reflects the fact that he cannot take advantage of generalized gains from exchange – the 'mutual advantage' to use Rawls' phrase – that social interaction affords. But strictly speaking the term "gains from exchange" is somewhat misleading here. The gains that commercial society offers include gains from specialization which may be *associated* with exchange but need not be logically entailed by it. As Adam Smith remarked, the "division of labor is limited by the extent of the market" – and in Crusoe's world, that limit is extreme.

In fact, however, in Crusoe's case the limits are rather less extreme than his 'solitary' state might lead one to suppose. The fact that the ship remains accessible for an extended period means that Crusoe can take advantage of the specialization (and division of labor) embodied in the various things he can ferry to the island – guns and powder and shot; various tools; tent cloth; paper and writing equipment; and so forth. At one point in the narrative, Crusoe compiles a list of pros and cons associated with his situation on his island:

> *"God wonderfully sent the ship in near enough to the shore that I have gotten out so many necessary things as will either supply my wants or enable me to supply myself even as long as I live."*

The point Defoe makes here is illustrated afresh in the contrast between Crusoe and the group of Spanish and Portuguese sailors who Crusoe later learns of, when he saves Friday's father and one of the Spaniards from cannibals. This group, though fourteen in number, *"were under the greatest distress imaginable, having neither weapons nor clothes nor any food, but at the mercy and discretion of the savages…"* [p204][ii].

In short, Crusoe, in his many years of total solitude, was not so totally cut off from the benefits of commercial society as that solitude might lead one to believe. Moreover, it seems clear that Crusoe was alert to the significance of such benefits. Even though Defoe may have had no well-worked theory of how those benefits arose, it seems clear that he understood well enough that such benefits depended in some manner on the mutual advantage that can arise from social interaction. Defoe is hardly original here. Socrates develops his theory of justice in *The Republic* explicitly on the assumption that Man is not individually self-sufficient. Hobbes makes the assumption that peaceful interactions (of the kind ruled out in the state of nature) generate huge mutual advantages — though in neither case is there the detailed account (of the kind one finds in Smith (1776)) of how such mutual advantage arises.

## IV Crusoe's Spiritual Development

Crusoe, though bereft of human company, does not find himself totally alone. In addition to his dog and his two cats, he has reading material – specifically, the ship's Bible. (By the third year of his occupancy of the island, Crusoe is reading the Bible thrice each day). And he also has writing material – so that he can keep a record not just of his activities and projects but also of his thoughts and attitudes –

*"not so much to leave them to any that were to come after me, for I was like to have but few heirs, as to deliver my thoughts from daily poring upon them and afflicting my mind; and as my reason began now to master my despondency, I began to comfort myself as well as I could, and set the good against the evil, that I might have something to distinguish my case from worse."* [p 56]

In the process of his reading and his reflections on that reading, he comes to practice regular prayer. And through this reading and prayer, he comes to the realization that he is not in fact alone: God is continually with him.

It seems that Crusoe had a practice, common among Protestants, of randomly 'opening' the bible with the expectation that the words would then speak to him specifically: as if Providence would also be revealed in the determination of which passage was thereby delivered. In this manner, sometime in his third year:

"*One morning, feeling very sad, I opened the Bible on these words -- 'I will never, never leave thee, nor forsake thee'. Immediately it occurred (to me) that these words were to me. Why else should they be directed in such a manner, just at the moment when I was mourning over my condition as one forsaken by God and man? 'Well then' I said 'if God does not forsake me, of what ill consequence can it be or what matters it, though the world should all forsake me, seeing on the other hand if I had all the world and should lose the favour and blessing of God, there would be no comparison in the loss?'"* [p 97]

And this realization has a surprising upshot.

*"From this moment I began to conclude in my mind that it was possible for me to be more happy in this forsaken solitary condition than it was probable I should ever have*

*been in any other particular state in the world; and with this thought I was going to give thanks to God for bringing me to this place."* [p 110]

This attitude is not one that Crusoe can quite bring himself to maintain at first. But a year later,

> *"I had now brought my state of life to be … much easier in my mind…I learned to look more on the bright side of my condition and less on the dark side… With these reflections I worked my mind up not only to resignation to the will of God in the present disposition of my circumstances, but even to sincere thankfulness for my condition."* [p 112]

Crusoe entertains two specific comparisons in this connection. First, he compares his state with how much worse it might have been. Unlike his shipmates he is spared from drowning. There are no wild beasts on his island – unlike what he "…*saw on the coasts of Africa: and what if I had been shipwrecked there?"* [p 59]. And of course, there is the proximity of the resource-rich ship. *"These reflections made me very sensible of the goodness of Providence to me and very thankful for my present condition, with all its hardships and misfortunes."* [p 111] But the further comparison of himself in his earlier state compared with that he now finds himself in leads him to value the solitude in and of itself. His very isolation on the island becomes evidence for him of divine providence.

This view surely reflects Defoe's own about the value of solitude. If solitude is the source of spiritual development in Crusoe's case, then this fact can stand as a kind of morality tale for Defoe's readers. As the Desert Fathers and founders of Christian monachism believed, life in

society may involve too many distractions for the spiritual life to flourish fully: a surprising conclusion perhaps from so resolute a Protestant as Defoe.

Crusoe himself, reflecting on his previous seafaring life, is instructively scathing:

> *"I had lived a dreadful life, perfectly destitute of the knowledge and fear of God. … Falling early into the seafaring life and into seafaring company, all that little sense of religion which I had entertained was laughed out of me by my messmates, by a hardened despising of dangers and the view of death, which grew habitual to me. … In all the great deliverances I enjoyed, I never once had the word "Thank God" so much as on my mind or in my mouth; nor in the greatest distress had I so much as a thought to pray to him or so much as to say "lord have mercy upon me"; no, nor to mention the name of God unless it was to swear by or blaspheme."*[p 111/2]

It is likewise notable that, in the final chapters of the book, once Crusoe is delivered from the island, there is little mention of God, 'Providence', regular Bible reading or disciplinary prayer. Adventures and amusing episodes (as, for example, Friday's wrestling with a bear seems intended to be) and the management of his financial affairs, seem to take over Crusoe's life. Nor does Crusoe seem to register any regrets about this. His vestigial qualms about Roman Catholicism do draw him back from settling in Brazil – but the nature of those qualms, apart from the observation that they were a legacy of his island life, receives no further discussion, no more indeed than the tiny reference to his marriage and his having children.

Two things seems clear from all this. One is that some measure of solitude is to be seen as a necessary feature of the spiritual life. The other is that, for Defoe, the *primary* Christian virtue is that of having a grateful heart. It is this virtue that Crusoe comes to both recognize, and

in substantial measure to develop in himself, over the course of the many long years (28 of them) on the island.

Now, although the virtue of gratitude is first and foremost a matter of *attitude*, it is by no means inert in the arena of action. For example, when the cannibals finally appear on his island, Crusoe's first instinct is to slaughter them – but reflection makes him draw back. He is drawn instead to "Christian compassion". "*This appeared so clear to me …*" that by refraining from such slaughter, "*I had not been suffered to do a thing which I now saw so much reason to believe would have been no less a sin than wilful murder had I committed it. And I gave most humble thanks on my knees to God who had thus delivered me from blood-guiltiness…"* [146] What Defoe thinks of as the primary Christian virtue is actually that which leads Crusoe to the preeminent 'theological virtue' of Charity.

One interesting feature of Crusoe's more general self-assessment is that he regards his very first decision to pursue the life of maritime adventure, leaving the promise of a secure comfortable life in his father's station, as his own "original sin". It is, however, by no means clear that *Defoe* endorses that judgment. After all, the very fact of writing the narrative suggests that, in Defoe's eyes, the life of activity and adventure to which Crusoe aspires is entirely worthy of pursuit and even of admiration.

Before we leave the religious themes in the novel, it is worth noting one episode occurring late in the narrative, in which Crusoe decides to instruct Friday in the Christian religion. In discussion between them, Friday raises a fundamental question for a coherent monotheistic faith: the Problem of Evil. "'*But,' Friday says again, 'if God much strong, much might as the devil, why God not kill the devil so make him no more do wicked?'"* [p182] Crusoe is nonplussed. He has no answer to this question – and knows that he hasn't. At first, he pretends

not to hear Friday. Then he sends him away. And prays to God for guidance. The exchange serves to make Crusoe highly sensitive to his own inadequacies as a religious instructor; but he persists. And in the endeavor, "*I really informed and instructed myself in many things that either I did not know or had not fully considered before*." [p 184] And indeed the sense that he is "*made an instrument under Providence to save the life, and for aught I know the soul, of a poor savage"* lends him a "*secret joy*" that "*ran through every part of my soul; and I frequently rejoiced that ever I was brought to this place which I had so often thought the most dreadful of all afflictions . . .*"

This episode changes the relation between Crusoe and Friday. For one thing, Friday reveals himself, in his various challenges, to be Crusoe's intellectual equal – and perhaps more to the point, Crusoe's spiritual equal. For "*we were equally (*sic) *penitent and comforted and restored. . . .*" And Crusoe observes, "*I had more affection . . . than ever I felt before*" [p 184]

There is a theological issue embedded in this series of events. Up to this point, one might consider that in Defoe's view solitude is a necessary condition for spiritual development. But notwithstanding the Desert Fathers, that would be a theologically unorthodox position. When for example Jesus summarizes the law, he insists that "love of God" and "love of neighbor" are *alike*: "the second is like unto it" is the prelude to the Good Samaritan parable. For Christians, one's relations with one's fellows are a critical aspect of a religious life. Without neighbors, as Crusoe is for the first 25 years of his life on the island, an essential dimension of the Christian life is missing. For there can be no Charity without someone to be charitable to. And indeed, in a strictly etymological sense there can be no 'religion' whatsoever. For *religio* is that which *binds* us to one another and to God. It is only when Friday appears that there is any possibility of the full, religious expression of Christian spirituality. And here Defoe seems to gesture at that

thought: human society and true religion are complements not substitutes. If this is Defoe's intention, the episode just described plays an important role in the history of Crusoe's religious development and of the overall message of the book. For much of the narrative, taken as a whole, seems to focus attention on the centrality of solitude for religious development – and that, in itself, backgrounds the whole relational element in the Christian tradition that many would see as of its essence.

One important theological issue that Defoe's novel raises can then be seen as securing the right balance between solitude and society in the Christian life. This is, of course, a quite different issue from that which preoccupies Buchanan (and Whateley) and their economist targets in relation to proper economic method; and is to be settled by appeal to quite different principles. But the rival positions in the two debates are interestingly parallel.

## V Conclusions

A theoretically serviceable nexus between 'Faith' and 'Economics' depends upon the assumption that sane human beings may exhibit both the theological virtue of 'Faith' and a rational stewardship of scarce resources for themselves or others; and experience no intellectual inconsistency in so doing.

What is the connection between the 'Faith' that is the principal concern of Defoe in *Robinson Crusoe* and the 'Economics' that many in our profession have perceived in that novel? Is it simply that an English Puritan of the early eighteenth century was more likely to be a merchant and entrepreneur than his Anglican fellow-citizens whether whig or tory, and therefore more likely to conduct his business with at least procedural rationality? Is there a relation

between the rationality, such as it is, that informs Crusoe's economic behavior and the spiritual awareness forced on him in his solitude? And is there a necessary connection between 'Faith' and 'Economics' in general of which *Robinson Crusoe* is simply an illustration?

Although the answer to the first question is probably 'yes', it is evident – as we have shown in part II above – that Crusoe's behavior on the island is no model of procedural rationality. Though protected from the harshest aspects of the economic problem by capital from the wreck, his attempts to improve his situation are often ill-conceived. Crusoe's story abounds in examples of the (non-catallactic) problem of economizing scarce resources, but few of his actions can be construed as rational solutions to those problems.

If catallactics be our model of economic theory there can be no 'Economics' in *Robinson Crusoe* until the arrival of Friday. Crusoe's solitude (part III above), even when broken by invasion of savages, rules out exchange.

How is Crusoe's undoubted spiritual development related, if at all, to 'economics'? We have argued in part IV that not only is there no possibility of a full expression of Christian spirituality on Crusoe's part until Friday joins him, but that true religion and human society are complementary; and that this is an important element in the overall message of Defoe's book, notwithstanding the spiritual advantages of solitude. Human society is a necessary condition for a catallactic understanding of 'economics'. And it is a necessary condition for a full expression of true religion.

'Faith' – regarded as a voluntary disposition towards the transcendent, and 'Economics' – regarded as a scientific study of the material condition of human life, are necessarily connected by the fact that both can be performed by the same human being. Crusoe exhibits the former but

not the latter, for indeed ‘Economics’ in that sense did not appear until Boisguilbert (1696). But if ‘Economics’ be construed more broadly as any sustained thinking, however unsystematic, about the material conditions of human life, then Robinson Crusoe can surely qualify. For Crusoe however that sustained thinking has an irreducible religious component!

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[i] This paper developed out of the Annual PPE and Literature Colloquium held at the University of North Carolina in October 2018. The authors are grateful to participants in that Colloquium for helpful comments.

[ii] All page references to the *Crusoe* text refer to the Barnes and Noble Classics edition of 2003.