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Why Not Curse God and Die? R. H. B.[[1]](#footnote-1)

 Perhaps the bitterest blow that fell upon Job was that which came over and above all his misfortunes and from no one else than his own beloved wife, the companion of his days, the mother of his children, when she said to him: “Dost then still hold fast thine integrity? Renounce God and die.” Job had lived his whole life with reference to God and God’s will. His “integrity” was real and true. His standard of righteous living was high and pure—it would today [?] but to shame that of the average Christian. (Read Job 29 and 31) And Job adhered to it faithfully and conscientiously, day by day. He was pious also and devout. When his children had had their social good times together, Job always offered sacrifices for each one of them (for in patriarchal times the father and head of the family was the priest) and sanctified them, on the mere chance lest in their merriment they might have sinned against God. How often he must have held sweet communion in his family circle and talked with his wife and his children about the greatness and goodness of God, to whom they owed their life and breath and all they possessed and enjoyed. And, surely Job’s wife was his companion in his spiritual life also and shared his faith and devotion with him. But when unexplained misfortunes fell stroke upon stroke, when Job lost his possessions of herds and flocks, when he was bereaved of his children, and when last of all his health failed—then his wife’s faith broke down. She had come face to face with the proof (as she must have felt) that all this thing of trusting in God and the endeavor to obey and please Him was of no worth or value.

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As for all that may be called religion[—]she saw that (as we express it in common talk) it doesn’t get you anywhere. Nobody knew better than she how true and faithful Job’s life had been toward God. And now, see what he had come to. By the same sweeping logic of modern unbelievers and doubters, she reassured that either God could not have prevented the cruel misfortunes that befell her guiltless spouse, or He would not do so when He could. If He could not He is not almighty; if He could and did not, He is not good. For if ever a man was loyal to his God and trusted life and all to Him, it was Job. And now such things as these had befallen him. No—there is nothing to it—the whole thing is a senseless fiction. Why continue to profess a faith in the face of facts? Come Job, and admit it, renounce those delusions of God’s tender care and mercy, for the logic of events and the bitter reality of experience have proved it false. So there—“Curse God and die!” she said, with perhaps a special emphasis on the “die.” And this from his wife! She who should have spoken words of comfort and of hope and assurance to sustain him in his darkness and distress—but, nay, her own faith was now gone, and a bitter cynicism had taken possession of her soul. She was disgusted with the whole farce of it. And she felt that Job must surely be [convinced] of the futility of his faith, even as she herself was. Why should he [pretend?] to believe in God any longer? She challenged him

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to take what we in these days call the “realistic attitude” to wash his hands of it all, and to be done with God and religion forever. Many have done just that, and upon much smaller ground than Job could have pleaded. It was the keenest of all temptations and tests to Job. But with unwavering words, he answered her: “Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil?” and we are told, “In all this Job sinned not with his lips.” When messenger after messenger had reported to him the loss of his flocks and herds, and the last messenger had brought him the heaviest tidings of all—that in the windstorm his children all had perished together, “Job arose and [rent] his robe and shaved his head and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped; and he said, “Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: Jehovah gave and Jehovah hath taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah”—[t]here follows the printed statement: “In all this Job sinned not or charged God foolishly.” So again after his answer to his wife’s suggestion, follows the like statement: “In all this Job sinned not with his lips.”—Ah, how easily we sin with our lips under stress of trial and ill-fortune! But Job sinned not with his lips.

 In estimating the quality of Job’s faith

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and his “sufferance sublime” we must take into account the comparative meagerness of the Divine revelation in those days. It is conceded by most scholars that the book of Job is one of the most ancient of the books of the Bible—probably the very oldest of them all. In these days of primitive [revelation], Job’s knowledge of God’s way was naturally very limited. He had no 23rd Psalm to comfort him, nor the wondrous consolations of the prophecy of Isaiah. There was not “ Rom. 8:28” as yet to assure him that “all things would together for good to them that love God,” the tender words of John 14—“Let not your heart be troubled [\_ \_]” had not yet been spoken, nor had he ever heard of John 3:16 a redeemer come to bring life and immortality to light through the gospel. In fact, Job’s outlook (as that of his contemporaries) was restricted to the present life. The current view was that here, if anywhere, God would bless and reward the righteous; and here and now, or never, the sinner would get his due. A glimmer—a mere thought—of life after death shines out for a moment through the gloomy setting of the 14th chapter of Job; and in the 19th chapter his faith rose to the vision of a redeemer who would plead his cause and vindicate him. For Job felt that he had been wronged, and he could not but think that God, being just and righteous, would not, could not let things

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stand as they were. Even now, he felt witness must be in heaven, and that sometime, somewhere a Redeemer would adjudge things righteously; yea, and he, Job, would himself be there to see it and to hear—for what could such vindication be to him or to God is he were ling in the dreamless dust? –But, after that brief vision the spirit of Job subsided again into the mists of darkness.

 It was a wonderful faith, this faith of Job’s. He believed in God, and cleaved to Him for His own sake, when there was nothing to be gained, nothing to be hoped for. As the Old Version (though somewhat faulty) translates, “Though he slay me yet will I trust him.” Was not this Satan’s challenge to God: “Doth Job fear God for naught? [\_ \_ \_] Thou has been blessed the work of his hands and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thy hand now and touch all that he hath, and he will renounce thee to thy face.” Satan charged that Job’s regard for God was like that of most others—dictated by a consideration. And, as some one has said, “He who serves god for pay will serve the devil for higher wages.” Not, it is good and right to know that there is a final reward for God’s people and to set our hope, sure and steadfast, upon those exceeding great and precious promises. But if

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that is all the reason and motive of our religion would that satisfy the heart of God? Even we poor human beings desire to be loved—not merely for what we care do or give, but for our own sake. And so it is with God. He, too, wants to be loved for His own sake, for what He is; as said the psalmist—“When have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon the earth I desire besides thee.” (Ps. 73:25) Or as the apostle—“I count all things to be loss for the excellency of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse that I may gain Christ . . .” (Phil. 3:8) But, said the Adversary, Job does not fear Thee for naught: he knows where his advantage lies and where his wealth comes from. If then withdraw thy blessings he will renounce thee to thy face.

 So, God permitted the test—not only to demonstrate to Satan that after all there were men who serve God for the pure love of Him; but for Job’s sake. As he himself said, “He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me I shall come forth as gold.” He stood the test—and even when his wife had cast away her faith and taunted him to renounce God and die, he held fast to his confidence, and sinned not with his lips. Job’s wife long dead is still speaking. There are not a few who in time of affliction are ready to take her advice, to

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cast away all faith and hope, and plunge recklessly into bitterness and desperation again. But Job held true. And when the testing time was over the Lord turned the captivity of Job, [and] he came forth a truer, nobler, humbler man than he could have been before. The Lord also showed him his goodness “in the land of the living,” and restored to him, twice over, all that he had lost. “Ye have heard of the patience of Job,” writes James, “and ye have seen the end of the Lord, how that the Lord is full of mercy and [pitiful?]. So if trial and tribulation has beset your way—strengthen then the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees, and make straight paths for the feet, and [urge? or use?] it for the Lord—“For with Jehovah there is loving kindness, and with him is plenteous redemption.”

 “Light after darkness,

 Gain after loss,

 Strength after weakness,

 Crown after cross,

 Sweet after bitter,

 Hope after fears,

 Home after wanderings,

 Praise after tears.”

So mote it be.

1. Transcript of handwritten undated sermon or article manuscript by Robert Henry Boll completed by Audrey Schaffner, 8 October 2013. Pagination is in [brackets]. Send corrections to McGarvey Ice, mxi13a@acu.edu. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)