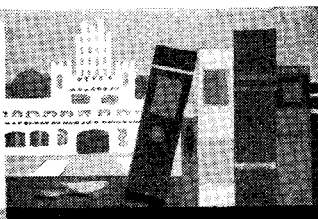


Perspective



"A Bit of an Ass"

WHEN he was a very old man, I used to visit G. M. Trevelyan, the historian, at his Northumberland home. Nearly sightless, he still clambered about the ruins of the great Roman wall which stretched across the fells he loved so much and knew so well. No day was so wet that it kept him from stumbling round the deep woodland garden that surrounded his house. During these walks he would stop, glare at the middle distance, and grunt a gnomic utterance. One day Namier was very much on his mind, another it was Russell. He paused in the drenching Scotch mist and growled at the dripping beeches, "Bertie Russell was always a bit of an ass." And for once I thought I heard a hint of envy from a man whose life was as generous and as malice-free as any I have known.

Bertrand Russell and Trevelyan had been young dons together at Trinity at the turn of the century, its period of greatest intellectual distinction since the days of Newton and Bentley. Here were clustered A. E. Whitehead, G. E. Moore, the physicist H. J. Thompson, the anthropologist Sir James Frazer, all of world stature, and a host of others just below. None are left now save Russell, the last lingering relic of a wonderful generation—liberal, humanist, agnostic, intensely proud of man's intellectual achievements. To participate in them was their desire. Before such men one can only feel humility and a profound respect and wish that one's own generation had half their sincerity and dedication.

And yet—what of Russell? When Trevelyan spoke, Bertrand Russell had recently been sitting, frail and old, amongst a horde of adolescents on the sidewalk in Trafalgar Square protesting the Bomb. Long after the others were dead, or had retired, or become conservative, he went on and on. The baubles of the Establishment meant nothing to him, and protest for human rights was still as indestructible a part of his nature as it had been seventy years before. Of course, one can point to occasional lapses that have betrayed both his historical sense and the warmth of his heart. Yet how rare have these moments been, compared with the decades of sane judgment and wise comment that he has offered the world.

A Socialist, he was pro-Boer in 1901, a pacifist in 1914. He has been an ardent supporter of votes for women, an expo-

nent of freedom in education, a despiser of conventional morality, a hater of Fascism and Nazism, a friend of Negroes and Jews, a protester against American involvement in Vietnam.

Filled with utter loathing of oppression in every form, a passionate adherent of human rights, since 1900 Russell has given his ardent support and superb intellectual dialectic to one noble cause after another. Who among us can present so honorable a record not only over nearly seventy years but even over fifteen? Which of our generation in America or in Britain of Lord Russell's eminence has gone gladly to jail for his beliefs? And the motives that have driven him on, an old man doing a young man's work, lie very deep, at the core of his personality. Much better than anyone else he himself explains this in one of the most beautiful forewords I have ever read—that to *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell 1872-1914* (At-

To Edith

Through the long years

I sought peace

I found ecstasy, I found anguish,

I found madness,

I found loneliness.

I found the solitary pain

that gnaws the heart;

But peace I did not find.

Now, old & near my end,

I have known you,

And, knowing you,

I have found both ecstasy & peace

I know rest.

After so many lonely years,

I know what life & love may be

Now, if I sleep,

I shall sleep fulfilled.

Dedication in Bertrand Russell's
hand to *The Autobiography*—a
life governed by three passions.

lantic-Little, Brown, \$7.95). It ought to be engraved in stone and set up in every school and university throughout the world—an epitome of the noble aspirations of a noble man.

Three passions, simple but overwhelmingly strong, have governed my life: the longing for love, the search for knowledge, and unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind. These passions, like great winds, have blown me hither and thither, in a wayward course, over a deep ocean of anguish, reaching to the very verge of despair.

I have sought love, first, because it brings ecstasy—ecstasy so great that I would often have sacrificed all the rest of life for a few hours of this joy. I have sought it, next, because it relieves loneliness—that terrible loneliness in which one shivering consciousness looks over the rim of the world into the cold unfathomable lifeless abyss. I have sought it, finally, because in the union of love I have seen, in a mystic miniature, the prefiguring vision of the heaven that saints and poets have imagined. This is what I sought, and though it might seem too good for human life, this is what—at last—I have found.

With equal passion I have sought knowledge. I have wished to understand the hearts of men. I have wished to know why the stars shine. And I have tried to apprehend the Pythagorean power by which number holds sway above the flux. A little of this, but not much, I have achieved.

Love and knowledge, so far as they were possible, led upward toward the heavens. But always pity brought me back to earth. Echoes of cries of pain reverberate in my heart. Children in famine, victims tortured by oppressors, helpless old people a hated burden to their sons, and the whole world of loneliness, poverty, and pain make a mockery of what human life should be. I long to alleviate the evil, but I cannot, and I too suffer.

This has been my life. I have found it worth living, and would gladly live it again if the chance were offered me.

This should teach us that the deepest religious feelings can live in the heart of an agnostic, that the mind and the passions are not forever at variance. There is nothing more absurd than the notion that the intellect is cold, as inane indeed as to suggest that it is a poor guide to the affairs of men. There is none better or safer so long, as with Russell, it is warmed with compassion.

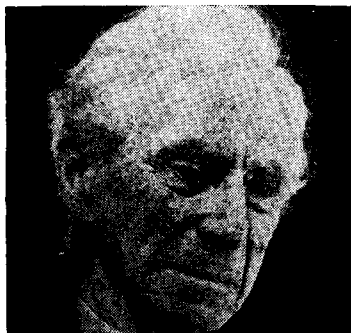
Russell, of course, was lucky. Like so many of his friends, he has a remarkable heritage. The grandson of Lord John Russell, "Finality Jack" of the Great Reform Bill, he is thus allied to the Dukes of Bedford and half the Grand Whigery of Victorian England. He was educated privately, but in an atmosphere drenched with the philosophy of the Utilitarians and Positivists. Hence he was saved from the thoughtless philistin-

ism of Victorian public schools, and enjoyed the attentive interest of able personal tutors. In his ancestral background loomed Holland House, the great Whig bastion of progressive ideas, itself the child of the Enlightenment, whose belief in the value of words and ideas was intense. Cramped though it might be by a certain moral rigidity, this tradition's confidence in man's intellectual ability was as great as its confidence in its own rightful aristocratic privilege.

But Russell derived even greater advantages from that social environment than a belief in the value of free-ranging thought or the sense of authority natural in an aristocrat. Thought was expected to result in action—wherever it might lead. The Victorian intellectual aristocracy not only tolerated oddity but encouraged it. If conviction should lead to Buddhism or to Islam or to vegetarianism or to a crusade for birth control, so be it. To please other men was neither necessary nor desirable if it conflicted with truth. Secure in status and income, Russell's generation was freed from any need to subjugate their personalities for the sake of survival in the race for power and distinction. They could always quit their jobs out of principle and live on their private incomes if they so desired. This made honesty of purpose and its implementation in political action easier for Russell than it might have been, but such an attitude also led him to public conflict, public disaster, even—if rarely—to public and private humiliation.

For us, Russell stands as one of the last great figures of the Enlightenment. All mankind owes him a debt, not only for his philosophy and mathematics—his genius in which bred grace in his prose—but for his life. And now, in the twilight of it, he has given us the first volume of his autobiography, which will rank with the best; honest, of course; beautifully written, of course; poignant, wry, and deeply human. A bit of an ass, maybe, but far more of a saint. If only all saints had been as clever as he, what a different world we might have had. And the reverse is true. If only our intellectuals had his saintliness, the world might be more honorable to live in.

—J. H. PLUMB.



Bertrand Russell—"Poignant, wry, and deeply human."

Powell in the Pulpit

The Politician-Preacher-Playboy Collects Sermons and Meditations



—Wide World.

Adam Clayton Powell—"a directness, an economy of words."

By DAVID POLING

ADAM CLAYTON POWELL has successfully mixed politics and religion for the last twenty-five years. Although the House of Representatives has derailed his political career momentarily, the role of preacher is as strong as ever. *Keep the Faith, Baby!* (Trident, \$4.95) is a collection of sermons, meditations, and speeches delivered at the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem. Here we have a glimpse of the style, interests, and themes of Powell in the pulpit in contrast to the playboy of Bimini, Cutty Sark and milk fame.

Will the Reverend Powell be asked to conduct seminary classes on preaching or sermon construction? I doubt it. But he has to be considered above average in ability to relate scripture to the needs and problems of everyday life. There is a directness, an economy of words that eludes too many preachers. The strongest sermons are fashioned around social issues that have swirled about the church in more than a decade: capital punishment, McCarthyism, civil rights, God is Dead, and, of late, Black Power.

David Poling is editor of *Christian Herald*.

He describes his own ground rules:

I believe it is the business of the preacher to say an eternal word in a contemporary setting; to say a permanent word in a changing world; to help those who enter the doors to have not only a sense of history but a sense of the age.

In the sermon on capital punishment he notes that the rich usually go free while the poor go to the graveyard.

In this decade we must move still further. The gallows, the gas chamber, the electric chair, should be relegated to our museums; to their appointed places along with the rack, the thumbscrew, the guillotine, and other discarded instruments of primitive injustice.

A thunder-and-lightning sermon on McCarthyism came right to the point when Powell said, "It is a reflection of the moral irresponsibility of the church which condones him, the press which praises him, and the large numbers of American people who follow him." As strong as this piece was, it seemed rather late in the fray: November 29, 1959.

We come to the best and the worst of this book for faith-keeping babies: respectively Powell's attitude toward Black Power and his slighting of Vietnam. If the ground rules have not changed on Powell's definitions, many people would be able to subscribe to his interpretation and promotion of Black Power: He writes:

... black power is not anti-white.

Black power incorporates everybody who wishes to work together, vote together, and worship together. . . . Violence must play no part in its fulfillment. . . .

After years and years of rioting, black people should realize by now that when we burn up the neighborhood dry cleaners in a riot or a rebellion, we set our own clothes on fire. . . . Whites must join hands with blacks to achieve the full freedom of the Guaranteed Society because they are determined to get their full measure of freedom.

Powell's civil rights-Black Power statements have none of the yakety-yak that he has been feeding the public via press and TV interviews from the decks of *Adam's Fancy*. Vietnam, however, is a large shameful gap in Powell's sermons. Apparently his war is in Rhodesia