

'To Christ': My Response to Bertrand Russell's 'To Edith'

Following my 'Arrogant Atheism Answered', which was based on Dorothy Day's 'Conquered', the poem she wrote in response to William Ernest Henley's bragging poem, 'Invictus' ('Unconquered'), and my 'The Unbeliever's Lament', which was based on poems by Matthew Arnold and Thomas Hardy, I thought I would use Bertrand Russell's poem 'To Edith' – which he wrote to his fourth and last wife, Edith Finch Russell – to produce the following poem of my own. Russell, of course, like Henley, was a militant atheist. It is my conviction that the first half of Russell's poem, full of self-confessed disappointment leading to wretchedness, captures more than ordinary grief; I am sure it expresses what every unbeliever will have to confess in a Christless eternity. Consequently, in hope of helping some of those who are facing such a bleak prospect, in hope of encouraging them to come to Christ before it is too late, I have accommodated the second half of Russell's poem to speak of a believer addressing Christ.

Bertrand Russell's '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.*

To Christ: My Response to Bertrand Russell's 'Edith'

My 'To Christ':

*Now, convicted & converted,
I have known you,
And, knowing you,
I have found both lasting joy & peace,
I know rest.
After so many wasted years,
I know **that** life & love which only truly is
Both life & love.
And though I come, as come I must, to die,
I know I shall, in your returning day,
And by your grace alone,
Arise to everlasting bliss divine.*