

# To the Master and Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge

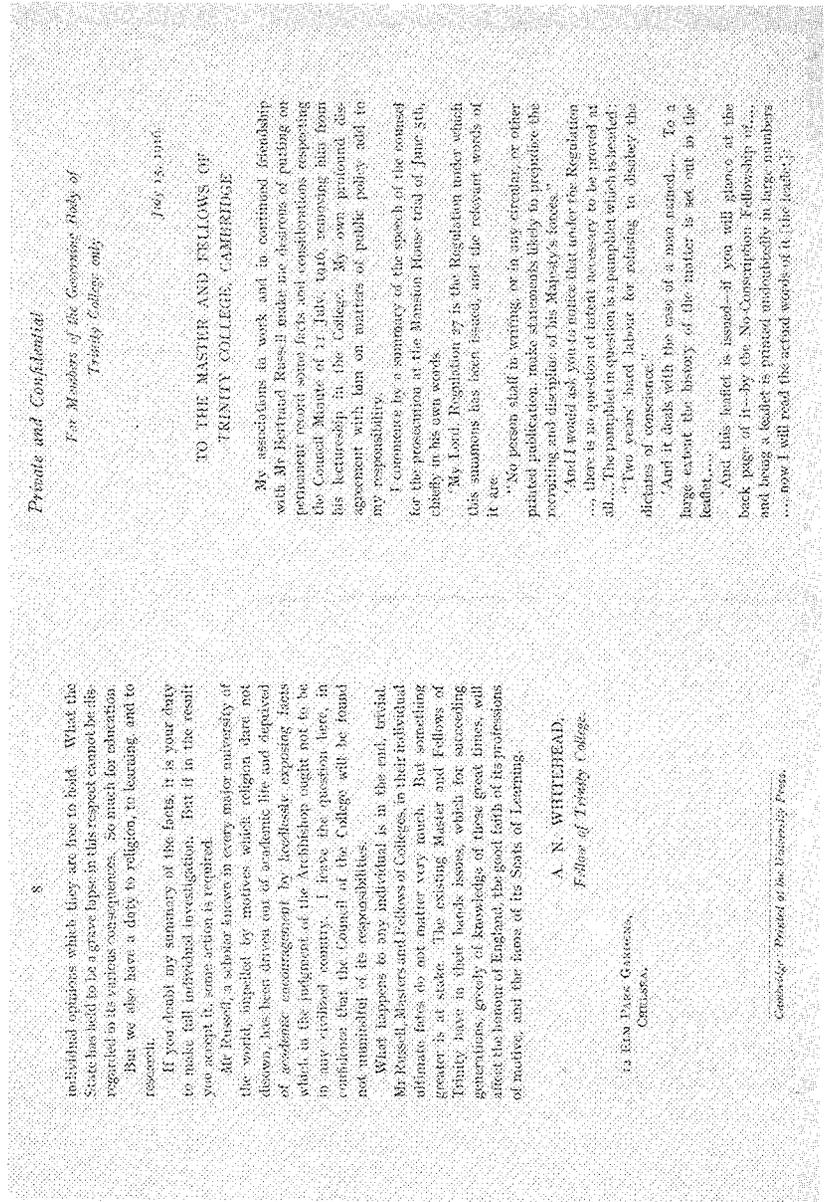
by A.N. Whitehead

## EDITORIAL NOTE

In *The Life of Bertrand Russell* Ronald Clark mentions A.N. Whitehead's pamphlet on Russell's dismissal from Trinity, and observes that Whitehead "apparently joined the protest, although no copy of the pamphlet seems to have survived" (p. 291). This is the only mention in print of the pamphlet, and derives from Whitehead's letter of 14 September 1916. There Whitehead sympathizes with Russell in the face of the latest harassments by the government. He then asks, as if continuing in the vein of sympathy, "Have you seen my pamphlet on you, to the fellows of Trinity? I sent it round in July." We do not know Russell's answer, for Whitehead did not wish private letters preserved for posterity. The pamphlet is not listed in Victor Lowe's "Bibliography of the Writings of Alfred North Whitehead to November, 1941", in *The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead*, ed. P.A. Schilpp (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University, 1941), in the updated bibliography in Vol. 1 of his biography of Whitehead (Johns Hopkins, 1985), or in Barry Woodbridge's *Alfred North Whitehead: A Primary-Secondary Bibliography* (Bowling Green: Philosophy Documentation Center, 1977), where the discovery should be entered as follows:

37a "To the Master and Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge." Dated July 15, 1916. Cambridge: Printed at the University Press. "Private and Confidential. For Members of the Governing Body of Trinity College only." (On the dismissal of Bertrand Russell from his lectureship at Trinity.)

Ignorance could not have been G.H. Hardy's reason for omitting to mention the pamphlet in *Bertrand Russell and Trinity* (Cambridge U.P.,



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individual opinions which they are free to hold. What the State has held to be a grave lapse in this respect cannot be disregarded in its various consequences, so much for education.

But we also have a duty to religion, to learning, and to research.

If you doubt my summary of the facts, it is your duty to make full individual investigation. But if in the result you accept it, some action is required.

Mr Russell, a scholar known in every master university of the world, impelled by motives which religion, dare not disown, has been driven out of academic life and deprived of academic recognition by headless exposing facts which in the judgment of the Archbishop ought not to be in our civilized country. I fancy the question here, in confidence that the Council of the College will be found not unmindful of its responsibilities.

What happens to any individual is in the end, trivial. Mr Russell, Masters and Fellows of Colleges, in their individual attitude takes no matter very much. But something greater is at stake. The existing Master and Fellows of Trinity have in their hands issues, which for succeeding generations, greedy of knowledge of these great times, will affect the honour of England, the good faith of its professions of motive, and the fate of its State of Learning.

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Cambridge: Printed at the University Press.

1942). The only other reference known to us is in a letter to F.M. Cornford from Hardy dated 25 July [1916], in which he writes: "I suppose you've got Whitehead's flysheet by now?"

A copy has now been found, in the F.M. Cornford papers recently donated to the Russell Archives. We learn from it that Whitehead attended Russell's appeal of his conviction for "prejudicing recruiting and discipline", at the Guildhall on 29 June 1916. He went up to Cambridge shortly after Russell's dismissal on Tuesday, 11 July, to confer with members of the Council and other Fellows. By Saturday he had completed his statement. It was to be printed by the University Press—the equivalent, in those days, of a xerox service. From the ambiguous heading, Whitehead may have distributed his "flysheet" only to the Council, though it was addressed "to the Master and Fellows". The arguments and the political significance of the pamphlet are discussed in Delany's article in this issue of *Russell*.

The pamphlet measures 219 × 139 mm. and consists of one gathering of four leaves of medium weight, cream-coloured, wove paper, sewn in the centre. They are paginated 1 2–8. The text begins immediately after the admonition to privacy and confidentiality, the date, and the inscription. Beneath Whitehead's address on p. 8 is a rule and the printer's identification: "*Cambridge: Printed at the University Press.*" Presumably Whitehead sent Cornford this copy, though there is no covering note. Mrs. T. North Whitehead has kindly given us permission to reprint it.

Paul Delany and Kenneth Blackwell

TO THE MASTER AND FELLOWS OF TRINITY COLLEGE,  
CAMBRIDGE

*Private and Confidential* July 15, 1916.  
*For Members of the Governing Body of Trinity College only*

My associations in work and in continued friendship with Mr. Bertrand Russell make me desirous of putting on permanent record some facts and considerations respecting the Council Minute of 11 July, 1916, removing him from his lectureship in the College. My own profound disagreement with him on matters of public policy add to my responsibility.

I commence by a summary of the speech of the counsel for the prosecution at the Mansion House trial of June 5th, chiefly in his own words.

My Lord, Regulation 27 is the Regulation under which this summons has been issued, and the relevant words of it are "No person shall in writing, or in any circular, or other printed publication, make statements likely to prejudice the recruiting and discipline of his Majesty's forces."

And I would ask you to notice that under the Regulation ..., there is no question of intent necessary to be proved at all.... The pamphlet in question is a pamphlet which is headed: "Two years' hard labour for refusing to disobey the dictates of conscience."

And it deals with the case of a man named.... To a large extent the history of the matter is set out in the leaflet,....

And this leaflet is issued—if you will glance at the back page of it—by the No-Conscription Fellowship of ..., and being a leaflet is printed undoubtedly in large numbers ..., now I will read the actual words of it [the leaflet]: "... He appealed as a conscientious objector before the local and appeal tribunals, both of which treated him very unfairly, going out of their way to recommend his dismissal from school. They recognised his conscientious claim only so far as to award him non-combatant service,...."

The counsel then proceeded to make other quotations of statements of fact from the leaflet. In no instance did he suggest that such statements were not strictly accurate. The counsel commented on these facts, but he did not allege any comment to be present in the leaflet in the quotations made by him and here omitted, until the final citation which is as follows:

"The sentence was two years' hard labour. Everett is now suffering this savage punishment solely for refusal to go against his conscience. He is fighting the old fight for liberty and against religious persecution in the same spirit in which martyrs suffered in the past. Will you join the persecutors? Or will you stand for those who are defending conscience at the cost of obloquy and pain of mind and body? Forty other men are suffering persecution for conscience sake in the same way as Mr. Everett. Can you remain silent while this goes on?"

In none of the citations given by the counsel and here omitted can I discern anything except a direct neutral narrative of facts, which expressly mentions civilities shown to the prisoner. Any matter in the nature of comment in the leaflet, quoted by the counsel, is quoted here. I may mention that I have heard the leaflet read in full at the Guildhall appeal, by the prosecuting counsel at that trial.

Returning to the Mansion House trial, I will now give in full the prosecuting counsel's final peroration on the contents of the leaflet:

It is for you, my Lord Mayor, to form your judgment upon the leaflet, but our submission is that throughout in its terms, and especially in the comment at the end, the effect it would have would be to prejudice both recruiting and discipline; and coming from this organization which is supporting those who find that their consciences permit them to take advantage of the security of the country, but refuse to permit them to do anything which tends to secure the safety of the country, that it has the tendency of preventing recruiting for that reason, and is eminently likely to discourage what is so essential, the full and complete embodiment of the manhood of the country in the forces of the Crown at the present time. And so the matter is put before you for your consideration and judgment.

One thing which is perfectly certain about it is that there is not a syllable in it from beginning to end which is likely to assist recruiting or discipline, and the commentary upon the leaflet itself is that some forty others at that date—whenever that was published—forty others were in a similar position, and since, from another edition of the leaflet, a great many more, that is to say, in the same position as Everett. And stern views must be taken if you find that refusal to obey orders, and mutinous and insubordinate conduct, is not that of a mere isolated individual, but is the conduct of a person who is acting in combination with others, or with many others. It is necessary to deal differently with persons under different circumstances, whether they are acting entirely alone as individuals, or whether, as I say, in combination with, or supported by others or by organizations which live by the support that they can apparently give to those who find that their consciences do not permit them to obey the law of the country.

The only witness called was a police inspector “to formally give the necessary evidence.”

I have summarized the case for the prosecution in great fulness, and, as I hope, with scrupulous accuracy.

Mr. Russell conducted his own defence. I need merely state its outline in my own words.

He quoted, from the *Official Report of Parliamentary Debates*, the Home Secretary, Mr. Herbert Samuel, as making the following statement: “It is one thing to advocate repeal of the Compulsory Military Service Act. It is another thing to advocate resistance to its provisions.”

Inasmuch as the legal position of conscientious objectors is expressly recognized in that act, and in virtue of the direct statement of the Home Secretary as to agitation for repeal and (by inference) for modification, Mr. Russell argued that he had conceived himself as acting with strict legality in drawing attention to the existence of such men, and to the fact that their treatment at that time was unsatisfactory. He also argued

that it was not his leaflet which was prejudicial to discipline and to recruiting, but the fact of such treatment. He gave his reasons for crediting this unsatisfactory treatment, and denied that the object of the pamphlet was to create conscientious objectors.

First, as to the intent of the author, which was immaterial to the Court of Law, but is very material to the Fellows of Trinity. Mr. Russell denied that his intent was to create conscientious objectors. I can supply evidence that his denial was not due to any distortion of his recollection. In the spring of 1916 he wrote to me, knowing that I am in favour of military compulsion at this juncture, and asked me to help him, by private influence or otherwise, to stop the mishandling of this question which, as he stated to me, was resulting in a deplorable religious persecution. Unfortunately I have destroyed his letter. I refused to move, my own opinions as to the proper treatment of the difficulty being exactly expressed by the quotations from speeches of Lord Parmoor and the Archbishop of Canterbury which are given below; and I refused to believe that any other method of treatment was being adopted.

Now as to the reality of the evils alleged by Mr. Russell. I turn to the *Official Report (unrevised)* of a debate in the House of Lords which took place on 29th June, 1916. This report is “printed under the authority of his Majesty’s Stationery Office”, and is “To be purchased, either directly or through any Bookseller”. I make these quotations to show that I am giving information as to that debate, which is published by official authority.

The chief speakers were Lord Parmoor and the Archbishop of Canterbury. It will be remembered that Lord Parmoor was an eminent King’s Counsel and, until recently, a member of the House of Commons, associated with the Conservative Party. It will be noted that the Army Order referred to is as late as May 25th, and that a statement of the Prime Minister, announcing a yet revised treatment of the problem, was only made on June 29th, the day of the debate.

Lord Parmoor rose to call attention to the administration of the Army Order of May 25, and to ask whether its provisions had been applied to all cases.

It is a fair characterization of Lord Parmoor’s speech, which extends through six columns of legal analysis, to say that it exhibits considerable anxiety; otherwise it is meaningless, especially in its conclusion which is as follows:

I want to say this in conclusion. My desire is to find a fair solution of what is really a difficult problem. It is never more difficult to ensure justice and fair treatment than in the case of an unpopular minority, and everybody knows that conscientious objectors stand in the position of an unpopular minority at the present time. It must be so. One cannot avoid that. It is exactly what has happened to some of the bravest of the brave in the course of history; they have had to suffer because, however brave they are, their views have not been in accord with the powers that be for the time being. One of the greatest examples of what I say was that of Sir Thomas More. He said he was willing to take office, but that he would put his duty to God first, and when his duty to God came first he gave up his life under conditions of which we all know. I am sure nobody in this House wants either persecution or inquisition. I therefore hope that on the lines of civil decision and civil punishment as against military decision and military punishment fair satisfaction can be given with regard to a difficult problem, and that we may relieve the Army of a matter which ought not to be imposed upon it at the present time.

But what had happened which might lead a conservative lawyer to remind the House of Lords of the fate of Sir Thomas More?

The Archbishop of Canterbury shall state his impression after investigation of the evidence. No one who has followed the career of the great statesman-Archbishop, Dr. Davidson, will consider him at all likely to make heedless or rash statements. The Archbishop analyses in his speech types of conscientious objectors, whose consciences in varying degrees deserve respect, and who in varying degrees must suffer restraint or deserve punishment. He then in respect to them all proceeds thus:

These men too, like all citizens, ought to receive fair treatment and to be safeguarded against cruel and arbitrary punishment. That they have received harsh and cruel punishment in the last few months has been adequately substantiated. Men in both the classes to which I have referred seem to me to have been subjected to treatment which I can only think would be deplored by most of your Lordships, who would feel—if they were satisfied, as I am, as to the truth of the facts—that those who brought about that form of treatment had not been acting in the way that men ought to act in a civilized country. I think it is absolutely right that such objectors should be subjected to the sternest imposition of labour of even the most strict kind, but I confess that such an argument as found utterance in this House some time ago—that once the Tribunal had rejected the man's appeal as a conscientious objector he became from that moment *ipso facto* a soldier and ought to be subjected

to military laws and military ways of treatment—such an argument seemed to be not only a mistake in policy but something like a false interpretation of our fundamental principles in this matter....

So in April, Mr. Russell was aroused by his knowledge of actions, concerning which the Archbishop on June 29th states, "those who brought about that form of treatment had not been acting in the way that men ought in a civilised country."

Mr. Russell has been fined £100 by the Lord Mayor's Court, and in consequence on July 11th deprived of his lectureship at Trinity College.

But there is this difference: Mr. Russell heedlessly brought the facts to the knowledge of the people, and in the present awful danger of the State heedless action must be sternly suppressed by any means. Even here I would observe that the Archbishop's statement is published by authority and can be bought for threepence.

There is however, as I agree, a substantial point here, though of what exact weight I will not, in the case of my friend, presume to decide.

For the moment the equities of individual cases are subordinate to the safety of the State and of the cause for which our men are dying. Our statesmen have characterized it as the cause of freedom, of justice, and of civilization; and that is the thought which sustains us as in our minds we follow the fate of our boys.

I make no criticism on the College Council for their action. Their minute, removing Mr. Russell from his lectureship, is on the face of it a support of the State in its decisions as to the civil discipline necessary in the immediate present. It is perfectly consistent with a just appreciation by the individual members of the Council of the future obligations of the College.

After the war, Reconstruction. Mr. Russell has stood his trial, and the facts are noted above. We shall then stand our trial, not before the Lord Mayor of London, but before more searching tribunals, our consciences, the nobler judgment of the world, and, as some hold, in that unknown future to which we all must pass. When Paul reasoned of righteousness, of self-control, and of judgment to come, Felix trembled. Have twenty Christian centuries removed us from such naïve emotionalism as we read the Archbishop's words? Can Mr Russell's case be left then exactly where it stands today? In endeavouring to find a solution, can we shelter ourselves merely behind precedents?

We administer a College whose objects, as defined in Statute XII, are "education religion learning and research". We have a duty that the nation has reasonable security for the teaching staff not to be heedless in their propagation of individual opinions which they are free to hold.

What the State has held to be a grave lapse in this respect cannot be disregarded in its various consequences. So much for education.

But we also have a duty to religion, to learning, and to reseach.

If you doubt my summary of the facts, it is your duty to make full individual investigation. But if in the result you accept it, some action is required.

Mr. Russell, a scholar known in every major university of the world, impelled by motives which religion dare not disown, has been driven out of academic life and deprived of academic encouragement by heedlessly exposing facts which in the judgment of the Archbishop ought not to be in any civilized country. I leave the question here, in confidence that the Council of the Colledge will be found not unmindful of its responsibilities.

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