

John Truluck Tribunal Reports

Military Service Tribunals- Transcriptions of Newspaper Reports

From Bexhill Chronicle 8th July 1916 - Page 10– Local Tribunal

An Objector's Conscience

John Truluck (24), married, grocer's assistant in the employ of a provision merchant, objected to military service on conscientious grounds. He said he was a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and could not take part in military service which involved the taking of human life, that being contrary to the Word of God. He had no thought of disloyalty to His Majesty, the King, or of joining any political or religious organisation opposed to the Government's measures, and was willing to serve as a non-combatant.

The Town Clerk said, in accordance with the direction of the Local Government Board, a series of questions had been put to Mr Truluck that afternoon, and he read them and the answers given to the Tribunal. The answers were to the effect that the appellant objected conscientiously to participating in the use of arms in the settlement of disputes. He would be willing to engage in military work which did not involve the destruction, but was intended for the saving of life. He had held these conscientious objections from about six years, and three years ago joined the community known as the Brethren. He did not know that body had a tenet in their creed to the effect he had stated; the only principles by which they were guided were those of Jesus Christ as set forth by command and example in the Word of God, but he believed that the conscientious objections he held were also held by most, if not all, of the Brethren. - The Town Clerk read a question asking the applicant if he had made any sacrifices in connection to the conscientious scruples. - The applicant said he was with a Tea Company. The company desired him to attest, and when he declined to do so because of his conscientious objections, the company dismissed him. He lost, in consequence, his place and wages.

The Town Clerk: They paid you your wages? - The applicant: Yes, they paid me my week's wages and another week in lieu of notice. - The Town Clerk pointed out that seeing he obtained another the situation was not a very great sacrifice on his part. - The applicant said that he did not get the situation for five or six weeks. - The Town Clerk: Except this one sacrifice has there been any other? - The applicant replied that there were, but he did not wish to state them. He added that he was quite ready to do other forms of national service. - The Town Clerk: What form of sacrifice are you prepared to make? - I am quite prepared to sacrifice my personal interests altogether. - The Mayor: Do you think a man should always obey his conscience? - No, not at all; the conscience is not a guide, but it is a good guard. I am not here on my conscience, but because of what is in God's Word. - The Mayor: if you need not obey your conscience, what is the use of it? - One who is a Christian has purged conscience. - The Mayor: I do not understand you. How does it fail as a guide? - Mr Truluck quoted from 7th Hebrews and added that everyone that believed in the saving of the soul had a conscience purged. - The Mayor: Then you want a special kind of conscience? - Not exactly: the conscience of every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is a purged conscience. - The Mayor: If it is a conscience you cannot rely upon, I should not worry about it. - Alderman Gibb: You are a member of the Brethren? - I am. - Alderman Gibb: do you recognise that the greatest demonstration of Christianity is now in the trenches - the brotherhood of men? - The Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man as talked about is not according to the Word of God. - The Town Clerk: Then the greatest sacrifice you have made is that you have lost a month's wages? - I don't like to talk about it or what I have done. The Town Clerk: That is a searching question. The Mayor (after the Tribunal had conferred in private): The Tribunal will exempt you from combatant service; you will go for non-combatant service.

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Conscience Not a Guide

Bexhill Objector and his Sacrifice

DISMISSED BECAUSE HE WOULD NOT ATTEST

At the sitting of the Bexhill Tribunal on Wednesday, John Truluck, 24, married in October 1915, in the employ of Mr Wickens, Devonshire road, applied for exemption as he had a conscientious objection to military service, which involved the killing of human life.

He said that he was a believer and follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he could not go against His teaching. He felt no disloyalty to the King and did not belong to any political or religious organisation in opposition to the Government.

“GATHERED WITH THE BRETHREN”

Answering a number of official questions, applicant stated that as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ he could not take human life. He did not object to non-combatant service. He objected to participate in the use of arms in any dispute however just the cause. He would not object to join some branch of military service in saving life. He had been an objector for six years and was gathered with the brethren. There was no rule that members should not engage in military service. Each individual had to act by the light God had given him. The body did not penalise a member who engaged in military service. He was not a member of any other body having an objection to military service.

“Can you state any sacrifice you have made because of your objection?”, read one question.

Applicant said that he had been in the employ of a Company, and as he did not attest they discharged him without notice.

The Clerk – You are not saying that the firm discharged you without notice?

Applicant – They gave me my money.

The Clerk – Then you have no right to say this. They were quite fair. That is the greatest sacrifice you have made? You lost one month's wages.

NOT A GUIDE BUT A GUARD

Applicant said that he would undertake any form of national service if his conscience allowed him. He would do work with the wounded.

“Have you been engaged upon any philanthropic work for the good of the community?”, was another question.

“I have tried,” answered applicant, “to do good to all.”

The Clerk – Most people try to do that.

Another question was: “What sacrifices are you prepared to make to help the country?”

Applicant said that he was prepared to sacrifice personal interests.

The Mayor asked if he had learned to obey his conscience.

Applicant – No, Sir. Conscience is not a guide, it is a guard.

The Mayor – Then what is the use of it? – It is a guard.

The Mayor – I cannot understand that.

Applicant – We read in 7th Hebrews that through the blood of Christ we have a purged conscience.

So you want a different kind of conscience? – No, Sir.

Are you a believer in Christ? – Indeed, I am.

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Is yours a purged conscience? – It is, Sir.

Is it one to rely on? – No.

The Clerk – You cannot improve on the question with regard to the greatest sacrifice losing a month's wages? – No.

Applicant quoted several passages from scriptures, but Alderman Gibb said that he could go on quoting and contradict himself all along.

The Tribunal decided to exempt applicant from combatant service.