



## Henry Joel Cadbury: A Quaker Luminary

Dec 1, 1883 – Oct 9, 1974



Friends Southwestern Burial Ground  
Upper Darby  
Delaware County, Pennsylvania

Give Unto Caesar: Credits for the contents of this illumination go to Henry J. Cadbury, Wikipedia, Pendle Hill Pamphlet 376, various schools, college and university libraries including Bryn Mawr, Swarthmore, Haverford, Harvard, Pennsylvania State University and a bunch of others I've failed to mention. Some sections are direct quotes from the sources, others are edited or paraphrased. Some comments are the author's.

Delivered Sunday, February 17, 2019 at Patapsco Friends Meeting.

“**A** graduate of Haverford College, [Henry J.] Cadbury was a Quaker throughout his life, as well as an agnostic. Forced out of his teaching position at Haverford for writing an anti-war letter to the Philadelphia Public Ledger, in 1918, he saw the experience as a milestone, leading him to larger service beyond his Orthodox Religious Society of Friends. He was offered a position in the Divinity School at Harvard University, from which he had received his Ph.D, but he first rejected its teacher's oath for reasons of conscience, the Quaker insistence on telling the truth, and as a form of social activism. He later accepted the Hollis Professorship of Divinity (1934–1954). He also was the director of the Andover-Harvard Theological Library (1938–1954), and chairman (1928–1934; 1944–1960) of the American Friends Service Committee, which he had helped found in 1917. He delivered the Nobel lecture on behalf of the AFSC when it, together with the British Friends Service Council, accepted the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947 on behalf of the Religious Society of Friends.” (Wikipedia)

## Partial List Of Works:

- The Style and Literary Method of Luke. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919.
- National Ideals in the Old Testament. New York: Scribner's, 1920.
- The Making of Luke-Acts. New York: MacMillan Co., 1927.
- The Peril of Modernizing Jesus. New York: MacMillan Co., 1937.
- Jesus: What Manner of Man. New York: MacMillan Co., 1947.
- George Fox's Book of Miracles. Cambridge, MA: University Press, 1948.
- The Book of Acts in History. London,: A. and C. Black, 1955.
- The Eclipse of Historical Jesus. Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications, 1964.
- John Woolman in England: A Documentary Supplement. London: Friends Historical Society, 1971.
- Narrative Papers of George Fox. Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1972.

Henry's preferred teaching method was Socratic – a form of cooperative argumentative dialogue between individuals, based on asking and answering questions to stimulate critical thinking and to draw out ideas and underlying presuppositions. (Wikipedia)

"Modest and self-effacing, often in the shadow of Rufus Jones, the well-known Quaker leader who was his more ebullient brother-in-law, Henry Cadbury is a figure whose legacy to twentieth century Quaker scholarship and Quaker social action needs to be revisited in the early years of the twenty-first. A biblical scholar of world renown and for twenty years Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard Divinity School, Henry Cadbury was one of the finest scholars the Religious Society of Friends has produced. A translator of the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament, he published twenty-nine books and well over 100 scholarly articles.

"Henry Joel Cadbury, spent his lifetime practicing the Christian message in every aspect of his life and reaching out to activists more committed to peace, racial justice and social change than to an abstract theology.

"Why must it be belief into action?" he asked; "Why not action into belief?" (php376)

Cadbury saw himself as both a Quaker (through inheritance at birth) and an agnostic.

From a 1936 lecture given to Harvard Divinity School students on “My Personal Religion”:

*"I can describe myself as no ardent theist or atheist."*

*"And I find myself at times in moods that seem to me closely to resemble the moods of religious experience. But I do not induce them, nor quote them, nor treat them as evidential. I am inclined to think other people would do so. I would regard that as a matter of interpretation.*

*"Taking action against war and injustice could lead an individual into belief—just as belief must be translated into action." (HJC)*

“A deeply committed pacifist from the first, he believed that war was totally at variance with Jesus’s whole life and teachings, as well as being madness for society at large.” (php376)

In April of 1917 he and his brother-in-law, Rufus Jones drew together Orthodox and Hicksite Friends, and what would later become Friends United Meeting, to create alternative service for conscientious objectors. The meeting was the birth of the AFSC, of which Henry Cadbury would be involved in for the rest of his life. (per php376)

On promoting activism of Friends in general and especially towards racial inclusion in a 1939 conference:

*"Are our testimonies on peace, simplicity, democracy, racial equality, as valid today as when they developed in answer to a need of their time? If so, are we prepared to pay the price of spreading them?" (HJC)*

Throughout the 1930’s and forties Henry Cadbury repeatedly and constantly pushed the conservative Friends of both Hicksite and Orthodox persuasions toward acceptance and inclusion as Jesus taught, asking if anything less is hypocritical of Christianity. He became an advocate of Quakers promoting African American membership, civil liberties and equality.

“As a teacher at all-female Bryn Mawr, Henry Cadbury became aware how many young women of the day, as well as young men, were attracted more to social work and social action than to the organized religion in which they had grown up. In his view, the impulse to help humanity was

essentially a religious impulse; thus he urged young people not to surrender their concept of religion to those who demanded a strict orthodoxy of belief. The conventionally religious had no right to exclude activists who were motivated by a deep search for meaning and value in life and made uncomfortable by rigid theological creeds.” (php376)

#### From Pennsylvania State University’s Biography:

“Henry Joel Cadbury was born on December 1, 1883, to a faith-driven Quaker family in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His parents were Joel Cadbury Jr., a relative of the chocolate-manufacturing Cadbury family, and Anna Kaighn Lowry. Joel Cadbury Jr. demonstrated his strong Quaker beliefs when he refused to serve when drafted to the Civil War; instead, he paid a \$300 bounty to hire another man to fight in his place, and spent his time helping freed slaves begin their new lives in Pennsylvania. As a result of his parents’ conviction to their Quaker beliefs, Henry Cadbury was enrolled in Quaker school, graduating in 1899 from William Penn Charter School, the oldest Quaker school in the world.

“Cadbury chose to continue his education by enrolling in Haverford College, a Quaker-based school set on the outskirts of Philadelphia.

“After graduation from Haverford, Cadbury decided that he would choose teaching as his profession, and he enrolled in Harvard University to earn his master’s degree. In 1904, he was awarded an MA in Greek from the University.” (PSU)

“Henry Cadbury did a great deal of outreach to young objectors. One of his letters advising a young man on what to do if he were drafted fell into the hands of the Philadelphia Press, which published it, labeling Henry Cadbury a traitor. The Selective Service reported his activities to the U. S. District Court, which called him before a district judge, fortunately one with a more lenient attitude.” (php376)

“During World War I, Cadbury wrote letters to various press sources. On October 12, 1918, Cadbury wrote a letter to the Philadelphia Public on Haverford College stationary decrying the American hatred and ill will toward the Germans. Readers of the newspaper objected to this statement, labeling Cadbury as anti-patriotic and even anti-Christian. Because of the letterhead used, Cadbury’s statement was associated by the public with Haverford College and the alumni of Haverford called for Cadbury’s resignation. Cadbury was placed on a one-year temporary leave of absence.” (PSU)

*“As a Christian and patriotic American, may I raise one cry of protest in your columns against the orgy of hate in which the American press and public indulges on the receipt of peace overtures from the enemy. Whatever the immediate result of the present German request for an armistice, the spirit of implacable hatred and revenge exhibited by many persons in this country indicates that it is our nation which is the greatest obstacle to a clean peace and the least worthy of it.” (HJC)*

After his dismissal from Haverford (being forced to resign) Henry taught at Andover Theological Seminary in Cambridge, closely associated with Harvard Divinity School, as assistant professor of New Testament. During this time he became active in a child feeding program in Germany through AFSC, and in 1920 he went to Germany to see the conditions for himself. He became deeply moved by the appreciation of the Quakers “One Meal A Day” food program which he described in a series of articles.

After his return he resumed teaching at Andover. In 1925 however, Andover began requiring all faculty be ordained ministers and to subscribe to a conservative “Andover Creed”. Henry and the entire faculty resigned. He then accepted an offer to teach at Bryn Mawr College, teaching there from 1926 to 1934.

From 1928 to 1934 and from 1944 to 1960 he chaired the AFSC, and in 1930 he was a board member of the newly organized Pendle Hill Quaker study center in Wallingford where he lectured regularly and wrote for the rest of his life.

“After seven years on the faculty at Bryn Mawr, Henry Cadbury enjoyed a sabbatical at Woodbrooke, the Quaker study center in Birmingham, England, working on George Fox’s papers. He eventually published the Annual Catalog of the Papers of George Fox, a monumental project, and from this work was able to publish George Fox’s Book of Miracles, after reconstructing the never-published manuscript that had been lost over the years.

“Since the Annual Catalog gave the first and last lines of each entry, he was able to match many of the stories to events in Fox’s journal and letters. Scholars regarded this work as a sort of miracle itself.” (php376)

In 1934, Henry found that his mentor, James Ropes had died, and learned that James’ wish was that Henry would fill the vacancy created by his death...that of the Hollis Chair of Divinity at Harvard.

“During his first year at Harvard, Henry Cadbury was invited to give the prestigious Lowell lectures at Boston’s historic King’s Chapel. Once more he spoke of the dangers of trying to understand Jesus in strictly modern terms. Published several years later as *The Perils of Modernizing Jesus*, the work is regarded by some scholars as Henry Cadbury’s most important. He continued to assert that Jesus’s teachings had to be understood in terms of his own time, but that nevertheless aspects of these teachings, as well as of Jesus’s own life, express eternal Truth.” (php376)

*“No passion for humanity, no philanthropic sentiment, no program of social betterment can be more effective in producing perfectly socialized persons than the essentially religious spirit such as we find in Jesus. This religious spirit cannot be put on at will, is not always easy for the modern mind. In fact it must be expressed in different terms in different ages ... When it does exist it is marked by the same power, insight, instinctive virtue and persistent efficiency which marked the career of Jesus.” (HJC)*

Amazingly Henry Joel Cadbury staunchly, energetically and steadfastly championed many social causes which were not popular or even on the radar of the times. He did not “win” all of his arguments, but made a mark for all. Plus his *actions* led to opportunities many can only dream about. Here are a few:

- Defended the AFSC’s refusal to collect taxes from employees who were conscientiously opposing them
- Reaching out to and supporting activists more committed to peace, racial justice and social change
- Translator of the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament
- Published 29 books
- Published over 100 articles
- Awarded six honorary degrees
- Founded and twice chaired the American Friends Service Committee
- Instrumental in the AFSC’s receiving the 1947 Nobel Peace Prize
- Prodded Quaker schools to admit African American students
- Worked hard to persuade the U.S. government to accept refugees from Hitler’s Germany
- Fought anti-Semitism and opened his own home to Jewish refugees
- Defended the civil liberties of those accused of un-American activities
- Wrote background papers for the American Civil Liberties Union

- Appeared in defense of men and women who refused to sign loyalty oaths
- Wrote and published a series of letters to the editor expressing his opposition to all wars
- Helped create alternative service for conscientious objectors to the Selective Service
- Launched a program to feed German children through the AFSC
- Pressed Quaker Meetings to invite and engage African Americans and eliminate segregation and racial discrimination in employment
- Published the Annual Catalog of the Papers of George Fox
- Published the lost manuscript of George Fox's Book of Miracles

And this list likely represents far less than a tenth of Henry's achievements. I simply ran out of what I thought I could cover in a one hour review.

On October 7, 1974, at 90 years old, Henry tripped and fell while taking his wife's breakfast tray downstairs.

Henry Joel Cadbury died from a massive cerebral hemorrhage on October 9, 1974 at Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania.

"A humble, modest, quiet man, Henry Cadbury had no idea of the effect of his life on other people. But it is clear that his influence was recognized by others. As obituaries appeared in all the leading newspapers and magazines and tributes poured into the Friends Journal, some measure of his impact on scholars, on students and on Quakers began to emerge. He never abandoned his search for the truth and his belief that the translation of the gospel message into action—which flourished in a Woolman, a Benezet, a Lucretia Mott—was an expression of the religious impulse, which he recognized as the finest attribute of humankind. His own life reflected that impulse.

"As Quaker historian Kenneth Carroll said of Henry Cadbury:

"To give the message you must be the message." (php376)

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