

# Made for Sharing: George Cadbury, ‘Industrial Betterment’ and Salvation<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Both the business success and the philanthropic activities of Quaker magnate George Cadbury (1839–1922) are well known. However, historians (Quaker and otherwise) have largely neglected to consider the philanthropic activities centred on Bournville in the wider context of the contemporaneous movement for Industrial Betterment: given the similarity of activities, the question is prompted: ‘what, if anything, was distinctly Quaker about George Cadbury’s philanthropic activities?’. Using a contemporary evaluation of international Industrial Betterment, this article examines similarities between the settlements at Bournville and those created by industrialists who were not members of the Religious Society of Friends. Cadbury’s actions are then considered in terms of Victorian philanthropy, the Social Gospel movement and the ethics of a contemporary Christian merchant. In conclusion, the article posits the existence of a motivational distinction, placing Cadbury’s philanthropy within the distinctly Quaker tradition of ‘building the Kingdom’ on earth.

## Keywords

Social Gospel, philanthropy, Quaker, Victorian, business, ethics, salvation, George Cadbury, Samuel Budgett, Industrial Betterment, Bournville Village, Garden City, ‘Protestant ethic’

1 ‘Made for Sharing’ was an advertising slogan used by UK manufacturer Rowntree’s; manager Henry Rowntree bought the chocolate business from the Quaker Tuke family in 1862, and with his brother Joseph created the third of the great Quaker chocolatiers, alongside Fry’s and Cadbury’s.

## Introduction

The rise of the firm of Cadbury's during the nineteenth century was originally attributed to the strength of the Quaker values of the brothers Richard and George that underpinned their approach to business management; this had been established by the latter's employee, A. G. Gardiner, in his posthumous biography of George in 1923.<sup>2</sup> Subsequent evaluations have tended to take George Cadbury at his own evaluation in identifying certain qualities as 'Quaker': 'self-denial, rigid abstinence from all luxury and self-indulgence'.<sup>3</sup> A problem arises in that these values are by no means unique to the Society of Friends. Further, as Bailey and Bryson note in their work on Bournville aesthetics, this approach also lacks 'a historically contextualised approach' to Quakerism.<sup>4</sup> They note that the Society spanned a spectrum of values, from the mystically simplistic aestheticism of Quietism to the Evangelicals, who wielded scriptural authority in pursuit of conversion.<sup>5</sup> Cadbury, they claim, was predominantly influenced by the Evangelicals; as a 'formative leader in the Christian Social Movement, he sought 'a practical reorganisation of society as a testimony to a Christian gospel that was redemptive'.<sup>6</sup>

If this theoretical alignment of soteriological objectives is correct, then any intellectual claim for Cadbury's Quaker uniqueness rests solely on his actions as an industrialist and philanthropist; put in the practical terms that Cadbury himself would have preferred, the question considered in this article is 'are there consequences for Quakerism if Cadbury's Bournville experiment is merely the deployment of contemporary industrial best practice?'

## The Rise of the Trope

A long history lies behind the creation of Cadbury as the archetypal Quaker industrialist. As early as 1910 his work at Bournville attracted the attention of those who considered it an object worthy of emulation: in a review of Garden City schemes, the village was cited as proof that such developments could be commercially viable.<sup>7</sup> Edward Cadbury's 1912 *Experiments in Industrial Organisation* (described as 'exceedingly valuable and instructive')<sup>8</sup> furthered a claim for the firm to lead the

2 Gardiner, A. G., *The Life of George Cadbury*, London: Cassell, 1923. A similar connection was made in the case of Quaker Joseph Fry; see Walvin, J., *The Quakers: money and morals*, London: John Murray, 1997, p. 158.

3 Cadbury, G., *The British Monthly*, May 1901, p. 300.

4 Bailey, A. R. and Bryson, J. R., 'A Quaker Experiment in Town Planning: George Cadbury and the creation of Bournville Model Village', *Quaker Studies* 11/1 (2006), pp. 89–114; p. 91.

5 Baily and Bryson, 'A Quaker Experiment', p. 92.

6 Baily and Bryson, 'A Quaker Experiment', p. 92.

7 Abercrombie, P., 'Modern Town Planning in England: a comparative review of "garden city" schemes in England', *The Town Planning Review* 1/1 (1910), pp. 18–38, 19, 35–37.

8 *Bulletin of Friends' Historical Society of Philadelphia* 5/1 (1913), p. 30.

vanguard of innovative business practices.<sup>9</sup> As a managing director, he publicly championed the values of the firm, not least the importance of the worker as an individual rather than a cog in an optimised machine.<sup>10</sup> The year 1922 saw the first *Bournville Housing handbook*,<sup>11</sup> which was independently considered 'an extremely valuable addition to Housing literature', and went into multiple editions.<sup>12</sup> In the 1920s the results of an academic survey of the industrial development of their region was published as the doctoral thesis of George Allen, who would go on to hold influential professorships in the growing discipline of economics.<sup>13</sup> The renown of Bournville in industrial relations became world-wide: an Italian review of British industry noted the beneficial influence of Quaker industrialists, concluding '*Una certa influenza deve senza dubbio attribuirsi a questo fattore religioso*';<sup>14</sup> while, in America, Cadburys' was cited as an example of success in social industrial relationships.<sup>15</sup> That George Cadbury 'shrewdly anticipated the future' was a view encouraged by the Cadbury's Publication Department, responsible for *Sixty Years of Planning*, in 1942;<sup>16</sup> but their perspective was supported independently by academics: Ashworth in 1951 gave primacy to Cadbury, noting that Bournville had 'a wider conception than that of Saltaire', and that subsequently there had been 'no notable innovation in this field'.<sup>17</sup> A decade later, one chronicler enthused that Cadbury had attracted:

worldwide attention with the first of the 'garden cities,' Bournville. Here, in a well-planned community, every worker owned his own home and garden on liberal payment terms, went to work in clean clothes, and sent his children to endowed public schools.<sup>18</sup>

9 Cadbury, E., *Experiments in Industrial Organisation*, London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1912.

10 Cadbury, E., 'Some Principles of Industrial Organisation: the case for and against scientific management', *The Sociological Review* 7/2 (1914), pp. 99–117; Cadbury, E., 'Reply to CB Thompson', *The Sociological Review* 7 (1914), pp. 266–69.

11 *Bournville Housing—A description of the Housing Schemes of Cadbury Bros. Ltd. and the Bournville Village*, Bournville Village Trust, 1922.

12 Review, *The Town Planning Review* 12/3 (1927), p. 231; signed W. D., reviewing the fifth edition.

13 Published in 1929; Allen, G. C., *The Industrial Development of Birmingham and the Black Country, 1860–1917*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1929.

14 Pagini, C., 'Impressioni su alcuni aspetti dell' industria Britannica', *Giornale degli Economisti e Rivista di Statistica* 4th series 73 (Anno 48)/12 (1933), pp. 898–910; p. 900. Other 'quacqueri' cited include: Fry, Dennison, Filene, Morris & Leeds, of which the last were not British.

15 Schwenning, G. T., 'British Dismissal Gratuities', *Social Forces* 13/3 (1935), pp. 436–52; pp. 445–46.

16 *Sixty Years of Planning: the Bournville experiment*, Bournville: Cadbury Brothers Publication Department, 1942; review, *Geography* 32/1 (1947), p. 47, attributed to K. C. E.

17 Ashworth, W., 'British Industrial Villages in the Nineteenth Century', *The Economic History Review* New Series 3/3 (1951), pp. 378–87; pp. 381, 385.

18 Sylvester Smith, W., 'London Quakers at the Turn of the Century', *Quaker History* 53/2 (1964), pp. 93–108; p. 107.

The same author ventures into the occasionally mired waters of paternalism, which has engaged some modern academics; he claims ‘Cadbury’s use of wealth was always carefully guarded against the taint of “charity” or paternalism, and his life is an enviable example of Quaker ideals put to practical purpose.’<sup>19</sup> Professional social worker Gillian Wagner devoted an entire chapter to the topic, suggesting there is more than one point of view, before concluding that there was more genuine concern for workers than economic self-interest in the philanthropy.<sup>20</sup> Some have tried to detect more subtle, almost Machiavellian motives: Bryson, inspired by his purchase of a residence in the village, wished to tell ‘a little known story [which] involves attempts by George Cadbury to impose a bourgeois conception of the family on the inhabitants of Bournville’.<sup>21</sup> His ‘story’ is based on the price of houses built between 1896 and 1900—an unexplained sample, given that building started in 1879 and continued into the twentieth century. Equally surprising is the notion that Cadbury’s values in respect of the family were ‘little known’; it remains difficult to think of a more micro-managed environment than one in which the founder provided printed advice for each home on how to breathe correctly.<sup>22</sup> Bryson helpfully provides much evidence as to the accepted ‘story’ of Bournville as the innovative ‘parent’ of the garden city movement,<sup>23</sup> and cites numerous modern publications promoting what he terms this ‘street view’.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps not surprisingly, these provide counter-evidence to the ‘bourgeois’ story—not least Cherry, who notes Cadbury’s ‘dismay’ on finding his houses sold ‘at inflated prices, beyond the pocket of the skilled artisan, clerk, or shopkeeper’, and the subsequent policy of building for rent only.<sup>25</sup> Bryson might also have considered the very well-known biography by Gardiner, which includes a table of rentals providing evidence for a substantially low-weighted distribution of property values.<sup>26</sup>

19 Sylvester Smith, ‘British Industrial Villages’, p. 107.

20 Wagner, G., *The Chocolate Conscience*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1987.

21 Bryson, J. R. and Lowe, P. A., ‘Story-telling and History Construction: rereading George Cadbury’s Bournville model village’, *Journal of Historical Geography* 28/1 (2002), pp. 21–41; p. 23.

22 *Bournville Village Suggested Rules of Health* (?1897); ‘Through the nostrils with the mouth closed, especially at night.’

23 Bryson and Lowe, ‘Story-telling’, p. 21.

24 These include: Sarkissian, W. and Heine, W., *Social Mix: the Bournville experience*, Bournville: Bournville Village Trust, 1978; Burnett, J., *A Social History of Housing: 1815–1985*, London: Methuen, 1986; Cherry, G. E., *Cities and Plans: the shaping of urban Britain in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries*, London: Arnold, 1988; Cherry, G. E., ‘Bournville, England, 1895–1995’, *Journal of Urban History* 22 (1996), pp. 493–508; and many more. Bryson and Lowe state: ‘these works provide good accounts of the “accepted history” of Bournville. It is also worth noting that the “street” or general knowledge history of Bournville is usually a version of the “accepted history”’: fn. 24.

25 Cherry, *Cities and Plans*, p. 23; Bryson is not the first to fail to navigate the narrow strait between the complex Scylla of England’s aspirational middle classes and the whirling Charybdis of the ‘petite’ bourgeoisie.

26 Gardiner, *Cadbury*, p. 147.

Outliers aside,<sup>27</sup> the overall trope is perhaps best expressed in Walvin's popular book, where the Quaker (Chocolate) magnates come 'from a culture in which public service and good works were part of the warp and weft of their beliefs',<sup>28</sup> in consequence of which they:

devised paternalistic schemes of employment and then built model villages to house their workers, all well ahead of provision at that time. They championed workers' leisure facilities and self-improvement, and funded social welfare programmes on an unusual scale. The *impetus for all this belonged to a Quaker tradition that reached back to the words of George Fox.*<sup>29</sup>

### Cadbury's Betterment

Fortunately, when attempting to establish what was actually done in context, there exists a detailed contemporary comparison of global leaders in Industrial Betterment: this is James Edward Budgett Meakin's *Model Factories and Villages*, published in 1905. Meakin was a co-founder of the British Institute of Social Service and dedicated proponent of the Social Gospel, having organised the Shaftesbury Lectures in 1890 to propose ways of eradicating city slums and improving the conditions of workers, after which he styled himself a 'lecturer in Industrial Betterment'.<sup>30</sup> A contemporary reviewer noted that 'there is undoubtedly a tendency on the part of many large employers throughout the world to ameliorate, as far as possible, the conditions under which their employees perform their daily work';<sup>31</sup> Meakin researched and described eight aspects of this 'tendency', indicating the broad spectrum of contemporary concerns: Social Relations; Buildings; Workrooms; Work; Meals; Recreation; Education; and Administration. In each section he attempted to illustrate the best practices of leading firms in America, Germany, France and England. Interestingly, many of the firms he cited remain household names well over a century later, such as BASF, Cadbury, Eastman Kodak, Heinz, Krupp, Lever Brothers, McCormick & Co; NCR, Marshall Field, Rowntree, Villeroy and Boch, and Zeiss.<sup>32</sup> Significantly, Meakin concludes that the Bournville factory represented the 'high watermark' of

27 This must include Rowlinson & Hassard's 1993 discursion into 'invented tradition'; see Fincham, A., 'Cadbury's Ethics and the Spirit of Corporate Social Responsibility', in Burton, N. and Turnbull, R. (eds), *Quakers, Business and Corporate Responsibility*, Cham: Springer, 2019, pp. 40–60; p. 49.

28 Walvin, *The Quakers*, p. 177.

29 Walvin, *The Quakers*, p. 177; emphasis added.

30 Budgett Meakin, J. E., *Model Factories and Villages: ideal conditions of labour and housing*, London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1905.

31 Dewsnup, E. R., reviewing Meakin in the *Journal of Political Economy* 14/3 (1906), pp. 185–86.

32 It would worthwhile to research how many of these firms or brands are still in operation: the impression from reading is a surprisingly high proportion.

Industrial Betterment in England.<sup>33</sup> Much North American information is sourced from Professor N. P. Gilman's 'Dividend to Labor' (1900), while the rest is the result of personal research, often using material provided by the companies involved. Bournville's leadership success was clearly in part a result of the setting of both factory and associated village in a 'clean' environment, and Cadburys' excelled in their gardens, architecture, ventilation, cleanliness and dress, provision of drinking water and provision for invalid staff, including facilities, health education, medical staff and even grapes, *gratis*, from the Cadbury hot-house.<sup>34</sup> This latter category shows a remarkable level of advancement for the time, with monthly medicals, sick pay and staff trained in first aid. Early examples of employee benefits included the Works Medical Department (from 1902) with a company doctor, dentist and nurses. Nutritional supplements were provided in cases of employees who were underfed, and two free convalescent homes were run. Cadbury's provision of meals is covered extensively by Meakin as a model of best practice in subsidy, efficiency and hygiene, as well as being unsurpassed for scale, with a 2,000-seat capacity, while the factory kitchen provided meals for retired employees, with up to 100 being served daily. Cadbury's experience with adult schooling provided insight into conditions in the cities, and was reflected in his creation of facilities both at the works and in Bournville village. Meakin notes schools for men, girls and youths, as well as a library and reading room.<sup>35</sup> Religion of a kind prevailed in the promotion of spiritual education, which, as Meakin noted, 'should not imply the inculcation of specific doctrines, but the raising of the thoughts above the daily toil, the struggle for existence, and the cares of life'. This in itself is an insight into the Cadbury mind, for the worship was a blend of silent worship, a bible reading and a hymn or two—less Quaker evangelism than spiritual awareness appears to have been the objective. Cadburys' financial policies were praised, with paid holiday, sick pay, pension funds for men and women, a Women's Savings Trust and Pensioners' Widows' Fund, and an early unemployment scheme—the piece-work calculations even ignored the most rapid workers and based wages on an average output.<sup>36</sup> With respect to industrial housing, in which Cadburys' work at Bournville is described in detail, Meakin notes the commercial aspect of the village, which ensured adequate financial return was built into the plan; Meakin suggests that the Bournville example could 'be followed with advantage not only by the private investor satisfied with a reasonable interest, but by public bodies'.<sup>37</sup>

Such a catalogue of achievements provides the basis for a typical assessment of Cadbury's as the acme of Quaker social action. However, it must be acknowledged that Meakin's research makes observations from, and draws similar conclusions

33 Meakin, *Model Factories*, p. 68; interestingly, Cadbury's provided financial assistance in publication.

34 Meakin, *Model Factories*, pp. 75, 81, 109, 121, 143, 149–52.

35 Meakin, *Model Factories*, pp. 272–74, 293.

36 Meakin, *Model Factories*, p. 312.

37 Meakin, *Model Factories*, pp. 433–43.

about, the initiatives put into practice by the other industrial sites surveyed. NCR, Heinz, Westinghouse and Rowntree are all commended for their use of 'Social Secretaries' to engage as 'the workers' friend'—an early incarnation of what would become the ubiquitous human resources function.<sup>38</sup> Education opportunities were also common: NCR provided a 'Settlement House' for 'reading, rest, or letter-writing, and the Secretary ... [organises] desired classes in English, German, French, rhetoric, art, cooking, carving, poker-work, bent iron, sewing and dancing ...',<sup>39</sup> while a similar selection is evidenced from Wannamaker.<sup>40</sup> Meakin cites France's Harmel Mills, at Val-des-Bois, who operated what might be termed pro-family policies (women's education, reduced but paid hours, all family members working in the same department), resulting in infant mortality 'half that of the whole country'.<sup>41</sup> In term of buildings, the advantages of open country were widely known, and Meakin cites both the relocation of factories and provision of villages by Levers (Port Sunlight), Clarks (Street) and Chivers (Cambridge), as well as many less-known examples, and much larger examples outside England.<sup>42</sup> The originator of industrial resettlement would appear to be Robert Owen's welfare developments at New Lanark in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Contrary to the claim of Baily and Bryson, the 'ideal community movement' cannot be traced to the work of John Bellers, whose 'Proposals for a College of Industry' were offered to the Quakers in 1695.<sup>43</sup> Bellers' 'Proposals' required large agricultural estates (not 'small village communities') on which the inmates (expressly to be educated no more than needed for their toil) would labour to produce goods owned by investors who would provide their subsistence in return.<sup>44</sup> Contemporary Quakers were never minded to implement such a scheme; indeed, Bellers (despite promoting ever higher returns) significantly failed to attract investors for any of his schemes.<sup>45</sup> Owen's attempts were followed by those of Richardson in 1846 (at Bessbrook, Ireland), and Titus Salt in 1849 (Shipley Glen, near Bradford, better known as Saltaire)—both a generation before Bournville.<sup>46</sup> Where Owen had avoided religion, Salt eventually

38 Meakin, *Model Factories*, pp. 44–48.

39 Meakin, *Model Factories*, pp. 51–52.

40 Meakin, *Model Factories*, p. 54.

41 Meakin, *Model Factories*, p. 57.

42 Meakin, *Model Factories*, pp. 67–68.

43 Baily and Bryson, 'A Quaker Experiment', p. 99.

44 Baily and Bryson, 'A Quaker Experiment', p. 99; Bellers, J., *Proposals for Raising a College of Industry*, London, 1695.

45 Owen was passed the pamphlet by a friend following publication of the *New View of Society* in 1813; his 1818 reprint included the 'Proposals' *in extenso*, and modestly reassigned Bellers credit. Owen, R., *New View of Society: extracted from the London daily newspapers of the 30th of July and the 9th and 11th of August, 1817: with reference to a public meeting held at The City of London Tavern, on Thursday, August 14th, 1817, for consideration of a plan to relieve the country from its present distress*, London: R. Watts, 1817, p. 18.

46 Morris, A. E. J., 'History of Urban Form—4: philanthropic housing', *Official Architecture and Planning* 34/8 (1971), pp. 598–600.

added a Congregational Church (1859) and a Wesleyan Chapel (1866), as well as baths and wash houses (1863); factory schools (1867); retirement almshouses and an infirmary (1868); a social club and institute (1869); and Saltaire Park (1871)—he died shortly after completing a Sunday School building (1876).<sup>47</sup> It is likely that the Cadbury Brothers were aware of this example when purchasing land for Bournville in 1878, as would have been the Lever brothers when investing in Port Sunlight a decade later. The negative environmental effects of rural relocation were recognised by Meakin, with praise for Crosfields of Warrington, who (like Cadbury's) had both automated boilers and filtered smokestacks, saving emissions and fuel.<sup>48</sup> Bournville's hot water pipes were equally effective as the cooling system of the Cooperative Baking Society of Glasgow; their glue-pot effluvia extraction fans equalled by those of Badische Anilin-Soda-Fabrik and jam-makers Hartley; the Bournville staff bathing ratio matched or was exceeded by those achieved in Connecticut and Berlin.<sup>49</sup> Religious education, far from being unique, was also exemplified by efforts at works owned by Samuel Budgett, Thomas Adams, Boden, and the Frys, while Crosfield's are noted for providing a works chapel; Meakin remarks that, 'Even in France, where one does not often look for such things', a dedicated vicar conducted daily worship at the Baccarat Glass Works.<sup>50</sup> Financial innovation is equally common, with profit-sharing schemes in many guises: the substantial investment to sustain Lever's Port Sunlight catering facility receives praise for the use of funds from the employee profit-share allocation.<sup>51</sup> Pensions, marriage allowances, redundancy pay, performance pay, company life assurance, even capped directors' salaries (Zeiss paid a maximum of ten times the earnings of workers aged twenty-four after three years' service)—all are exemplified in Meakin's 1905 catalogue of Industrial Betterment 'best practice'. Thus, while whether or not Cadbury was 'first' in any Bournville innovations may be disputed, it is quite clear that he was certainly among equals; the global extent and number of firms surveyed by Meakin indicate that Cadbury's scope of actions was widely practised: successful firms acted on concerns for employee welfare, and even the wider community, and achieved prosperity as a result. Any enquiry seeking a unique Quaker influence must therefore look elsewhere.

### The Evolution of Philanthropy

One possible source of Cadbury's Quaker uniqueness may lie in the nature of philanthropy. The eighteenth century had seen a shift away from historic, individually endowed charities towards a more 'social' philanthropy, where

47 Morris, 'Urban Form', p. 599.

48 Meakin, *Model Factories*, p. 82.

49 Meakin, *Model Factories*, pp. 108, 112, 128–33.

50 Meakin, *Model Factories*, p. 297.

51 Meakin, *Model Factories*, pp. 179–82.



voluntary societies held lavish annual dinners and benevolence was displayed through subscription lists in which wealth competed on a par with aristocratic patronage: when Princess Christian unexpectedly cancelled her engagement to attend the annual meeting of the RSPCA in 1876, the president (a mere earl) remarked to the half-filled and disappointed hall that 'Humanity is a very popular thing ... but Princesses are popular also, and still more attractive'.<sup>52</sup> It has been suggested that this great increase in activity was fuelled by a combination of Evangelicalism and a fear of urban unrest caused by social dislocation arising from the industrial revolution.<sup>53</sup> Certainly, the alleviation of distress could accompany the salvation of souls, but not always: much early philanthropic work was characterised by the concept of the 'deserving poor', who bore their tribulations with patience while attempting to alleviate their circumstances (in contrast with those who exacerbated their condition, most commonly through the 'demon drink'). Such an approach had always characterised the Quakers, where local meetings made regular collections for their poor, who could receive contributions (and even rent and coals) if visits from 'weighty Friends' reported them suitable.<sup>54</sup> However, Quaker concerns had from the first been to address the needs only of those within, or at least connected to, their Society, and refusal to pay poor relief to the Steeplehouse for general parish use was the norm. A shift took place towards the end of the eighteenth century, when social concerns (first against slavery, and later prison reform) attracted the attention of some Quaker communities. By the middle of the nineteenth century it could be suggested that the middle-class ladies who engaged in 'slumming it' (as visiting the poor for the purpose of their improvement was known) found therein an effective remedy for their own boredom, invalidism and temptations.<sup>55</sup> Social welfare thus expanded from meeting house, as well as from church and chapel, in attempts to alleviate both poverty and ignorance through dedicated institutions addressing education, health and (rather more selectively) recreation—all of which became preferred over the traditional Quaker approach of direct financial assistance. Over time, some of these religious centres might evolve into 'unformalised friendly societies, spawning their Dorcas Clubs, thrift associations, Bands of Hope, and discussion groups'.<sup>56</sup> Notwithstanding, the issues associated with poverty persisted, and a growing awareness of the ineffectual nature of philanthropic organisation prompted the formation of the Charity Organisation Society (COS) to encourage a more 'scientific' approach.<sup>57</sup> The

52 Quoted in Harrison, B., 'Philanthropy and the Victorians', *Victorian Studies* 9/4 (1966), pp. 353–74; p. 365.

53 See Owen, D., *English Philanthropy 1660–1960*, Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1964.

54 See records of Peel Monthly Meeting Minutes, MBR11b5/FPR/7, LSF.

55 Greville, V., *Vignettes of Memory*, London, n.d., p. 158.

56 Harrison, 'Philanthropy', p. 356.

57 Owen, *English Philanthropy*, pp. 216–29.

origins of that institution are highly illustrative; Dean Martyn Hunt recalled (some decades later):

the Blackheath Mendicity Society, a device of mine to rid Blackheath of a pest of beggars, and from which the *Charity Organisation Society* took its birth ... [gathered] the charity operators of a neighbourhood board ... attracted the attention of Lord Lichfield, who interested Lord Ebury. Subsequently Lord Grosvenor, afterwards the Duke of Westminster, became very interested, and took the chair at several meetings. It was in the office of the *Society for the Prevention of Pauperism and Crime* (SPPC) ... that Lord Lichfield, Dr. Hawkesly, I think, Mr. Wilkinson, and myself, changed the Society into the Charity Organisation Society, ... which soon attracted to its board all the theorists and faddists in London.<sup>58</sup>

The SPPC had been proposed in 1868 by Unitarian minister and irascible radical Henry Solly as part of his efforts to develop rapprochement between classes.<sup>59</sup> Another Lord—Lyttleton—had already presided at the creation of Solly's Working Men's Club and Institute Union in 1862.<sup>60</sup> The Reverend Solly, an advocate of ever-more 'pepper in the inkstand', displayed an enduring inability to accommodate others of his class, which ensured that he rarely remained long with his creations (he lasted but a few months as Secretary of the COS), yet in other ways was highly representative of his middle-class church in calling vociferously for social reform: together with a strong identity arising from its anti-Trinitarian positioning, 'less denominationally minded Unitarians inspired by the "catholic" ideals of the old Dissent, were seeking new forms of public service.'<sup>61</sup> In this they resembled the less Quietist Quakers. The second half of the nineteenth century was marked by an increasing interest in addressing causes rather than effects, and, while the religious motivation of salvation remained, it has been suggested that 'Toynbee and other social reformers had begun to make their confessions—not to God, but to the working classes.'<sup>62</sup> By 1883, Arnold Toynbee (to be commemorated a year later by the eponymous Hall founded by Samuel Barnett) could publicly state his animosity to charity rather than justice, and tell the working class that his own had 'sinned against you grievously—not knowing always; but still we have sinned, and let us confess it'. Toynbee's requirement was

58 Hurt, M. H., letter dated 21 May 1907, in *Charity Organisation Review* New Series 22/128 (1907), pp. 141–42. He was at that time Dean of Denver, Colorado, having stopped there 'en route to shoot a buffalo' in 1872.

59 Woodroffe, K., 'The Irascible Reverend Henry Solly and His Contribution to Working Men's Clubs, Charity Organization, and "Industrial Villages" in Victorian England', *Social Service Review* 49/1 (1975), pp. 15–32; p. 16; Solly later also set up the short-lived 'Society for the Promotion of Industrial Villages'.

60 Woodroffe, 'Henry Solly', pp. 17, 21–22.

61 Woodroffe, 'Henry Solly', p. 18; see Bolam, C. G., *The English Presbyterians from Elizabethan Puritans to Modern Unitarianism*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1968; esp. chap. 1.

62 Harrison, 'Philanthropy', p. 359.

that, in return, the worker should always remember that they had the obligation upon the receipt of 'material civilisation' to 'grow up toward the heavens'.<sup>63</sup> A relative absence of doctrinal competition from differing branches of the church typified many efforts by the COS, with clergy of various hues working alongside each other: one important exemplar who championed the cause in the name of the 'Social Gospel' was Andrew Mearns (1837–1925), a Congregational minister whose 'Bitter Cry of Outcast London' of 1883 led to the Royal Commission on the housing of the working classes (1884–85).<sup>64</sup> This melding of individual, denominational and eventually state action would ultimately lead to the view (hastened by the First World War) that the philanthropist and their committees should give way to government responsibility for social action and improvement. It is against this background that Baily and Bryson's claim of George Cadbury as a redemptive Social Christian reformer may be evaluated.

### Teaching the Social Gospel

The Social Gospel movement had its origins in this Christian socialism, largely arising from the Anglicans in mid-nineteenth-century England; cooperation would become sufficiently close for nonconformists to come alongside. Such socialism was born uncontaminated by the influence of Karl Marx; indeed, a General Secretary of the Labour Party, Morgan Phillips, could observe in the mid-twentieth century that his party owed more to 'Methodism than Marxism'.<sup>65</sup> Established church co-operation with nonconformism was evident from the 1880s, resulting in such bodies as the *Christian Union for Social Service* (1885) and *The Ministers Union* (1893), which later became *The Christian Socialist League*, and later still *The Christian and Socialist Brotherhood*. While these titles indicate something of the beliefs and objectives of the movement, a further insight is offered in the published papers of a central event entitled 'The Relations of Employer and Employed in the Light of the Social Gospel',<sup>66</sup> held in 1889 under the auspices of the Baptist Union Annual Assembly. The papers given addressed labour remuneration as the central theme, with two businessmen (T. W. Bushill and William Walker) expanding on the Christian duty to share profits in pursuit of what the latter termed the most 'pressing Christian work at the present day ... the sweetening of the relations between masters and workmen'. Walker's foundation was to question the incoherence of a society that expected praise for the philanthropist who gives hundreds to build a church or chapel using money

63 Himmelfarb, G., 'Victorian Philanthropy: the case of Toynbee Hall', *The American Scholar* 59/3 (1990), pp. 373–84; p. 374.

64 Wardley, P., 'Budgett, Samuel (1794–1851)', *ODNB*.

65 Hunter, W., 'Rise and Fall of the Labour Party', *Labour Review* (February 1982).

66 Bushill, T. W., 'The Relations of Employer and Employed in the Light of the Social Gospel: ... papers read at the annual assembly of the Baptist Union, held in London, on Thursday, May 2nd, 1889', LSE Pamphlets.

obtained by paying the lowest wages: the minutes note echoes of approval as he declares that ‘working men don’t call that charity, but something very different’.<sup>67</sup> His motivation for greater equity, it should be noted, was largely economic: he believed that seeking to prevent labour unrest, and the accompanying strikes and lock outs, could avert losses running into tens of millions.<sup>68</sup> Importantly, these papers expressly demonstrate the biblical basis for the ‘Precept of the Social Gospel’: an injunction from the apostle Paul that states ‘Masters, render unto your servants that which is just and equal.’<sup>69</sup> Thus both ethical and economic justifications ran in parallel, and were considered mutually supportive (and only later does economics ultimately gain mastery, in a nuanced argument that sees a motivated workforce increasing productivity by a greater amount than the profit shared).<sup>70</sup> This admixture of self-interest and biblically grounded ethics typifies the basis for social justice in the movement for Industrial Betterment; as such, it would appear to co-exist comfortably with traditional Quaker commercial practice. In this sense, the admixture may perhaps be considered a development from the values of the Owenite Congresses that dominated the cooperative movement until 1835, before they evolved into the Socialist Congresses and were ultimately superseded by the more formalised Co-operative Movement by the 1860s. Yet, throughout these changes, the link between engaged employee engagement and profit can still be seen: a Mr Marshall of Leeds remarked to Robert Owen that ‘his workpeople, if they chose to exercise care and intelligence, and avoid waste, could save him £4000 a year.’<sup>71</sup>

Just over a decade after this conference, in 1902, radical Thomas Rhondda Williams (later chair of the Congregational Union) published his more radical ‘Social Gospel’.<sup>72</sup> The volume was not welcomed universally, with one contemporary review going as far as to claim that, although the preacher was ‘possessed with a righteous wrath against various social wrongs ... his remedy would be fatal’.<sup>73</sup> Other Congregationalists were to add elements of radical, modernist theology: the minister at the City Temple, R. J. Campbell, declared that emphasis on the universal fall of man ‘was not only misleading but unethical’,<sup>74</sup> while contemporary Methodists such as Hugh Price Hughes suggested that individual evangelism was ‘potentially detrimental to promoting the social welfare of the people’.<sup>75</sup>

67 Bushill, ‘Relations’, p. 4.

68 Bushill, ‘Relations’, *passim*; interestingly, he uses figures from the US government.

69 Bushill, ‘Relations’, p. 7 (Col. 4:1).

70 Bushill, ‘Relations’, p. 10.

71 Reported in the *Cooperative News*, 22 September 1888.

72 Williams, T. R., *The Social Gospel* [Sermons], Bradford, 1902.

73 Review, *The Spectator*, 25 January 1902, p. 40.

74 Campbell, R. J., *Christianity and the Social Order*, London, 1907.

75 Pope, R. (ed.), *T&T Clark Companion to Non-conformity*, Bloomsbury: JHY Briggs, 2013, vol. 2, pp. 678–80.

Ten years later, and perhaps reflecting the tensions that would shortly result in the Great War, the September 1912 edition of *The Biblical World* proclaimed that the 'world can never be saved by the salvation of individuals, simply because the greatest of its sins are not the sins of individuals at all'.<sup>76</sup> The piece continued with a call for those within the Christian church to address the faults of an ungodly and inhuman political economy in which mankind has estimated 'with fine scientific precision ... the cost of the products of our industries, but ... stupidly failed, to put down in our expenses the cost in blood, and tears, and virtue, and hope'. The title of this challenging manifesto was 'The Social Gospel', and it may be considered indicative of the distance some thinkers had travelled on the subject of redemption. It seems possible that less conventional thinkers, perhaps those like George Cadbury with a Quaker heritage, could have arrived at such a position rather earlier.

### Quaker versus Christian Commerce

Having considered the industrial competition for Cadbury Brothers, a different perspective can be obtained by considering a similar individual, whose career resembled Cadbury's while not having a Quaker legacy; enter Samuel Budgett, commercial giant, practical philanthropist and man of religion. Though now largely forgotten, Budgett was hugely celebrated during the nineteenth century as one who had moved from apprentice through a partnership in a humble village shop to become the creator of the 'largest business in the West of England, one which turns nearer millions than thousands in the course of a year', as an obituarist noted.<sup>77</sup> Posthumously, he achieved international significance as the subject of the Rev. William Arthur's extraordinarily popular biography *The Successful Merchant* (1852), which portrayed him as a paragon who had combined devoutly held Christian ethics with a natural talent for business. His biographer was aware of the potential conflicts arising from such elements, and took pains to show how Budgett trod a fine and definite line: not one 'who accumulated by the simple power of retention—getting, griping, holding and never giving'; nor an 'amasser of a fortune, a wonder in itself'; nor a 'walker in the high walks of cosmopolitan philanthropy'. Budgett's story was a singular one, at least as it was popularly narrated; his biographer describes the origins of his riches in the bounty of a blacksmith from whom he obtained his first penny after carrying a discarded horseshoe three miles on his walk to school; the same later gave him his second penny for administering a beating to a larger boy

<sup>76</sup> 'The Social Gospel', *The Biblical World* 40/3 (1912), pp. 147–51, now *The Journal of Religion*.

<sup>77</sup> Arthur, W., *The Successful Merchant: sketches of the life of Mr Samuel Budgett, late of Kingswood Hill*, London: Hamilton, Adams, & Co.; J. Mason, 1852; see intro. The information here is drawn largely from this biography.

caught abstracting soil from the smith's premises, and yet a third for returning three weeks later with that second penny unspent. At school he learned to trade, legitimately obtaining two marbles by buying fourteen for a penny and selling six for a ha'penny, from which point he moved into lozenges, after which his fortune seems to have been assured. Yet his biographer assures us that his first major purchase was John Wesley's *Hymns*, which would indicate values that extended beyond the counting house. By the age of fourteen he had amassed thirty pounds (perhaps a year's wages for the average man), which he presented to his parents (who would prove incapable of returning it). The Reverend Arthur declares that 'clearly, he had no love for gold, rather the love of a trade'. The revelation at the heart of his business was rather different: he declared that he realised early on that 'self-interest was the mainspring of human actions: you have only to lay before persons, in a strong light, that which you propose is to their own interest, and you will generally accomplish your purpose.' As a precaution, he always insisted in dealing in cash, on thirty-day terms. Yet there was a 'just and reasonableness' criteria that he applied to trades, which suggests that understanding an equitable exchange was at the heart of his success. In a partnership with his brother (Henry Hill Budgett, a leading member of the local Wesleyan Methodist community and the Kingswood Benevolent Society), they addressed the social and religious needs of their community: Kingswood, 'a notoriously lawless coalmining community',<sup>78</sup> was subsequently provided with both a Wesleyan chapel (paid for by nationally raised subscriptions) and a school, at which Samuel was an enthusiastic Sunday School teacher (salaried, in his early years); and a host of other, non-sectarian charitable acts included communal religious services at the works.

Budgett's interest in the welfare and motivation of employees was evidenced by a significantly shortened working day, as well as supervised training, sickness benefit and an annual fête. Interestingly, when considering what are commonly ascribed as 'Quaker attitudes' towards bankruptcy and compounding with creditors, it was through his personal thrift and private savings that the business survived after his partner Henry's banking enterprise collapsed.<sup>79</sup>

Much work on Quaker commercial success promotes the idea that it arose from adopting business practices that were uniquely ethical. Yet Budgett can serve as an example of a non-Quaker who would have considered themselves equally qualified. And, on the evidence of his life, it would seem that many others felt the same: such was the demand from those wishing to emulate this 'paragon who combined devoutly held Christian ethics with a natural talent for business' that the Reverend Arthur's biography remained in print through forty-two editions over the next twenty-five years.

78 Wardley, P., 'Budgett, Samuel (1794–1851), merchant and philanthropist', *ODNB* (23 September 2004).

79 Wardley, 'Budgett'.

It would be remarkable if such fame did not reach Birmingham and the young George Cadbury. Here, too, was a practical man, for whom a Christian ethic was interwoven with a talent for commercial success, for whom the just and equitable played an essential part and who would might have seen some value in William Arthur's claim that mutuality ensures 'commerce bears the imprint of God's great law of brotherhood'.

### Conclusion—A Question of Motivation

Thus, having found nothing unique to Quakerism in Cadbury's actions, his philanthropic engagement or indeed the ethics that unpinned his business methods, one must finally consider if something unique can be attributed to his faith *itself*, rather than in its manifestations. As a starting point for protestant thinking in connection with commerce and salvation, it is perhaps essential to consider Max Weber and his 'Protestant Ethic'. At its most simple, Weber initially attempted to posit a (causal) connection between Protestant beliefs and the desire to achieve worldly success;<sup>80</sup> however, as David Chalcraft observes, the lamentable chain of misunderstanding around this work might now be characterised as 'the academic "Hundred Years' War"', and one in which the historian of the Quakers would perhaps be advised to remain neutral, since the conflicts arise from interpretative difficulties over 'what Weber really meant'. Once having observed some correlation between Protestantism and commerce, Weber attempted to identify a causal link by arguing that his 'spirit of capitalism' holds within it the notion that the pursuit of profit is, in itself, virtuous. Weber suggests that Protestantism's 'ascetic character' may provide one source for this belief, through an association of the *requirement* to 'do God's work on earth' with the *successful conduct* of earthly work. He uses as a rationale the psychological desire for predestined Calvinists to demonstrate their salvation through an accumulation of worldly blessings, before extending his argument to include other sects, including Pietists, Methodists, Baptists and Quakers, all of whom, Weber claimed, considered material success a necessary worldly indication of salvation. His argument concludes that, over time, the general utility of capitalism removed the need for such an ethical justification. Weber would later revise his work, stressing that his 'motives of the ascetic character' are not to be identified with the spirit of capitalism, but rather 'as one constitutive element amongst others of this "spirit"'. Introducing his 2002 translation of the work, Stephen Kalberg summarised Weber's position thus:

These ascetic Protestants forcefully placed work and material success in the middle of their lives; little else seemed to matter greatly to them, not even family,

80 Weber, M., *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, London: Routledge Classics, 2001[1930]; this is the last version of the PE to have been altered by Weber himself.

friendship, leisure, or hobbies. Any discussion of the spirit of capitalism's origins, Weber insists, must acknowledge this central religious source.<sup>81</sup>

Weber expressly (if carelessly) cites Quakers as an example of such values in action, through an erroneous conflation of Quakers with Anabaptists.<sup>82</sup> The 'Protestant Ethic' was published in the same year as Meakin's study; Bournville, therefore, might be seen by Weber as a first-class example of his theory: the Quaker Cadbury both seeking and exhibiting worldly success in order to demonstrate his salvation. Weber cites the business practices of Benjamin Franklin (not least his writings on 'time is money') to illustrate typical Quaker business practices—unfortunately, neither Franklin nor his family had any Quaker connection or heritage.<sup>83</sup> Historian Frederick Tolles described the failure of both Weber and later Troeltsch to realise this as a 'significant blunder',<sup>84</sup> and further noted that Weber's insights were not based on Quaker sources.<sup>85</sup> However, he chose to neither reject nor accept Weber<sup>86</sup> by avoiding any discussion on the conflicts of motivation arising from 'inner-' worldly rather than 'other-' worldly Asceticism.<sup>87</sup> Yet, even had Franklin been a Quaker, Weber's argument would appear to be less than watertight: Franklin refused to pursue money through patenting either his famous stove or his lightening conductor, both of which he wished to see benefit mankind. In mid-career, he retired from business once his means allowed him to pursue other avenues (including pleasure): in all, a very poor example of Weber's thesis in practice. Neither Franklin nor Cadbury would have found anything particularly Quaker or even Protestant in the Weberian claim that hard work made for success; rather, they could have argued that the ancient principles of the Society of Friends were not in conflict with values that made for successful commerce. But that does not equate to believing that success was considered a reward from God, or that the Society of Friends needed to demonstrate the superiority of their beliefs by upper-quadrant secular ostentation. Perhaps the most significant of Weber's errors is the claim that Quakers believed in a requirement to do worldly good works as a means to eternal salvation. Quakers,

81 Weber, M., *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Kalberg, S., Los Angeles: Roxbury Publishing Company, 2002[1920], 3rd edn, p. xix.

82 See also Troeltsch, E. and Wyon, O., *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1931.

83 Weber appears generally unfamiliar with Franklin, erroneously claiming his father was a 'strict Calvinist', while describing Ben as a 'colourless deist', which suggests a scant knowledge of the life and career of this First American.

84 Tolles, F. B., *Meeting House and Counting House: the Quaker merchants of colonial Philadelphia, 1682–1763*, published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, VA; Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1963[1948], appendix, pp. 225–26.

85 Tolles, *Meeting House*, pp. 165–66.

86 Tolles, *Meeting House*, p. 49.

87 Tolles uses Weber's German: '*Ausserweltliche*' versus '*Innerweltlich*' *Askese*: differing definitions of Asceticism have given rise to additional layers of fog when applied to Weber's web of 'ethical motivations'.



unlike many sectarian millennial groups, never observed a detailed doctrine of eschatology or end-times.<sup>88</sup> Where Weber's Calvinists had concerned themselves with the Quinquarticular Controversy and the doctrine of *sola fide*, a century later the Quakers pursued an absence of creed that was the mark of a practical faith.

And it is this practicality that provides a link between evolving manifestations of Quakerism across the years: it would not be impossible for Fox and his contemporaries to believe that the 'end-times' were upon them—as signified by the executions of the archbishop of Canterbury and the king, by the plague and by the Great Fire of London. In such a position, the early Friends might also believe that they had inherited an obligation to personally build The Kingdom. A century later, Unitarian Isaac Worsley could neatly express their emancipation thus:

The mind that is bound by a religious creed of man's compositing and dares not look out of it, thinks feebly upon other subjects. Bound down by the fetters of Councils and Synods, and dreading the displeasure of the ruling powers who have adopted their fiat, it cannot look but with apprehension of error upon the works both of man and of God.

But when the mind unbends to the dictates of religious truth, and is free to submit to its instructions, it becomes a matter of habit ... to think freely and to act independently on all questions, whether they be religious, political, economical, or other.<sup>89</sup>

It was a very similar freedom that had been claimed by the first Quakers. A Quaker's salvation was never a function of accumulated capital; nor would the preservation of a soul ever depend upon its worldly deployment. Cadbury, ever practical, did not speculate as to how to achieve such an end. As a Quaker, the performing of deeds to acquire personal salvation was unnecessary, while the idea that he could obtain salvation for those whose lives he sought to improve would have struck him as absurd, if not blasphemous. Like all Quakers, Cadbury's belief system was grounded on a personal 'inner light';<sup>90</sup> and the primary goal of the Religious Society of Friends since Fox was ever the cultivation of an individual's awareness of that 'light'.

Thus we are required to reject the claim that Cadbury's practical efforts were made as testimony to 'a Christian gospel that was redemptive'.<sup>91</sup> Rather, it might be expressed that, by creating an environment in which an individual could begin to discover the 'inner light', Cadbury sought to enable the process through which a spiritual journey may begin to be illuminated.

88 For a discussion on the range of early soteriological musings from sectarians who would go on to become Quakers, see Gwyn, D., *The Covenant Crucified: Quakers and the Rise of Capitalism*, Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill, 1995; Gwyn considers that commercial practicality comes to dominate after 1655.

89 Worsley, I., *Observations on the state and changes in the Presbyterian Societies of England*, London: Longman, 1816, pp. 70–71.

90 Given a widespread use of 'inward', 'inner' and 'inwards' light, I here consider these synonymous.

91 Bailly and Bryson, 'A Quaker Experiment', pp. 89–114; see above p. 122, note 4.

This not only clearly separates his motivation from the active redemption of the Social Gospel, but provides a distinction between Cadbury and Industrial Betterment. The movement was founded on a principle of mutuality, in pursuit of increased returns—not unlike the profit-sharing motivations urged in the cause of the Social Gospel. As Meakin put it: ‘Mutual protection of each other’s interests is therefore incumbent on both employed and employer, if the common object of increased returns all round is to be achieved.’<sup>92</sup> In this, he echoes his grandfather Samuel Budgett’s appeal to self-interest, following Wesley’s Christian maxim: ‘First, gain all you can, and, Secondly save all you can, Then give all you can’; the implication of this sermon is that such is the route to salvation.

If this is so, then perhaps there are a number of possible implications for Quakerism, both historical and contemporary. While these must of necessity be explored elsewhere, it is worth identifying the main threads. Quaker history, in line with the discipline in general, is more often than not a history of deeds (or perhaps, in the case of Quietism, the lack of them): it moves through early enthusiasms, the sufferings, the disciplines, emancipation and prison and, ultimately, social reform. The story of the evolution of Friends’ motivations is rarely considered in the telling.

Perhaps more profoundly, the significance of the Quakers’ freedom from soteriological fears, and any concomitant requirement for worldly success, may have been underestimated. Cadbury, encumbered by neither a Weberian *ethik* nor the Wesleyan ‘gain–save–give’ model of salvation, was free to work directly for the furtherance of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth: a distinction with a difference. As his friend and biographer A. G. Gardiner observed, he allowed ‘no gulf between the world of spiritual ideas and the world of fact ... he translated one into the other with a directness that was often disconcerting to the conventional mind.’ The source of Quakerism’s true uniqueness may find its well-spring in this immaterial vision.

#### Author Details

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