

The Invention of Professional Quakerism: Academia, Gender, and Social Class in the Shaping of Quaker Leadership in the Twentieth-Century United States

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Abstract

This article describes the emergence of ‘professional Quakers’, or Friends who emerged as leaders of Quaker institutions based on secular credentials. In the early twentieth century, many American Quaker institutions, especially Quaker colleges, large yearly meetings, and Quaker organisations like the American Friends Service Committee, began hiring full-time staff and assembling boards that resembled the structures of corporations and other secular institutions. Furthermore, the leaders of these bodies became de facto leaders within the Religious Society of Friends, a process accelerated by the comparative decentralisation of the Quaker denominational infrastructure relative to other Protestant groups. Over time, the Quaker leadership apparatus came to reflect the values and prejudices of the larger American society in which it operated, privileging those to whom secular credentials were widely available, namely wealthy male Friends, and excluding those also excluded from most secular institutions of learning, especially women.

Keywords

Professionalization, clergy, degrees, education, college, elitism

In the summer of 1937, the eminent Quaker leader Thomas Kelly suffered a setback that would plunge him into a suicidal depression: Kelly froze in the middle of his PhD oral exams at Harvard. He showed such a startling degree of disorientation and confusion that the examiners failed him and expelled him from the philosophy programme altogether. Curiously, Kelly already had a PhD from Hartford Theological Seminary at the time and had spent years working as a professor at Earlham College, the University of Hawaii and Haverford

College. Yet he had become convinced that no one would take him seriously as a philosopher or thinker without a Harvard degree and a strong publication record. Demoralised by his failure, Kelly was comforted by his friend, Quaker theologian Douglas Steere. Religious Studies scholar Leigh Eric Schmidt observes that Steere was ‘Phi Beta Kappa, a Harvard Ph.D., and a Rhodes Scholar, so it is hard to know how Kelly could have taken too much heart in his presence at this moment of crisis’.¹

In this article, we suggest that Kelly’s crisis was indicative not only of his personal angst but of a more significant shift within the leadership of American Quakerism, which began to prize academic and professional credentials as the key markers of status and promise that lifted many men, and considerably fewer women, to positions of denominational authority. Kelly’s grief might be more understandable for contemporary readers when we realise that his failure to complete his exams was a religious failure as much as a professional one; he had failed to attain an essential credential required to ascend to the upper echelon of the educated Quakers who had begun to dominate leadership posts.

We argue that the process of creating a new class of ‘professional Quakers’, who became Quaker leaders by virtue of secular credentials, radically reshaped the denomination, both theologically and socially. In the nineteenth century, ‘weighty Friends’ tended to be associated with certain religious markers of recognition; they were recorded ministers, clerks, or sat on important Yearly Meeting committees. The availability of funds and spare time to engage in extensive uncompensated religious activities meant that the Quaker leadership structure was never entirely divorced from class, yet job titles and professional experience did not inherently translate to an aptitude for denominational leadership. But in the twentieth century many of the Religious Society of Friends’ most essential and public-facing institutions maintained full-time paid staff, including the American Friends Service Committee, large yearly meetings, and Quaker colleges. The leaders of these institutions were selected on secular meritocratic grounds, especially academic achievements, and this class of religious professional gradually replaced the old guard credentialed according to more strictly Quaker criteria, such that the Quaker leadership apparatus came to reflect values and prejudices similar to those of the larger American society in which it operated.

We do not claim to be the first people to notice the importance of education as a value to early twentieth-century Quakers. Leigh Eric Schmidt wrote about Kelly’s tribulation, while biographies of Henry Cadbury and Rufus Jones note their academic success. T. Vail Palmer’s series on Quaker biblical interpretation includes

1 Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Restless Souls: the making of American spirituality*, 2nd edn, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005, p. 244. Guy Aiken makes a convincing case that these events should not be seen as the central lens to interpret Kelly’s thought. Nevertheless, he agrees the academic failure did lead Kelly to ‘suicidal despair’. See Guy Aiken, *A Testament of Devotion and Thomas Kelly, Augustinian Quaker*, Boston, MA: Brill, 2021, pp. 6–8, 25.

ample attention to the CVs of Quaker biblical scholars.² Yet these discussions have largely overlooked the implications of these shifts for the denominational polity.

During the early twentieth century, mainline Protestant groups in the USA pushed for a more educated clergy and developed sophisticated and extensive bureaucratic administrations to this end, often headquartered in urban areas.³ Studies by Conrad Cherry and E. Brooks Holifield shows how this professionalisation process influenced the institutional structures of the Protestant mainline. Cherry, writing about elite seminaries and university-based divinity schools in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, describes how leaders like William Rainey Harper at the University of Chicago sought to create institutions that would combine academically rigorous graduate study with professional ministerial training. The hope was that ministers who graduated from these institutions would be as comfortable with Christian theology as with secular developments in the social and natural sciences and be able to provide pastoral care to the highly educated.⁴ Holifield suggests that although Protestants by the late nineteenth century increasingly rejected the idea that a minister's primary credential was a theological education, they nevertheless wanted clergy comfortable with various tasks that would grow to include pastoral care, psychological counselling, preaching, sociological research and social work. The findings of psychologist Mark A. Mays and theologian William Adams Brown in a study of ministerial education suggested that as late as 1926 only a quarter of clergy had college and graduate education, a statistic that generated significant concern among Protestant leaders who wanted to make education more uniform.⁵ Higher education was becoming the defining mark of competent clergy.

Research done by Paul Perl and Patricia M. Y. Chang in the late 1990s indicated that theologically liberal groups were more inclined to value education in the selection of clergy than were theologically moderate or evangelical communities.⁶ Their work also revealed that laypeople were no less likely than clergy to use

2 T. Vail Palmer, *A Long Road: how Quakers made sense of God and the Bible*, Newberg, OR: Barclay Press, 2017, p. 178. Palmer observes that 'a surprising number of Friends—especially considering the tiny percentage of Christians who are Friends—have become solid and influential Bible scholars....'

3 For more information on these shifts in mainline and ecumenical circles see Jill K. Gill, *Embattled Ecumenism: The National Council of Churches, the Vietnam War, and the trials of the Protestant Left*, DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2011; Elisha J. Coffman, *The Christian Century and the Rise of the Protestant Mainline*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

4 Conrad Cherry, *Hurrying Towards Zion: universities, divinity schools, and American Protestantism*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995, particularly p. 295. See also: Glenn T. Miller, *Piety and Profession: American Protestant theological education, 1870–1970*, Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007.

5 E. Brooks Holifield, *God's Ambassadors: a history of the Christian clergy in America*, Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007, pp. 172–73, 216–31.

6 Paul Perl and Patricia M. Y. Chang, 'Credentialism Across Creeds: clergy education

degree attainment to choose the heads of their congregations, placing, if anything, even more weight on the prestige of the candidates' alma maters than did clergy.⁷ A significant minority of American Quakers embraced liberal theologies and identified the lack of separation between the laity and the clergy as integral to their understanding of Quakerism. It is perhaps unsurprising that these liberal Quakers ultimately embraced 'credentialism' as a critical way to determine their leadership, just like the Protestants studied by Perl and Chang. We offer a selection of case studies of distinguished Friends below to demonstrate this broad claim.

Rufus Jones

The early twentieth-century Friend Rufus Jones provides one compelling example of the Quaker turn toward credentialism. Jones published 57 books throughout his career, two of which sold approximately 15,000 copies apiece. The high sales were an impressive indicator of his commercial and critical success.⁸ Jones remains one of the most studied and influential Quakers of the early twentieth century; Michael Birkel calls Jones the most important Friend since George Fox.⁹

In Rufus Jones' first book, a hagiography of his missionary aunt and uncle, Jones suggests that long days of solitary manual labor are more spiritually beneficial than are educational degrees and intellectual study. In extolling his uncle as the paragon of a godly man, Jones seemed to denigrate the value of education for spiritual leadership:

[Having] missed the broad culture of the schools and universities, he cannot gain the intellectual skill which long study gives, but he has had a training which lays a foundation for the keenest judgment and for prompt decision in complicated circumstances, and his soul in solitude has taken in truths of God which often escape men lost in the tumultuous world of business and pleasure.¹⁰

Jones praises Sybil in similar terms by contrasting her experiential spirituality with a lack of formal education. 'As a minister she was especially gifted in exhortation and prayer, but she knew the Bible, and she knew experimentally the meaning of its promises and commandments.'¹¹ Rather than their formal education, Jones

and stratification in Protestant denominations', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 39(2) (2000), pp. 171–88.

7 Perl and Chang, p. 185.

8 Rufus M. Jones to Henry J. Cadbury, 27 February 1945, Rufus M. Jones Papers, Box 59, Quaker Collection, Haverford College. This information also appears in Isaac Barnes May, *God-Optional Religion in Twentieth-Century America: Quakers, Unitarians, Reconstructionist Jews, and the crisis over theism*, New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming, ch. 3.

9 Michael Birkel. 'Leadings and Discernment', in Stephen W. Angell and Pink Dandelion (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 253.

10 Rufus M. Jones, *Eli and Sybil Jones: their life and work*, United States: Porter & Coates, 1889, p. 9. Brackets ours.

11 Jones, *Eli and Sybil Jones*, p. 274.

stresses Eli and Sybil's multigenerational Quaker pedigree and their ability to interpret divine leadings and put them into practice.

Jones wrote *Eli and Sybil Jones* just after receiving his first MA, from Haverford, and before his second, from Harvard. Given the description of his aunt and uncle above, one might suppose that Jones would downplay his educational credentials in his writings, allowing the texts to speak for themselves or for the Spirit to move the reader. But Jones' next volume, *Practical Christianity*, included an endorsement from the *British Friend*: 'The author bears a unique equipment for the task, having studied Philosophy at Harvard under Royce and Palmer, and acquired the art of presenting it to untrained thinkers in his capacity of Professor of Philosophy at Haverford College.'¹² In this blurb, Jones' time at Harvard guarantees his theological and psychological expertise, not his Quaker pedigree or ability to interpret divine leadings. Where *Eli and Sybil Jones* was authored merely by Rufus M. Jones, *Practical Christianity* is written by 'Rufus M. Jones, Litt. D. Professor of Philosophy in Haverford College.'¹³ The subsequent edition added further degrees to the title page, making the author 'Rufus M. Jones, A.M., Litt. D.'¹⁴

Lest anyone suppose that this was a decision made at the publisher's discretion, Jones' writings reflected a similar shift. Jones says that the three major events of one's life are being born to the right parents, choosing a suitable partner for marriage, and choosing a college.¹⁵ For Jones, the most prestigious college was undoubtedly Cambridge, Massachusetts' own Harvard, which he endows with a legitimating authority akin to that which a Catholic might ascribe to Rome. Indeed, one origin of this article was a running joke between the two authors that one might have imagined Jones spent a decade at Harvard from his description of his time in Cambridge instead of the single year that he spent pursuing a second master's. In Jones' writings, Josiah Royce is always 'Josiah Royce of Harvard', and both Royce and William James are described as close personal friends, though James was actually on leave during Jones' entire time as a student. Similarly, Harvard is Jones' guarantor of academic excellence and personal integrity. Jones says of a former president of Haverford, Thomas Chase: 'His work at Harvard, his travels in Europe, and the fruits of his scholarship gave him much prestige ... He was given, as he richly deserved, an honorary degree of LL.D. by Harvard, the first of a long list of such degrees which Harvard University has conferred upon members of the Haverford faculty.'¹⁶ Indeed, Jones legitimates Haverford through its tenuous connections to Harvard

12 Rufus M. Jones, *Practical Christianity: essays on the practice of religion*, Philadelphia, PA: Winston, 1899, back cover.

13 Jones, *Practical Christianity*, title page.

14 Rufus M. Jones, *Practical Christianity: essays on the practice of religion*. New and Enlarged Edition, Philadelphia, PA: Winston, 1905, title page.

15 Rufus M. Jones. *The Trail of Life in College*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929, p. 21.

16 Rufus M. Jones. *The Trail of Life in College*, p. 55.

as much as through its own institutional merits or its distinctly Quaker values. Harvard appears 45 times in Jones' history of Haverford, a history that includes Jones' assertion that Haverford ascended to Harvard's academic tier under the leadership of president Isaac Sharpless.¹⁷ It is perhaps unsurprising that when Jones lectured at Harvard, his degrees were highlighted, and he was credited in the programme as 'the Rev. Rufus Matthew Jones, A.M., LL. D., D.D., Litt. D., Professor of Philosophy, Haverford College'. Harvard professor Francis Greenwood Peabody joked with Jones in a letter about how the Quaker seemed to attract honorary degrees, commenting, 'I am only surprised that they did not create you archbishop or archimandrite.'¹⁸

What caused Jones to embrace the credentialing that he formerly decried? Jones believed that an uneducated religious faith had been an asset to a prior generation but was no longer viable in a more advanced era. In a memoir of his childhood in Maine, *Finding the Trail of Life*, Jones praised the devout Quakerism of his grandmother and Aunt Peace. His grandmother, who had been born during the American revolution, Jones wrote, spoke with God with intimacy and familiarity as if the deity were another person.¹⁹ He mentioned her faith alongside her pioneer characteristics: she had grown up in a time where she had 'seen real forest Indians and had wild bears of the woods for neighbors.'²⁰ Jones describes the spirited Quakerism of this quaint past as a 'beautiful faith, and it produced a rare type of personal sainthood'. Such faith was no longer an option: '[t]he movements of the modern world have forced it to die out or undergo transformation.'²¹ Simple, pious faith was charming in one's grandmother, but a modern Quaker man needed to acquire learning.

Such learning gradually became indispensable to Jones' theological programme that would allow modern intellectuals to access to the same glimpses of God that Jones' grandmother had formerly found in the woods. As Jones says of his college years at Haverford: 'What was being settled in these important college years was a *vital* way of thinking of God, a way of thinking of Him that would not be undermined or exploded by new discoveries of science in the march of time.'²² Indeed, demonstrating the continued relevance of religious life to an increasingly scientific age was the heart of Jones' project. But this defence required expertise beyond those religious truths that Jones' grandmother or his Aunt Sybil could

17 Rufus M. Jones, *Haverford College: A History and an Interpretation*, New York: Macmillan, 1933.

18 Francis Greenwood Peabody to Rufus M. Jones, 7 April 1930. Rufus M. Jones Papers, Box 29, Quaker Collection, Haverford College. This information also appears in Isaac Barnes May, *God-Optional Religion in Twentieth-Century America*, ch. 3.

19 Rufus M. Jones, *Finding the Trail of Life*, New York: Macmillan Company, 1926, pp. 26–28.

20 Jones, *Finding the Trail of Life*, p. 27.

21 Jones, *Finding the Trail of Life*, p. 13.

22 Jones, *The Trail of Life in College*, p. 121.

intuit, namely knowledge of science, history and theology. As Jones writes: 'history is charged with significance. It is a form of revelation. It demonstrates laws and principles of life. It thunders moral conclusions. It proclaims and exhibits days of judgment. History is homiletical, and homiletics does well, too, to be historical.'²³

Similarly, Jones views the functions of universities as not merely to impart specialised knowledge but to form a whole person. He writes of the era when Pliny Earle Chase was at Haverford and William James was at Harvard: 'nearly every institution of real importance in those earlier days had its master in the midwifery of the soul ... for, after all, it is the teacher who discovers the hidden self in us and who sets it free.'²⁴ Universities then are places of moral formation as much as intellectual learning. Still, it is important to observe that Jones does not set off Haverford as morally or spiritually superior and Harvard as academically superior, but rather suggests that the twin pursuits are inextricably linked at both institutions. Jones' historical and academic credentials were also homiletical and theological credentials, as were his colleagues'. In *A Preface to Christian Faith in a New Age*, Jones introduces a 'Council of Advisers', 13 people he conscripted to help him advise the Laymen Foreign Missions Inquiry, a committee convened by John Rockefeller to demonstrate the relevance of Christianity to modern concerns. Every member Jones chose for the council was a PhD, college dean, college president or reverend, and, not coincidentally, male.²⁵ Any woman under consideration for such a position would likely have lacked access to the secular credentials required for participation. The constituent members do not simply happen to all be university presidents, PhDs, professors and reverends; rather, these nominals constitute their theological and professional qualifications.

Jones was both a cause and symptom of the gradual Quaker embrace of secular credentialing to fill a lacuna created by the absence of a hireling ministry. Jones' degrees, university affiliations and disciplinary expertise in philosophy, history and psychology not only legitimated Jones among secular businessmen like Rockefeller, but for Friends as well. Although there had always been a correlation among weighty Friends and economic success, the zeitgeist of the early twentieth century required academics with the expertise to demonstrate the relevance of religion to a Quaker community that had gradually lowered the hedge separating the Religious Society of Friends from the outside world, rendering the Quakers susceptible to the same social limitations found in broader society. Jones represented the vanguard of a new Quaker leadership that used intellectual skill as evidence of divine receptivity instead of its foil.

23 Jones, *The Trail of Life in College*, p. 80.

24 Jones, *The Trail of Life in College*, p. 12.

25 Rufus M. Jones, *A Preface to Christian Faith in a New Age*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1932, p. x.

Henry Cadbury

Henry J. Cadbury succeeded where Kelly and Jones had failed. Not only did Cadbury earn his PhD from Harvard in 1914, but he would go on to occupy one of the most prestigious professorships in the country as the Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard Divinity School from 1934 until 1954. If Jones was Quakerism's most important populariser in the early twentieth century, Cadbury was its most renowned specialist. Cadbury's research underscored the hyphen in Luke-Acts, and his conviction that Jesus should be studied primarily as a first-century Jew has aged well in our postmodern age. Among other honours, Cadbury served as president of the Society of Biblical Literature, received six honorary degrees, and was the youngest member of the translation team that produced the Revised Standard Translation of the Bible. Cadbury was known in the wider political world for his activism as much as his scholarship, especially after his acceptance of the 1947 Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of the American Friends Service Committee, and went on to meet with four US presidents.²⁶

It might seem intuitive in retrospect that such a respected scholar would emerge as one of the Religious Society of Friends' foremost leaders, but we wish to argue that Cadbury was part of a generation that normalised this hitherto rare trajectory. Indeed, no one was more aware of the novelty of a Quaker becoming a Harvard academic, in biblical scholarship no less, than Cadbury himself. As Cadbury argued, there was never a need for the Friends to attend universities to learn biblical languages or theology, as the Friends held that God's will could be divined without recourse to original manuscripts or learned treatises. Cadbury reminds readers that the early Friends called theological schools 'a cage of unclean birds' in reference to Revelation 18:2, and that Fox preached that the biblical languages of Greek, Latin and Hebrew were 'associated with the unsavory figure of Pilate, who used them in the inscription on the cross'.²⁷ Cadbury further cites Naylor's opposition to 'the requirement for professional ministers of such a pitch of learning and so many years at Oxford or Cambridge and there to study so long in books and old authors', as such studies will not yield the spiritual insights ploughman and fisherman already know experientially, echoing Jones' description of his aunt and uncle.²⁸ As a result, even though many Friends of the first generation received formal theological education, Friends had mostly ignored biblical scholarship in America, the odd

26 Margaret Hope Bacon, *Let This Life Speak: the legacy of Henry Joel Cadbury*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987, p. xii.

27 Henry Joel Cadbury, 'A Quaker Approach to the Bible', Ward Lecture, Guilford College, 1953, <https://universalistfriends.org/cadbury-1.html>. The 'cage of unclean birds' references the King James version of Revelation 18:2: 'And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.'

28 Henry Joel Cadbury, 'A Quaker Approach to the Bible'.

Charles Thomson (1729–1824) or Thomas Chase (1827–92) the exceptions that proved the rule.²⁹

Given this lack of theological necessity for Friends to obtain formal learning, Cadbury was inspired to take up the question ‘Who was the first Friend to go to college?’ as the subject of an article for the *Friends Intelligencer*.³⁰ Cadbury reasoned:

The English universities did not admit nonconformists until the nineteenth century, while the Quakers on their part abhorred every college as a ‘cage of unclean birds’ that was engaged in training hireling ministers. The law with its oaths, as well as the ministry, was a profession closed to Friends, and in England medicine was not usually acquired in universities.³¹

Cadbury proceeds to observe that attending a university represented a lapse in one’s Quakerism and a lack of spiritual commitment. Cadbury quotes William Caton saying of one Friend in 1665: ‘As concerning John Coughen he is gone againe to the filthy ffountains of the universatie to drink yet deeper of the foul streams thereof, that hee may become a doctor.’ George Hussey, who enrolled at Harvard in 1711 and Cadbury suggests was the first Friend to attend Harvard, is described similarly by his father in an anecdote circulating in a contemporaneous almanac: ‘Somebody asked Mr. Hussey the quaker of Nantucket why he sent his Son to college seeing that they were such Enemies to humane Learning, he said he did not perceive that his Son was ever like to’ve the Spirit and he need’ve something else.’ Verifying this assessment, George was immediately expelled from Harvard for ‘dressing himself in Women’s apparel and walking in the street of the Town at Noonday’, and he would one day be disowned from the Religious Society of Friends as well, albeit some 60 years later.³²

By the time Cadbury was coming of age at the turn of the century, cosmopolitan Friends had come to see the world as something to be negotiated rather than shunned, to see reform rather than renunciation as the cure to broader society’s ills. Prominent families like the Cadburys with unimpeachable Quaker pedigrees that dated back to the seventeenth century saw no conflict between their Quakerism and business ventures, as evidenced by the Philadelphia Quaker business aristocracy and the English line of Henry’s own Cadburys, founders of the English confectionery. Such Friends began to make concessions to formal education, accepting even a classical curriculum so long as it was coupled with Quaker process and moral standards. If Friends did not wish to drink of the ‘filthy ffountains’ and ‘foul streams’ of secular universities, they could at least

29 Henry Joel Cadbury. ‘The New New Testament and the Old-Fashioned Friend’, *Friendly Heritage: Letters from the Quaker Past*, Norwalk, CT: Silvermine Publishers, 1972, p. 100.

30 Henry Joel Cadbury. ‘Friends Start to College’, *Friendly Heritage: Letters from the Quaker Past*, Norwalk, CT: Silvermine Publishers, 1972, pp. 47–49.

31 Cadbury. ‘Friends Start to College’, p. 48.

32 Cadbury. ‘Friends Start to College’, p. 48.

dig their own wells. And so, in the nineteenth century, Friends established their own boarding schools behind the hedge separating Quakerism from the world, three of which would later become the Quaker colleges of Haverford, Earlham and Guilford. As educational credentials and networking opportunities became increasingly valuable to nineteenth-century Friends, a sort of shadow hierarchy emerged among Quaker institutions, one that paralleled rather than competed with secular Ivy Leagues.

Secondary education was an expectation in the Cadbury family. Henry Cadbury's sisters were sent to Friends Select, while Henry and his brothers attended Penn Charter, which sat next door to the Twelfth Street Meeting House in Philadelphia. As Cadbury's biographer Margaret Hope Bacon observes: 'Both schools traced their origins to the earliest days of the settlement of Philadelphia and the charter of William Penn.'³³ Cadbury would follow a path already trod by previous generations of middle-class Friends in choosing to attend Haverford for college. In these higher education choices, the Cadburys, like other middle-class Quaker families, sought to balance the benefits of a classical education with the specifically Quaker moral formation that they still did not trust non-Quaker institutions to instill.

At Haverford, Cadbury would encounter Rufus Jones, first as a teacher and later as a brother-in-law and colleague. Although we have not found documentary evidence to this effect, it seems likely that Cadbury's encounter with Jones was at least one factor in his decision to attend Harvard for graduate studies. Cadbury's relatives had already obtained graduate degrees from local schools like Haverford, the University of Pennsylvania and Bryn Mawr. This risk paid considerable dividends. Unlike William Calton in 1665 and George Hussey in 1711, Cadbury's decision to attend a non-Quaker institution was not considered a sign of his moral depravity but rather of his academic excellence. These academic credentials, in turn, were later used as evidence of his character.

Indeed, Cadbury's status as a Quaker leader was as much a byproduct of his scholarly excellence as any obvious theological qualities. Unlike Jones, Cadbury did not understand the historical study of the Bible or history generally to confer spiritual insights, nor did he view biblical scholarship as a necessarily apologetic vocation. In his 1936 address to the Society of Biblical Literature, Cadbury observes that liberal religions no longer regard the Bible as the sole revelation from God, nor do they believe ministers must continue to learn Greek and Hebrew, and, though he acknowledges that piety remains one reason scholars choose to engage in biblical studies, he does not treat this as a good in itself except in so far as it leads to ethical behaviour.³⁴ Indeed, ethical behaviour was Cadbury's main metric of religious veracity, including for Quakerism, and he repeatedly argued

33 Margaret Hope Bacon, *Let This Life Speak*, p. 6.

34 Henry Joel Cadbury. 'Motives of Biblical Scholarship', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 56(1) (1937), pp. 1–16.

for the importance of using ethics as the measure of one's Quakerism, rather than doctrinal understanding or mystical insight. If anything, Cadbury treated the Quaker devaluation of the Bible as one of the tradition's distinctives, and argued that Jesus must be studied in his historical context rather than as the progenitor of Christianity or liberal religion, a position aptly captured in the title of his 1937 monograph *The Peril of Modernizing Jesus*.³⁵ Studying Jesus in all his historical particularity might be useful in guiding one's own ethical formation, but for Cadbury this was not in itself a guarantor of theological insight. Cadbury was one of the leading biblical scholars of his day, but he insisted that he be renowned as a scholar, not a theologian.

Similarly, Cadbury's academic prowess seems to have been as or more important than his ethical leadership in his informal credentialing as a Quaker leader. Indeed, Cadbury's understanding of social justice inspired antipathy and castigation as often as admiration, even among American Quakers. In his own day, Cadbury's fame for his work on behalf of the AFSC and the peace movements during the world wars was rivaled by his notoriety for his strict interpretation of the peace movement. For instance, when Cadbury was teaching at Haverford, he published an op-ed in 1918 arguing in strident tone and diction that the Americans were no less responsible for the First World War than the Germans.³⁶ After an outcry from the Haverford alumni, Cadbury resigned, inadvertently setting his return to Harvard in motion, this time as an instructor. This was not a case in which the Quaker alumni supported Cadbury while the non-Quakers balked at his anti-militarism; the response was almost uniformly condemnatory. Even those Friends on the Haverford board who wished to reject Cadbury's offer to resign were more concerned with academic freedom than supporting his interpretation of the peace testimony, which attracted few sympathisers.

The controversy did not discourage Cadbury from speaking up when he felt morally compelled. He notoriously told the Central Conference of American Rabbis in 1934: 'By hating Hitler and trying to fight back, Jews are only increasing the severity of his policies against them.' Cadbury prescribed: 'If Jews throughout the world try to instill into the minds of Hitler and his supporters recognition of the ideals for which the race stands, and if Jews appeal to the German sense of

35 Cadbury presents this argument on a number of occasions, but for a concise example see Cadbury, *A Quaker Approach to the Bible*. See also Henry Joel Cadbury, *The Peril of Modernizing Jesus*, New York: Macmillan, 1937.

36 James Krippner and David Harrington Watt call this the 'orgy of hate letter' after its opening line: 'Sir—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.' The letter's cry of protest is shrill indeed. Cadbury writes in a representative passage, 'Never in the period of his greatest arrogance and success did the German Kaiser and Junkers utter more heathen and bloodthirsty sentiments than appear throughout our newspapers today.' For an analysis of the letter and its resultant controversy, see James Krippner and David Harrington Watt, 'Henry Cadbury, the Peace Testimony, and the First World War', *Quaker Religious Thought* 133(1) (2019), pp. 5–13.

justice and the German national conscience, I am sure the problem will be solved more effectively and earlier than otherwise.³⁷ Even in deeply anti-Semitic 1930s America, the take warranted an article in the *New York Times*, and the rabbis to whom Cadbury had addressed his comments condemned his naïveté. The point of these examples is not to defend or eviscerate Cadbury for arguments made over a century ago, but merely to observe that even more than for Jones, Cadbury's position as a Quaker leader was tied directly to his academic prominence.

Cadbury was at the vanguard of a new understanding of education in the credentialing of Quaker leaders. A generation prior, Rufus Jones followed the trajectory expected of an intellectual Quaker of his time, first as a student at Quaker secondary schools and colleges where one received a specifically Quaker moral education, and then as an instructor at Haverford, the premiere Quaker college of its day. But Jones helped chart a new path, one followed by Cadbury, such that secular education too could be marshalled in service of theological ends. Enrolling at Harvard rather than Haverford came to signify academic excellence rather than moral depravity or capitulation, and the missions and credentials of these and similar schools became increasingly interchangeable. As Cadbury noted in 1959:

No more than the roster for this year is it my intention to record all the honorary degrees to Friends in the past, men like Rufus M. Jones and Herbert Hoover having collected them by the dozen; the latter, at last count, had eight-one. The custom seems to be accepted as entirely Quaker. It can even be done in plain language, as by one Friend to another. I had the pleasure a few years ago of hearing John Nason say at Swarthmore College Commencement to Jane P. Rushmore, 'I confer upon *thee* ... the degree of Doctor of Letters.'³⁸

More than a title was conferred with the bestowal of honorary degrees. The Quaker intellectual class had knighted the recipient with a credential that would be honoured by other Quaker institutions, attesting to the formation of an informal Quaker leadership.³⁹

Other Quaker Leaders

Quaker leadership would increasingly follow the Jones mould in their understanding of graduate training as a legitimate form of preparation for a religious vocation. Elbert Russell, for example, graduated from Quaker-run Earlham College and taught for a few years before heading to the University of Chicago for graduate

37 'Urges Good Will by Jews for Nazis: Prof. Cadbury of Society of Friends Says It Will Gain More than Will Hate', *New York Times*, 15 June 1934, p. 15.

38 Henry Joel Cadbury, 'Honorary Degrees', *Friendly Heritage: Letters from the Quaker Past*, Norwalk, CT: Silvermine Publishers, 1972, pp. 243–44 at 244. Emphasis in original.

39 Cadbury himself calls the honorary degree the closest American equivalent to the British nobility. See: Cadbury, 'Honorary Degrees', p. 243.

school in 1903. He later did additional graduate work at Johns Hopkins and finally earned a PhD at the University of Chicago 16 years after he started. Russell, who would rise to become dean of Duke Divinity School, worked frequently with the AFSC, attended the 1920 All Friends Conference, and served as a Quaker delegate in ecumenical gatherings. A posthumous tribute to him chronicled his three honorary doctorates, Doctor of Literature degrees from Boston University and Haverford, and a Doctor of Divinity degree from Earlham.⁴⁰

Walter C. Woodward is a particularly interesting example of the lengths Friends went to get credentialed. After attending Pacific College, a newly created Friends institution in Oregon, Woodward was not satisfied because the degrees at Pacific lacked accreditation, so he attended Earlham College in his 20s.⁴¹ After a brief time at Earlham, Woodward went to the University of California at Berkeley and in 1910 earned a PhD in history. Woodward would have vast influence as editor of *The American Friend* and executive secretary of the Five Year Meeting, the largest denominational authority in American Quakerism.⁴² Here, Woodward's expertise was not even in religion. But the mere fact that he had a PhD was enough to allow him to quickly reach professional success within Quaker circles.

A generation later, theologian Elton Trueblood would follow much the same path. A competent student, Trueblood graduated from Penn College (1922), studied at Brown and Hartford Seminary, and graduated from Harvard Divinity School (1926), where Dean William Sperry heavily influenced him. He earned a doctorate in philosophy from Johns Hopkins in 1934. Between his time at Harvard and Johns Hopkins, he worked as a professor at Guilford College in North Carolina. He would later work as a professor at Haverford as a colleague of Rufus Jones, as a chaplain at Stanford University and, ultimately, as a professor at Earlham College.⁴³ Trueblood used academia to author a steady stream of popular religious books and establish himself as perhaps the best-known Quaker thinker of his era.

The extensive embrace of credentialism had obvious effects on who could claim leadership authority in Quakerism. Notably, it reinforced the whiteness of Quakerism's governing bodies. Not all the Quaker colleges were racially integrated; Swarthmore College had its first Black students in the 1940s, Haverford College graduated its first American-born Black student in 1951, and Guilford College

40 Palmer, *A Long Road*, pp. 188–89; Elbert Russell, *Elbert Russell: Quaker, an autobiography*, Jackson, TN: Friendly Press, 1956; Francis Charles Anscombe, *I Have Called You Friends: the story of Quakerism in North Carolina*, Boston, MA: The Christopher Publishing House, 1959, pp. 5–6.

41 Elizabeth H. Emerson, *Walter C. Woodward, Friend of the Frontier a Biography*, Richmond, IN, 1952, pp. 51, 68.

42 Emerson, *Walter C. Woodward*, pp. 79–81.

43 James Newby, *Elton Trueblood: Believer, Teacher, and Friend*, San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1990; Elton Trueblood, *While It Is Day: the autobiography of Elton Trueblood*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1974.

only integrated in 1963.⁴⁴ The inability to attend these institutions limited the opportunities for advancement within the Religious Society of Friends for the few Black Quakers in the USA and made Quakerism unwelcoming to non-members who might have been interested in joining, especially given its broader reputation for racial equality.

The focus on educational pedigree also meant that it was easier for men to claim leadership positions than it was for women. Consider the authorship of *The Quakers in the American Colonies*, which lists on its title page: ‘Rufus M. Jones, M.A., D.Litt, Professor of Philosophy, Haverford College’, ‘Isaac Sharpless, D.Sc., President of Haverford College’ and, merely, ‘Amelia M. Gummere’.⁴⁵ The postnominal letters following the names of the two men were not applied incidentally, nor were their professional titles. The corresponding lack of titles for Amelia M. Gummere, editor of the *Bulletin of the Friends Historical Association*, President of the John Woolman Association and a prolific writer in her own right, with three other books to her credit, was equally significant. Gummere contributed significantly to the project but lacked the men’s titles—they were not available to her, as Harvard did not begin admitting women to its graduate programmes until 1920, and Haverford College did not become co-educational until 1980.⁴⁶ Because women had fewer chances to gain either an undergraduate or postgraduate education, the embrace of academic achievement as a marker of spiritual leadership greatly disadvantaged them.

This is not to say that women were totally barred from advancement under this new model of Quaker leadership. Education and credentials still helped, to the extent that women could get them. Jane Rushmore, who in 1924 would become the first clerk of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (Hicksite), once separate men’s and women’s meetings were abolished, never graduated from college. Still, she managed to attend Quaker-run Swarthmore College for two years. However, her family finances made continued education unfeasible. Nevertheless, her higher education served as a considerable boost to her advancement through the Religious Society of Friends. Two years of higher education allowed Rushmore to become a teacher and eventually a principal of several Quaker schools. Her work to regulate and professionalise Quaker religious education attracted favourable attention in the denomination. Rushmore also authored several books of Quaker theology, ostensibly written to educate young people, though it seems likely she also had a larger audience of adults in mind. Rushmore was eventually given

44 Stephen W. Angell and Clare Brown, ‘Quakers and Education’, in Stephen W. Angell and Pink Dandelion (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Quakerism*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018, p. 142. Some Quaker colleges were integrated earlier. Earlham College and Whittier College both had Black students in the nineteenth century.

45 Rufus Matthew Jones, Amelia M. Gummere and Isaac Sharpless, *The Quakers in the American Colonies*, London, England: Macmillan, 1911, title page.

46 By the time *The Quakers in the American Colonies* was published, Gummere had written *The Quaker—A Study in Costume, Witchcraft and Quakerism*, and *The Quaker in the Forum*.

a leadership role in Friends Central Office, the centerpiece of the increasingly specialised administration of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (Hicksite).⁴⁷

Once Rushmore had succeeded, the denomination's reward for her success was not just a lofty position in the Yearly Meeting bureaucracy that had governed Quaker life, but an honorary doctorate: In 1952, she was awarded a Doctor of Letters by Swarthmore College. In a biography published a year later, Rushmore's admiring biographer Emily Cooper Johnson thought this event so important that she devoted the last page of her narrative to describing the graduation ceremony where the degree was conveyed. She noted Rushmore was apparelled in academic regalia and quoted verbatim from the commendation delivered by Swarthmore's president. Johnson gleefully extolled how suited Rushmore was for a doctorate, writing '[t]he laurel of formal academic recognition, by her friends felt to be a happy and amply deserved encomium, sits lightly on Jane's brow'.⁴⁸ Academic honours were presented as the cumulation of a lifetime of service and religious thought, a victory laurel, proof that Rushmore's life has been well-lived.

In prior generations, it would have been a religious leading to engage in ministry that marked men and women for leadership, and although no twentieth-century Friends would have denied the benefits of such leadings, for Rushmore it was the fact that she had two years of college that first got her noticed as an up-and-coming candidate for advancement. A doctorate, honorary or earned, was becoming a prerequisite to claiming authority. What marked someone as a potential weighty Friend had drastically changed.

Demographics and Doctorates

The limited demographic data on Quakers in the mid twentieth century indicates that these Quaker leaders were more than outliers; their examples reflect a broader trend towards valuing graduate education occurring within the membership of liberal Quakerism. Jack Cole Ross' 1964 dissertation 'Traditionalism and Charisma in a Religious Group: membership careers and role contingencies of Quakers' at the University of Minnesota studied Illinois Yearly Meeting. Based on 126 questionnaires sent to adult Friends, he found 18 per cent of his sample had a doctorate, and 62 per cent had at least some graduate education. All respondents had graduated high school, and 95.5 per cent had graduated college.⁴⁹

47 Emily Cooper Johnson, *Under Quaker Appointment: the life of Jane P. Rushmore*, Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, 1953. Rushmore is further discussed in Isaac Barnes May, *God-Optional Religion in Twentieth-Century America*, ch. 3.

48 Johnson, *Under Quaker Appointment*, p. 201.

49 Jack Cole Ross, 'Traditionalism and Charisma in a Religious Group: membership careers and role contingencies of Quakers', Doctoral Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1964, pp. 57, 65; Jack Cole Ross, 'Religious Careers and Commitment in a Middle-Class Sect', *Journal of the Minnesota Academy of Science* 33(1) (1965). The 18 per cent with doctorates was part of the larger 62 per cent with graduate training. Ross' study had flaws. It was

It is worth comparing the Quaker statistics to other groups. Ross' statistics indicate Quakers were wildly more educated than the surrounding population; the Bureau of the Census determined in 1966 that only 10 per cent of American adults over the age of 25 had completed four or more years of college.⁵⁰ The Pew Religious Landscape Survey in 2014 examined educational attainment and found that Hindus were the most educated religious group in the USA, with 77 per cent in possession of college degrees. Unitarian Universalists were the next highest educated group with 67 per cent, followed by Jews with 59 per cent.⁵¹ That Illinois Yearly Meeting Quakers seemingly exceeded this level of education in the mid 1960s is startling and indicates that Quakers had one of the highest levels of educational attainment of any religious group in the USA.

At the end of the 1960s, sociologist Martha L. Deed, in her dissertation 'Major Patterns of Religious Commitment among Members of the Religious Society of Friends', examined survey responses from 163 Friends. Deed noted that programmed Friends from pastoral meetings or churches, who tended towards more traditional Christian theology and leaned politically conservative, were considerably less educated than unprogrammed Friends, who were theologically and socially liberal. Her research ultimately indicated 'that 60% of unprogrammed Friends had earned at least a BA while only 30% of programmed Friends had done so'.⁵² The data was less dramatic than Ross' but still indicated that Quakers were among the nation's highest-educated religious groups.

Although a full treatment on the role of education in pastoral meetings would require its own article, it is worth observing in brief that although pastoral Friends were more than three times more likely than non-Quakers to graduate

based on mail responses, which he admitted were more likely to be completed by educated respondents. It underrepresented Friends aged 20–29 in the sample (only 11 responded), who might have still been completing their educations. Illinois Yearly Meeting was made up of unprogrammed Quakers from the Hicksite tradition, who may have valued education even more than the Gurneyite Friends who made up a considerable portion of American Quakerism. The Yearly Meeting also contained several meetings in areas with college campuses, which would have attracted many people with PhDs. Despite these considerations, the survey still likely reflected broader trends within liberal Quakerism. See Ross, 'Traditionalism and Charisma in a Religious Group', pp. 61–63.

50 'Population Characteristics', *Current Population Reports*, Bureau of the Census, 1966, <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/1966/demo/p20-158.pdf>. The data from 1964 does not actually precisely track college attendance, presumably because rates of attendance were too low. See 'Population Characteristics', *Current Population Reports*, Bureau of the Census, 1965, <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/1965/demo/p20-138.pdf>.

51 Caryle Murphy, 'The Most and Least Educated U.S. Religious Groups', *Pew Research Center*, blog, accessed 24/03/2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/04/the-most-and-least-educated-u-s-religious-groups/>.

52 Martha Louise Deed, 'Major Patterns of Religious Commitment Among Members of the Religious Society of Friends', Doctoral Dissertation, Boston, MA, Boston University, 1969, pp. 115, 133–34.

college, degrees do not seem to have held the same weight and importance within programmed Quakerism. Friends who embraced the holiness theology that swept through Gurneyite Quakerism in the late nineteenth century tended to be deeply sceptical of the value of education and degrees, which they associated with the spread of theological modernism. Recognising that there was a need to train clergy as they embraced pastoral leadership, but distaining academia's perceived secularising influence, they created Quaker bible colleges. These closely resembled the unaccredited bible colleges created by other conservative Christians groups.⁵³ For example, J. Walter Malone, who Thomas D. Hamm describes as Rufus Jones' 'most important opponent', founded Friends Bible Institute with his wife Emma. The Malones made sure that the school did not offer a liberal arts or science curriculum and that it focused exclusively on training religious workers.⁵⁴ The importance placed upon prestigious degrees thus signalled a growing divide between the liberal and conservative theological wings of American Quakerism.

Conclusion

The careers of Jones, Cadbury, Woodward, Trueblood and Rushmore were only the most prominent examples of a more profound transformation of leadership within the Religious Society of Friends. We wish to conclude by suggesting that Friends' move to embrace academic credentials was the beginning of a larger denominational professionalisation and bureaucratisation process, a process that scholars have yet to study in detail. When Friends were accruing these credentials, monthly meetings, yearly meetings, and other Quaker organisations were also beginning to change their bureaucratic structures. The 1920s and 1930s saw the rise of 'executive secretaries', paid positions at the monthly-meeting level that often were given to men with postgraduate theological education. Later, by the 1960s, many liberal meetings had kept the same positions but now called them 'Friends in Residence'. These spots often went to people with formal academic qualifications, replacing the older notion of recorded ministers with academically credentialed leaders. Many meetings adopted a full-time paid administration at the yearly meeting level, which replaced older continuing governance committees like the 'meetings for sufferings'. These paid and highly educated bureaucracies often became as powerful as the clerks of the yearly meetings. To make a closing pun, one might say that the professionalisation of modern Quakerism came by degrees.

53 Angell and Brown, 'Quakers and Education', p. 138.

54 Thomas D. Hamm, *The Quakers in America*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2003, p. 58. Friends Bible Institute eventually became Malone College, finally giving in to pressures to educate using a more conventional model of higher education. See also John W. Oliver Jr., 'Malone College', in John William Oliver, Charles L. Cherry and Caroline L. Cherry (eds), *Founded by Friends: The Quaker Heritage of Fifteen American Colleges and Universities*, Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007, pp. 203–22.

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