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## "Cadbury, Henry J" in Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus

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## CADBURY, HENRY J.

Although Henry J. Cadbury is most widely known for his contributions to the study of Luke—Acts and his leadership in the translation of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible (especially the Apocrypha), he was also a major contributor to historical Jesus studies. Cadbury's two books on Jesus, *The Peril of Modernizing Jesus* (1937) and *Jesus: What Manner of Man?* (1947), were actually published before the "New Quest" broke loose in the 1950s, and the field's indebtedness to his contributions to that transition has been under-acknowledged. (Cadbury also wrote an essay on the obverse feature of his first book: "The Peril of Archaeizing Ourselves" [1949].)

On one hand, this is understandable. Cadbury's first book on Jesus emphasized the peril of trying to make Jesus relevant to our modern sensibilities and thus would have been seen as continuing Schweitzer's critique of the tendency to project our own interests onto Jesus rather than advocating a new quest. He certainly furthered the basis for historical-Jesus skepticism in his 1963 analysis, *The Eclipse of the Historical Jesus*, as well as other writings. On the other hand, Cadbury's work was not simply deconstructive. Because of his understated and modest claims, Cadbury actually sketched a more likely presentation of Jesus than interested interpreters might have done for themselves, and in this way he contributed several constructive elements.

For instance, rather than assuming Jesus had a programmatic goal, or set of intentional platforms

and strategies, perhaps he simply responded to occasional needs as they presented themselves. And, rather than seeing himself as a social reformer, or as one setting out to change society, Jesus appears to have been driven by an apocalyptic vision of God's sovereign fulfillment of history. Further, rather than inferring Jesus had a set of doctrines to levy upon his followers, he appears primarily given to emphasizing human responsiveness to the divine will. Or, rather than being the sort of evangelist that sought to make converts, or a salesman peddling spiritual wares, he more characteristically sought to privilege the truth and authentic apprehensions of it, even challenging religious institutions and constructs as a result. In these and other ways, Cadbury not only challenged modernistic tendencies to create a Jesus in "our image," he also posed a more plausible set of ways to envision the epoch-changing stranger from Galilee.

More directly, though, Cadbury did argue that Jesus had an *emphasis*; or in Quaker terms, a "concern." The central concern of Jesus related primarily to "human conduct" and social ethics. Rather than focusing on the place, time, or setting of Jesus' teachings, the pressing *historical* interest lies in understanding his primary concerns for humanity: loving God and social justice. Likewise, noting his pointing to the center of the Jewish law shows us something not just about *what* Jesus taught, but *how*. By asking probing questions rather than giving answers, Jesus helped others discover the truth rather than propounding particular notions about it. This mode of operation

continues to create new “learnings” and “understandings” transformatively, rather than seeing Jesus’ teaching as a closed venture.

Cadbury also emphasizes the Jewishness of Jesus as a first-century prophet. Accordingly, Cadbury’s Jesus was more of a conservative than a radical. In other words, in emphasizing the truth of the Hebrew prophets’ message, Jesus can be seen as calling people *back to* covenant faithfulness, rather than inciting innovations. In that sense, Jesus also can be seen to be challenging the legalistic ways humans either seek to drive values home or seek to wriggle their way out of an ethical standard by means of parsing the letter of the law, pleading for exceptions to norms. Jesus likewise challenged cultic regulations within Judaism, extending implications to formalistic accretions within Christianity, as well. His association with John the Baptist also betrays a critique of religious assimilation with political power, so these features help us understand the sort of informal reformer Jesus was likely to have been – and why he raised the ire of contemporary authorities.

Cadbury’s most sustained contribution to historical Jesus studies came in his second book on Jesus (1947), in which he questions “what manner of man” Jesus might have been. What were Jesus’ interests? He called for following the way of the Kingdom, even if costly. Where did he get his wisdom? Some of it reflects conventional understandings, but it also suggests Jesus’ own discoveries and observations about the ways things are. Why did he teach in parables? The parables conceal the reign of God as well as revealing it; they also connect the ways of God with the experiences of persons. What was the character of his new teaching and his authority? The impressive feature of his teaching is his self-assuredness rather than his originality. And, who can really claim to know Jesus? Much of what Jesus says on the subject questions people’s claims to know; his mode of asking questions functioned to facilitate self-reliance and trusting in God rather than propping up religious or political authorities.

Jesus’ ethic was not an “interim” one; rather, it assumed the divine will as a standard for all time. Rather than being a factor of outcomes or utilitarianism, Jesus’ ethic called for holy obedience to the ways of God as a factor of truth’s convincing power. Jesus challenged incongruity where he observed it, yet he also used superlatives as a means of emphasizing ideals. There is no such thing as “enough” faithfulness; it is a life-long vocation. His teachings appear to be ordered by cognitive reflection upon experience rather than by

reasoned argument, and his challenging of authorities made him controversial. The miracles of Jesus legitimated his Messianic identity, and his Messiahship bolstered the authority of his teachings. Finally, however, Jesus’ authority lay in the veracity of his claims, finding resonance in the consciences of his audiences then and now.

Cadbury contributed to Jesus studies by his insistence upon limiting the interpreter’s inferences to what the text actually says rather than filling in the gaps with either liberal or conservative speculation. Therefore, “Hades” replaces “Hell” in the RSV, the informality of early Christianity is highlighted, and his identification of Jesus within the mold of the Jewish prophet becomes formative for future Jesus studies. Motive-criticism provided windows into the works of ancient authors, as well as a means of critique for modern scholarship, and his introduction of form-criticism to the English-speaking world furthered the distinguishing of oral from written traditions in Gospel studies. Because of his reluctance to claim more than the evidence will substantiate, Henry J. Cadbury exercised impressive modesty of claim regarding what can be known about Jesus of Nazareth. In that sense, Cadbury contributes to what we can know about the Jesus of history precisely because he clarifies critically what we cannot.

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### Further reading

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- “Intimations of Immortality in the Thought of Jesus,” *HTR* 53 (1960) 1–26; reprinted in *SPCK Theological Collection* 3, London: SPCK, 1964, pp. 79–94.
- *Jesus and Judaism and The Emphasis of Jesus*, Shrewsbury Lecture, Indianapolis, IN: John Woolman Press (1962), pp. 1–9 and 11–22.
- *The Eclipse of the Historical Jesus*, Haverford Library Lectures, Pendle Hill Pamphlet 133, Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications, 1963.

### CAESAREA MARITIMA

Caesarea Maritima, also known as Caesarea, was an ancient port city of great importance located on