



David Elton Trueblood (December 12, 1900 – December 20, 1994), who was usually known as "Elton Trueblood" or "D. Elton Trueblood", was a noted 20th-century [American Quaker](#) author and [theologian](#), former chaplain both to [Harvard](#) and [Stanford](#) universities.

Elton Trueblood was born December 12, 1900 in Iowa, the fourth of five children, and was graduated from [William Penn College](#) in Iowa in 1922. He did graduate study at [Brown University](#), [Hartford Seminary](#), and [Harvard University](#) before finishing his Ph.D. at [Johns Hopkins University](#) in Philosophy.^[1]

During his career, Trueblood held faculty and chaplain positions at [Haverford College](#), [Guilford College](#), [Harvard University](#), [Stanford University](#), and [Earlham College](#). He then settled in the Quaker hub community of [Richmond, Indiana](#) intending to help spur the growth of [Earlham College](#) from a small regional religious school into a nationally recognized institution of higher learning. He was a founder of the [Earlham School of Religion](#), a Quaker seminary in Richmond, and contributed to a renaissance of American Quaker thought and action spurred on partly by the common experiences of Quaker [intellectuals](#) as [conscientious objectors](#) during [World War II](#) (although Trueblood himself was not a [pacifist](#)). He actively sought to mentor younger Quakers into his nineties. Trueblood also founded the Yokefellow movement and supported [Stephen Ministries](#). His Yokefellow funders included some of his past students, such as planned community developer Charles Samuel Coble, whom Trueblood taught and also coached in track in the late 1920s at Guilford College.^[2]

He was a [political conservative](#) who supported Nixon's [foreign policy](#), including the [Vietnam War](#), and gave the [invocation](#) at the [1972 Republican National Convention](#). Nonetheless, he was known for maintaining an internationalist perspective, serving for many years as the permanent representative from the global Quaker community to the [World Council of Churches](#), an organization he helped bring into being. In the 1950s, he served as a senior advisor to President [Dwight D. Eisenhower](#), who created a post for him as Director of Religious Information at the U.S. Information Agency (formerly the *Voice of*

America). *Time* magazine profiled him in this role on March 15, 1954. During the Nixon Administration he again served as an adviser to the President.

Elton Trueblood wrote 33 books, including: *The Predicament of Modern Man, Alternative to Futility, Foundations for Reconstruction, Signs of Hope, The Logic of Belief, Philosophy of Religion, Robert Barclay, Abraham Lincoln: Theologian of American Anguish, The Idea of a College, The People Called Quakers, The Incendiary Fellowship, The Trustworthiness of Religious Experience* (1939 [Swarthmore Lecture](#)), *A Place to Stand, Your Other Vocation* and *The Humor of Christ*.

The History of Earlham School of Religion

Earlham School of Religion was opened on an experimental basis by Earlham College in the autumn of 1960. An M.A. in Religion was offered for the first two years. Then, the Board of Trustees authorized the expansion of the program to include a three-year Bachelor of Divinity degree. The B. Div. is now called either the Master of Ministry degree, a name many Quakers prefer, or the Master of Divinity degree, preferred by some who wish the name to correspond to that of other seminaries.

Earlham School of Religion was accredited in 1969 by the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS) and by the North Central Association through affiliation with Earlham College.

The founding and advancement of ESR fulfills a longtime dream of many Friends, who saw the need for a seminary based on Quaker values and practices.

D. Elton Trueblood quotes:

A man has made at least a start on discovering the meaning of human life when he plants shade trees under which he knows full well he will never sit.

Faith is not belief without proof, but trust without reservation

It takes a noble man to plant a seed for a tree that will someday give shade to people he may never meet.

We need to be agnostics first and then there is some chance at arriving at a sensible system of belief.

The unexamined faith is not worth having.

The world is equally shocked at hearing Christianity criticized and seeing it practiced.

No vital Christianity is possible unless at least three aspects of it are developed. These are the inner life of devotion, the outer life of service, and the intellectual life of rationality.

At the profoundest depths in life, men talk not about God but with Him.

The more we study the early Church, the more we realize that it was a society of ministers. About the only similarity between the Church at Corinth and a contemporary congregation, either Roman Catholic or Protestant, is that both are marked, to a great degree, by the presence of sinners.

If the average church should suddenly take seriously the notion that every lay member man or woman is really a minister of Christ, we could have something like a revolution in a very short time.

Never trust a theologian who doesn't have a sense of humor.

Our religion is one which challenges the ordinary human standards by holding that the ideal of life is the spirit of a little child. We tend to glorify adulthood and wisdom and worldly prudence, but the Gospel reverses all this. The Gospel says that the inescapable condition of entrance into the divine fellowship is that we turn and become as a little child.

One of the noblest words in our language is "grace," defined as "unearned blessing." We live by grace far more than by anything else. Accordingly, I find that the one thing which I want to put into practice in my own life is the conscious and deliberate habit of finding someone to thank.

Thoughtful people are concerned with the future because that is the only area of experience about which anything can be done. We cannot change the past, and the present is gone as soon as it is reported, but the future is that in which we can make a difference.

The ultimate verification of our religion consists of the changed lives to which it can point and for which it is responsible.

Religion is never devoid of emotion, any more than love is. It is not a defect of religion, but rather its glory, that it speaks always the language of feeling.

The only way to happiness is never to give happiness a thought.

Democracy is necessitated by the fact that all men are sinners; it is made possible by the fact that we know it.

The spoken word is never really effective unless it is backed up by a life, but it is also true that the living deed is never adequate without the support the spoken word can provide.

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Gratitude is the *one* thing that can't be overdone