

Douglas Steere and Elton Trueblood as Interpreters of John Woolman

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Abstract

Douglas V. Steere and D. Elton Trueblood were among the most influential Quaker voices in the middle decades of the twentieth century among liberal and evangelical Friends, respectively. Each turned to John Woolman's writings as inspiration for the needs of their times, from matters of spirituality and moral example to social justice and ecumenism.

Keywords

John Woolman, Douglas V. Steere, D. Elton Trueblood, mysticism

Significant texts come to life in many and various ways as they speak to later generations. In the mid-twentieth century, John Woolman's *Journal* inspired many Quaker readers. Quakers in the United States were theologically and liturgically diverse, heirs to schisms of the previous century. Two important centres of Quakerism were Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where Orthodox and Hicksite Friends would reunite in 1955, embracing Friends varying from traditional Christian perspectives to agnostic views, and Richmond, Indiana, home to the national office of Five Years Meeting (later rechristened Friends United Meeting), which gathered mostly pastorally led Friends who ranged theologically from liberal Protestant to conservative Evangelical. Two prominent Friends, who, for the purposes of the exploration of the reception of John Woolman in those years, may serve as spokespersons of these two expressions of Quakerism, were Douglas V. Steere (1901–1995) and D. Elton Trueblood (1900–1994).¹ Both were

1 This essay is a collaboration, although most of the research and writing on Elton Trueblood is the work of Stephen Angell, while that on Douglas Steere is by Michael Birkel.

professors of philosophy at Quaker colleges. Both were recognised both within and beyond the Society of Friends as representatives of Quakerism: Douglas Steere, for example, officially represented Friends as an observer-delegate at the Second Vatican Council, and Elton Trueblood travelled and ministered widely among mainline Protestants and Evangelical Christians. John Woolman spoke to each of these thinkers in parallel and complementary ways.

As Steere and Trueblood both recognised, the context in which John Woolman wrote was complex. Some of Woolman's Quaker contemporaries prospered financially, and Woolman, among others, regarded this wealth as a danger to the spiritual life. Some eighteenth-century Friends were enslavers. Others, such as Woolman, promoted liberty for those held in bondage. The Seven Years War in the 1750s tested Quakers' commitment to nonviolence. Gradually, the American colonies were moving toward independence from the British empire. Much was in flux.²

The mid-twentieth century in North America was similarly a time of change. The United States emerged from World War II as a leader among the nations that referred to themselves as 'the Free World'. A new era of prosperity ensued. Concerns for racial justice blossomed into the Civil Rights movement. A war in Vietnam became increasingly unpopular, giving rise to an anti-war movement. John Woolman's response to the challenges of his era inspired later Quakers as they pondered how to respond to their own.³

Douglas Steere

In his own life, Douglas Steere looked to John Woolman as a model for many of his Quaker and religious activities, from his lifelong efforts as peacemaking, to his concerns for the Quaker testimony of simplicity, to his ecumenical and interfaith labours.⁴ Steere was attracted to Quakerism while a Rhodes scholar at Oxford, although he was also powerfully drawn to Roman Catholicism as the breeding ground of the great mystics that he so loved. Upon settling into life in Haverford, he and his wife Dorothy ultimately joined the Friends.⁵

2 See, for example, Healey, R. R., 'Quietist Quakerism, 1692–ca. 1805', in Angell, S. W. and Pink Dandelion, B. (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 57–62. For a fuller account see Marietta, J. D., *The Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748–1783*, Philadelphia, PA: University of Philadelphia Press, 1984.

3 For an overview of American Quakers' responses to these post-World-War-II challenges, see Frost, J. W., 'Modernist and Liberal Quakers, 1887–2010', in Angell and Dandelion (eds), *Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, pp. 83–89; and Hinshaw, G. P., 'Five Years' Meeting and Friends United Meeting, 1887–2010', in Angell and Dandelion (eds), *Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, pp. 100–03.

4 Glenn Hinson, E., the great Baptist ecumenist and scholar of spirituality, composed a biography of Douglas Steere, *Love at the Heart of Things: a biography of Douglas V. Steere*, Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill, 1998.

5 They had come to know many outstanding Quakers in the Philadelphia region, yet

John Woolman's influence on Douglas Steere was pervasive. He identified John Woolman as one among several models for the Relief and Reconstruction Training Program, held at Haverford College in 1943.⁶ While travelling in England during a sabbatical in 1948, he sought out the burial place of John Woolman in York.⁷ He drew on a phrase found in John Woolman's *Journal* as the title for his 1955 publication *Where Words Come From*, and the book begins with reference to John Woolman.⁸ Glenn Hinson suggests that John Woolman was 'a mentor and a model' for Steere.⁹ More concretely, there are two major sources for Douglas Steere's reception of the writings of John Woolman. His first treatment at length of John Woolman was in his 1948 work entitled *Doors into Life: Through Five Devotional Classics*.¹⁰ The second came 36 years later, when his *Quaker Spirituality: Selected Writings* appeared.¹¹

Doors into Life is an introduction to five guides to the life of devotion. All of Steere's choices are quite personal. He begins with *The Imitation of Christ*, attributed to Thomas à Kempis.¹² Steere attributed to this book the stirring of his interest in the study of mysticism.¹³ In the summer of 1930, Douglas and Dorothy Steere visited the site in the Netherlands where the work was written – Dorothy Steere had written her undergraduate thesis on the *Imitation of Christ*, so the book held great interest for both of them.¹⁴ Two years after the release of *Doors into Life*, Steere published a selection and arrangement of passages from the *Imitation of Christ*.¹⁵ Clearly this text held great power for him. He freely admits that parts of the book are dated and do not speak to the twentieth century, such as its ascetical dimension and its concern for individual salvation rather than a social gospel, yet the book opened for him the value of the contemplative life and the validity of 'time to spare for God'. This last phrase provided the title for another book by Steere published in 1949.¹⁶

they cited the inspiration of the *Journal* of John Woolman, whose integration of the active and contemplative life spoke deeply to them, as the decisive factor.

6 Hinson, *Love*, p. 149.

7 Hinson, *Love*, p. 106.

8 Steere, D. V., *Where Words Come from: an interpretation of the ground and practice of Quaker worship and ministry*, London: Quaker Home Service, 1955. The American edition bears the title *On Listening to Another*, New York: Harper, 1955, p. i. See also pp. 51 and 52.

9 Hinson, *Love*, p. 203.

10 Steere, D. V., *Doors into Life: through five devotional classics*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948.

11 Steere, D. V., *Quaker Spirituality: selected writings*, New York: Paulist Press, 1984.

12 The authorship has been disputed during the past century, and Douglas Steere was well acquainted with the scholarly work on this text. For a recent scholarly assessment, see McGinn, B., *The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism*, New York: Crossroad, 2012, pp. 97–107.

13 Steere, *Doors*, p. 26.

14 Steere, *Doors*, p. 27; Hinson, *Love*, p. 54.

15 Steere, D. V., *The Imitation of Christ*, Nashville, TN: Upper Room, 1950.

16 Steere, D. V., *Time to Spare*, New York: Harper, 1949.

The second work to receive attention in *Doors into Life* is Francis de Sales' *Introduction to the Devout Life*. Wendy M. Wright, a leading scholar of Salesian spirituality in the English-speaking world, identifies major themes in that tradition. These include the affirmation of the innate dignity of the person that results in a natural orientation to God. In contrast to the pessimistic view of the human condition that held sway among many theologians of the seventeenth century, Salesian spirituality is optimistic about humankind and the created world. God is to be found in the midst of daily life rather than in withdrawal from human society. Therefore, do little things with great love. The Salesian tradition breathes compassion, gentleness and a quality that Francis called 'liberty of spirit', a holy freedom that genuinely loves all things.¹⁷

Douglas Steere frequently refers to Francis de Sales in his other writings.¹⁸ Clearly Francis de Sales was a writer often on Steere's mind and heart, and it is not hard to see why: the qualities of compassion, gentleness, patience, optimism and finding God in the ordinary are reflected in Steere's own spirituality. De Sales offered him an alternative to the pessimism, potential harshness and insistence upon God as distant and wholly other that characterised the dominant Neo-Orthodoxy of his day. Additionally, the hospitable style with which Francis de Sales wrote is also echoed in Steere's writings.

The fourth and fifth writers chosen for *Doors into Life* are thinkers that again are central to Steere's spirituality. Moreover, they are concerns of his scholarly work. One is Søren Kierkegaard, whose work *Purity of Heart Is to Will One Thing* was translated by Steere in 1938.¹⁹ Kierkegaard's existentialism spoke to Steere, and to the many readers who read his translation of this major Christian thinker of nineteenth-century Denmark.

The final book in *Doors into Life* is Friedrich von Hügel, whose letters of spiritual direction spoke powerfully to Steere. An independent scholar and a Catholic layperson, von Hügel's great opus is his 1908 study *The Mystical Element of Religion*, which earned him a place in the circle of writers on mysticism in the early twentieth century, including Evelyn Underhill, R. W. Inge, William James and Rufus Jones. Because he was so deeply immersed in the spiritual life, others sought spiritual counsel from him, including Evelyn Underhill herself, the author of the classic *Mysticism: A Study of the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness*, published in 1911. Douglas Steere's interests in von Hügel

17 Here we draw chiefly on Péronne Marie Thibert and Wendy M. Wright, *Letters of Spiritual Direction: letters of Francis de Sales and of Jane de Chantal*, The Classics of Western Spirituality, New York: Paulist Press, 1988, pp. 34–69.

18 See, for example, Steere, *Time to Spare*, pp. 9, 61, 85, 152, 173; Steere, D.V., *On Beginning from Within*, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1943, pp. 69, 73, 84–85, 93–95; *On Listening to Another*, p. 27; *Prayer and Worship*, Volume 6 of Hazen Books on Religion, New York: Association Press, 1938, repr., Friends United Press, 1978, pp. 5, 13, 25, 28, 78.

19 Steere, D. V. (trans.), *Soren Kierkegaard: purity of heart is to will one thing*, New York: Harper, 1938.

were academic and personal: he wrote a dissertation on his thought and published an edition of his letters.²⁰ Additionally, as a spiritual director himself, Steere appreciated the spiritual wisdom of Friedrich von Hügél's guidance in a practical way.²¹

Since the book is arranged chronologically, the middle chapter turns its attention to John Woolman and his *Journal*. Douglas Steere draws on his five spiritual companions for different approaches to the inward life. In John Woolman, he finds a model of what he calls 'the growth of a concern'. He writes

The *Journal* gives us a good insight into the growth of what Quakers call a 'concern' and from Woolman's experience we can learn more about how an inward vocation develops and matures than from any book on psychological counseling that I know.²²

Three things in this passage bear further notice. Among modern Quakers, the term 'concern' refers to a matter about which one has a care so profound that one holds it to be of divine guidance, a leading from God that is a call to action about a spiritual or social problem. A leading is subject to discernment, to determine whether it is of a divine or of a lesser origin. Douglas Steere's use of the word 'vocation' is also significant. Given his deep acquaintance with the breadth of Christian and particularly Catholic spirituality, he would have known how central discernment, especially discernment about one's vocation, is to the Ignatian tradition of spirituality. Finally, his reference to psychology is not superficial. When he joined faculty at Haverford College, psychology was taught as a subset of philosophy, and he taught all the courses in psychology until 1934, when he was relieved of the duty to teach elementary psychology by a new member of the department, D. Elton Trueblood. Elton Trueblood soon moved on, and a separate department of psychology was launched in the early 1940s.²³ Additionally, because spiritual direction and psychological counselling have some overlapping but not identical concerns, responsible spiritual directors keep up with developments in counselling. In other words, Steere knew whereof he spoke, and his reference to counselling was far from casual.

Douglas Steere noted factors and phases in the growth of a concern. John Woolman was rooted in a community that had many members who had experienced a deep sense of divine presence and leading, who had made their lives available for such guidance and who were committed to change society to conform to those revealed truths. They carried out their calling in this world,

20 Steere, D. V. (ed.), *Spiritual Counsels and Letters of Baron Friedrich von Hügél*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964.

21 Douglas Steere's gifts as a spiritual director were recognised by others. Tilden Edwards has said that he was an important influence on the style of spiritual direction training offered by the Shalem Institute (Hinson, *Love*, p. 343).

22 Steere, *Doors*, p. 98.

23 Hinson, *Love*, p. 95.

amid the responsibilities of work and family. Steere appreciated this dimension of Quaker spirituality, just as he appreciated Francis de Sales' letters of spiritual nurture to those who lived a lay life. John Woolman emerged from this Quaker setting, was faithful to its ideals and called that community into new and higher moral ground. Through his practice of piety and worship, Steere writes, he came to love all his fellow creatures. Out of this love began his concern for those held in the bondage of enslavement. His first steps were small – registering his unease with being required by his employer to write a will in which one human being was bequeathed to another as property²⁴ – but this first step led to greater clarity and greater boldness. He overcame social customs and expectations and found himself able to confront his elders lovingly but unambiguously, disregarding matters and practices of his own self-interest, such as failing to challenge others when that might drive them to take their business elsewhere. John Woolman sought personal experience that would bring him to understand the sufferings of the enslaved, and he reflected on that experience to develop his own empathy, so that all his labours could remain centred in love.²⁵

This love included love for the enslavers, and Steere appreciated how John Woolman's method of engaging with them maintained a respect for their human dignity. 'It presupposed a divine center in them that was open to approach.'²⁶ Here John Woolman spoke to Steere, perhaps less as the professor of philosophy and more as the activist who laboured on behalf of the American Friends Service Committee in relief work in Finland after the Second World War, and as the social visionary who dreamed of a better society and thus served in a variety of ways the work of Pendle Hill, the Quaker centre near Philadelphia that gathered and trained leaders for a more peaceful and just society.

Other dimensions of John Woolman's life that are highlighted in *Doors into Life* include his adoption of voluntary simplicity – which also characterised community life at Pendle Hill, as well as other experiments in simple and collective living in which some Quakers were active in the 1930s and beyond. Steere was clearly moved by John Woolman's 'following the leadings of truth' in his visit to the Lenni Lenape settlement of Wyalusing, especially the account of John Woolman asking that the awkward and imperfect translation of his vocal ministry be stopped, believing that those who listened could, as recalled later in the words of the community's leader Papunhank, 'feel where words come from'.²⁷ Steere spoke sympathetically of 'the scrupulous logic of love' that led John Woolman to witness against war and to abstain from the products of enslaved labour. He tells of John Woolman's final journey to England, dwelling at length

24 Steere, *Doors*, p. 99; Moulton, P. P. (ed.), *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1971, pp. 32–33.

25 Douglas Steere traces this process of the growth of a concern in *Doors*, pp. 96–106.

26 Steere, *Doors*, p. 103.

27 Steere, *Doors*, p. 109; Moulton, *Journal*, p. 133.

on a tale of the latter's reception by the reigning elders and ministers of London Yearly Meeting, who initially regard him as possibly an eccentric crank but then become convinced of his spiritual depth. Later, Quaker historian Henry Cadbury would, after painstaking reconstruction of John Woolman's experience from many sources, cast doubt on the tale's authenticity, but this author knows from experience that the story refuses to die perhaps because it seems to reflect a kind of truth about John Woolman's singularity and his sincerity.²⁸

Douglas Steere's chapter on John Woolman concludes with a summary of his final days as he suffered from smallpox in York. Steere offers this account and discussion of the vision that John Woolman wrote as he knew that his end was coming:

Some two and a half years before his death, John Woolman in a time of severe illness had a dream in which he saw a dull gray gloomy coloured mass made up of suffering humanity and felt himself a part of it. His name was called out but he could not answer. Then a voice spoke the words, 'John Woolman is dead.' He took this to mean that God had extinguished something in himself and had mixed him indistinguishably with the gray mass of suffering mankind But in this being mixed with his fellow, 'joined to all the living', Woolman was also joined to the blessed Source of healing, to the inward redeemer who can minister to this suffering from within as well as from without. In his life and in his death he had become an isthmus between this healing and his fellow. And to read the *Journal* is to be turned toward this isthmus life and toward the 'hope' that is promised to those who bring the needs of men and the nature of the inward redeemer together.²⁹

Here are some points to notice about this passage. Steere calls it a dream, but John Woolman does not. Steere omits supernatural elements, such as Woolman's certainty that the voice that spoke to him was the voice of an angel, and does not explicitly describe this as a mystical experience, despite his own great interest in mysticism and lack of hesitation to identify others as mystics.³⁰ Among mystical

28 Cadbury, H. J., *John Woolman in England, 1772: a documentary supplement*, London: Friends Historical Society, 1971, pp. 44–74. Among more recent works, Geoffrey Plank (*John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom: a Quaker in the British empire*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012, p. 200) refers to Cadbury's work and makes no mention of the tale, silently dismissing its historical value. Thomas Slaughter (*The Beautiful Soul of John Woolman, Apostle of Abolition*, New York: Hill and Wang, 2008, pp. 342–430) retells the story, notes that John Woolman makes no mention of it, but then does not explicitly reject it or explain why he choose to repeat it.

29 Steere, *Doors*, p. 115.

30 The relationship of Quakers to mysticism is complex and remains much contested. Early Friends were generally cautious to use the term to refer to themselves, as it frequently carried negative connotations in the seventeenth century and later (Birkel, M., *Quakers Reading Mystics*, Leiden: Brill, 2018, pp. 1–7) Among scholars throughout the past century, the term 'mysticism' often refers to an intimate, transformative experience of union with God. This union may be an experience of loving; alternatively, it may be an experience of

writers in the Christian West, Jeanne Marie Guyon spoke of a ‘mystical death’, Marguerite Porete referred to annihilation and Meister Eckhart told of the centrality of becoming nothing, yet Steere did not draw any comparisons with Woolman’s experience. True, here Woolman spoke of being absorbed not into a vast sea of divinity but rather into a suffering mass of humanity, but in the account in his *Journal*, when he is again capable of speech, he quoted the apostle Paul on union with Christ: ‘I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ that lived in me’ (Gal. 2:20). Given Steere’s deep acquaintance with the Christian mystical tradition, and the case that he makes elsewhere that the distinctive element of Quaker mysticism is its collective dimension, why is this experience not identified as an example of Quaker mysticism? During Steere’s lifetime, the proposal by Rufus Jones that Quakers were a part of the greater mystical stream in Christianity was being challenged by a younger generation, as well as some of Steere’s contemporaries.³¹ It may be that this resulted in a hesitancy to claim a mystical status for John Woolman, though at the end of his career Steere reclaimed a mystical identity for Quakerism, if not Woolman by name.³²

knowing, in which the person comes to a new realisation about self and God. The mystical encounter may be one in which the person retains a separate sense of self, or it may be one in which the sense of self is dissolved, as in a well-known passage from John Woolman’s *Journal*, in which his sense of selfhood was absorbed in Christ to such an extent that John Woolman said that he no longer lived (Moulton, *Journal*, p. 186). The effects of mystical experience may include an ethical dimension, in which the person feels renewed dedication to serve (Moulton, *Journal*, p. 177). Quakers from their earliest days have spoken of direct accessibility to God, referred to as the Light Within or Inward Christ, among other epithets. This Light offered ethical guidance, leading Friends to the commitments embedded in their testimonies for peace, plainness or simplicity, human equality, and so on. Many scholars of mysticism would distinguish between a sense of guidance and an experience of divine union, often described as a spiritual marriage or as annihilation. They would reserve the word ‘mysticism’ for the latter. Many liberal modern Quakers, however, inspired by the work of Quaker scholar of mysticism Rufus M. Jones (1863–1948), have adopted a much broader description of mysticism and readily include their experiences in Quaker worship and devotional life as mystical. Some people regard the narrower view of mysticism as elitist. In return, others consider the wider view as so vague as to be meaningless. Douglas Steere held a dual inheritance. On the one hand, he was a scholar of mysticism and therefore careful in how he used the term. On the other, he was an exponent of modern liberal Quakerism and an appreciator of Rufus Jones, who preceded him in the Philosophy Department of Haverford College.

31 Elton Trueblood uses ‘mysticism’ and ‘mystic’ both positively and negatively in *The People Called Quakers*, Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1971, pp. 28, 70, 73 (negative usages); p. 199 (praise for Isaac Pennington as a mystic).

32 Elsewhere Douglas Steere identified George Fox as someone who ‘had a series of profound mystical experiences’ (*Quaker Spirituality*, p. 7). Likewise, he wrote, ‘It is well known that each of the great world religions, if searched to its core, reveals of mystical dimension ... In Quakerism this mystical dimension in Christianity unfolds and assumes a corporate character’ (*Quaker Spirituality*, 16). He recognises that some have interpreted Quakerism less as mystical and more as prophetic, but he responds that early Friends were

In his 1938 volume *Prayer and Worship* Douglas Steere offers these words that may constitute another summary of the importance of John Woolman to him at this time of his life. After describing Woolman's simplification of his life and his labours to end enslavement, Steere wrote of the *Journal*:

His account of the frequent renewings of inner refreshment that came to him as he kept 'close to the root', his testimony for simplicity, his identification with those who suffer injustice, and his method of approach to those with whom he differed and hoped to win, make John Woolman's *Journal* a testament of insight for those who are seeking light on the rôle of the Christian layman in the social dilemmas of our day.³³

Thirty-four years after *Doors into Life*, Steere returned to John Woolman as he edited *Quaker Spirituality: Selected Writings* for the Paulist Press series The Classics of Western Spirituality. Six Quaker writers were chosen for inclusion in the volume: George Fox, Isaac Pennington, John Woolman, Caroline Stephen, Rufus M. Jones and Thomas Kelly. Steere prefaced these selections with a substantial introduction of some 50 pages, adding his own valuable voice to the others. This larger introduction to the volume makes little substantive mention of John Woolman. The very brief introduction to the selections from his *Journal* notes that it is the story of a 'collected' person and a 'recounting of the way in which a Quaker "concern" may unfold' within the human heart.³⁴ The reader is left to draw any conclusions about Steere's reception of John Woolman's *Journal* from the results of the selection process.

By the time that *Quaker Spirituality* was under preparation, an improved critical edition of John Woolman's *Journal* had appeared, thanks to the labour of love of Phillips M. Moulton. New insights had emerged into the relationships of the various manuscripts of the *Journal*. Especially valuable was new material that dealt with Woolman's thoughts on resisting the payment of war taxes. Understandably, Steere excised the lengthy quotation from John Churchman's views and actions on the subject that Woolman had included in one manuscript, but some of Woolman's own words on the topic were included, so there can be no suspicion of censorship on this controversial subject.³⁵

As noted above, Henry Cadbury had raised serious scholarly doubts about the tale of John Woolman's reception by London Yearly Meeting. The story goes

both, an 'ethical mysticism' that combined the mystical with the prophetic (*Quaker Spirituality*, 17). Just as Steere omitted a consideration of Woolman as a possible mystic, he likewise chose not to include John Woolman's reflection on 'the place of pure prayer' that is found on p. 160 of Moulton's edition of the *Journal*, although Steere wrote elsewhere at length on prayer.

33 Steere, *Prayer and Worship*, p. 81.

34 Steere, *Quaker Spirituality*, p. 162.

35 Steere, *Quaker Spirituality*, p. 185. Already in 1938 in *Prayer and Worship* he had written: 'There is a record of the searchings of conscience about taxes that might be used in support of the military during the French and Indian War' (p. 81).

that he arrived in unkempt appearance due to his hasty departure from the ship in which he had travelled in the untidy conditions of steerage for weeks. The properly minded elders and ministers of the Yearly Meeting were inclined to dismiss him and send him back to the colonies, until Woolman's genuinely deep spiritual condition changed their suspicious minds. Despite Henry Cadbury's argument about the probable unreliability of this tale and its omission from Phillips Moulton's critical edition, Steere, in his 1984 anthology, inserted it into passages from Woolman's *Journal*. He accurately notes that the tale is taken from the nineteenth-century edition of John Greenleaf Whittier. Apparently, the mind of the philosopher (Douglas Steere) was not that of the historian (Henry Cadbury). Steere's choice to include the tale indicates how drawn he was to the story. Whether or not it happened, it felt true to him.³⁶

In sum, Douglas Steere found inspiration and spiritual nourishment in the *Journal* of John Woolman. Perhaps most centrally, as someone whose own calling in life embraced both contemplation and action, he found a lifelong model in the tailor from colonial New Jersey.

D. Elton Trueblood

Of D. Elton Trueblood's more than 30 books, the one with the most relevance to Woolman is his 1966 work *The People Called Quakers*.³⁷ Near its conclusion, Trueblood singles out six individuals over the first three centuries of Quaker existence for their commitment to the travelling ministry and for representing 'the Quaker life with fidelity': 'Most outstanding of these', he wrote, 'are George Fox, John Woolman, Stephen Grellet, Joseph John Gurney, Elizabeth Fry, and Rufus M. Jones.'³⁸ Fox and Woolman both represent the main branch of Friends; the latter four all represent Orthodox Quakers in the nineteenth or early twentieth century. In this book, Fox and Woolman merit chapters of their own; Gurney and Fry share a chapter; and Grellet and Jones are mentioned only in passing.

To write about Woolman entails Trueblood writing about, or at least alluding to, sociological issues, which is relatively uncomfortable territory for him. Chapter 8 on Woolman starts out wrong-footed. What Trueblood needed to address there, perhaps in the manner that Rufus Jones addressed the matter in *The Quakers in the American Colonies*, was Quakers' shortfalls and missteps in dealing with the issue of their members being enslavers for roughly the first century of their existence, prior to the mid-eighteenth century. Trueblood, however, did not address this matter at that point in his text. In contrast, Rufus Jones, in *The Quakers in the American Colonies*, noted that Barbados was a major point of entry of Quakerism

36 Steere, *Quaker Spirituality*, p. 229.

37 Originally published by Harper and Row, it was republished in 1971 by Friends United Press. *The People Called Quakers* shall henceforth be abbreviated TPCQ.

38 TPCQ, p. 250.

in the western hemisphere and, although Quakers gained many adherents there, the Quaker presence did nothing to decrease slaveholding (including Quaker slaveholding) on that sugar-producing island.³⁹ Jones noted that:

There was little or no moral sentiment in the colonies against slavery in the seventeenth century, and Friends fell in with the custom, as others did, with few apparent scruples. They were, however, from the first to awake to the fact that black people were human, and deserved proper treatment as human beings, though they evidently did not see, before the middle of the eighteenth century, that slavery *per se* must go.⁴⁰

Jones's graphic footnote to this paragraph illustrates Quaker confrontation among their own members who had been complicit in the torture and murder of African American slaves. Trueblood knew some of this history, and presented it clearly and concisely in a later chapter that aimed to elucidate 'the nature of the Quaker movement':

Once no Quaker, not even George Fox, saw slavery as a deep and terrible sin. When Fox was on the Island of Barbados, he admonished the owners of slaves to 'cause their overseers to deal mildly and gently with their Negroes, and not use cruelty to them, as the manner of some hath been and is; and that after certain years of servitude they would make them free'. A hundred years later, at the death of John Woolman, the moral vision had altered so radically that slavery was seen as a sin, and emancipation as something required of any who sought to be followers of Christ.⁴¹

Something like this sentiment is very much needed at the beginning of Trueblood's chapter on 'The Genius of John Woolman'.

Trueblood began his chapter on Woolman with an obscure anecdote of Woolman's eighteenth-century English non-Quaker contemporary Samuel Johnson, as shared by his biographer James Boswell. Trueblood then managed a tenuous transition to Woolman and the rise of Quakers' objection to imbibing alcohol.⁴² We could wish for a more suitable introduction to Woolman, perhaps based on the insights gleaned from Jones above.

Trueblood examines the actions of Woolman and Philadelphia Quakers during the French and Indian War of the 1750s. Trueblood recognised, especially on the basis of the 1737 so-called Walking Purchase, that the Lenni Lenape neighbours of the Pennsylvanians had genuine grievances against the theft of their land by Quakers and Quaker-enabled European settlers. But Trueblood avoided taking a firm stand on Quaker actions in this crisis, especially the decision of enough Quaker legislators to step down so non-pacifist non-Quaker legislators could

39 Jones, R. M., *Quakers in the American Colonies*, New York: Macmillan, 1911, pp. 26–27, 41–42, 395.

40 Jones, *Quakers in the American Colonies*, p. 156.

41 TPCQ, p. 267.

42 TPCQ, pp. 148–49.

take their places and the war against the Lenape and their French and Indian allies could be energetically prosecuted by a legislature that was actually willing to raise a militia, something that the pacifist Quakers had been unwilling to do. Whether the Quakers' abandonment of political power, Trueblood wrote, 'was a wise moral decision no one knows'.⁴³ Trueblood quoted at some length from an epistle by Philadelphia Quakers to London Quakers, expressing regret about the ways that Philadelphia Quakers had failed to 'discharge our duties' toward the Lenape in the recent past.⁴⁴ At this point, however, Trueblood abruptly and awkwardly turned his gaze from the injustices done to the Lenape to what he saw as the supreme rectitude of Woolman. Woolman's Quaker rectitude 'was so clearly superior to his neighbours in both integrity and in his moral sensitivity, as well as in purity of life, that it is wrong to present him as a characteristic or representative Quaker of the eighteenth or any other century'.⁴⁵

Trueblood drew extensively from the scholarly edition of Woolman's *Journal* compiled by Amelia Mott Gummere.⁴⁶ The authors of this article are in possession of the actual copy of the book that Trueblood used. On the fly leaf, in a large hand, is inscribed 'D. Elton Trueblood, Stanford, 1945'. Comparisons of Trueblood's text in *The People Called Quakers* with his markings in Gummere's book are extremely enlightening. Trueblood also referred infrequently to Whittier's edition of the *Journal*.

Trueblood did not mark any passage in his copy of Gummere's book related to Woolman's youth prior to the age of 19.⁴⁷ He did quote at length the only time that Woolman, albeit with a clear protest, ever agreed to write a bill of sale for an enslaved person, and this passage is heavily marked.⁴⁸ Trueblood appends the dramatic comment: 'Here, as early as 1743, is the fountain head of one of the chief tributaries of what eventually became a mighty stream of anti-slavery conviction.'

Trueblood turned to Woolman's thoughts about the necessity to limit his secular occupation so that it would not interfere with his Quaker ministry. He quoted extensively from the *Journal* passage where Woolman reflected, 'I believed Truth required me to live more free from outward cumbers.'⁴⁹ After noting Woolman's marriage to Sarah Ellis, Trueblood turned to Woolman's preceding missionary journey, three years prior to his marriage to Ellis, to the Albemarle Sound area of North Carolina. In his marked copy of Gummere's journal, opposite the portion where Woolman's reflections on his North Carolina movements are recorded,

43 TPCQ, pp. 150–52.

44 TPCQ, p. 152; Gummere, A. M. (ed.), *The Journal and Essays of John Woolman*, New York: MacMillan, 1922, p. 53. Hereafter abbreviated AMG.

45 TPCQ, p. 152.

46 AMG.

47 Compare TPCQ, p. 154, with AMG, p. 153.

48 Compare TPCQ, p. 155, with AMG, p. 161.

49 Compare TPCQ, p. 156 with AMG, 183. The latter is only lightly marked in Trueblood's copy.

Trueblood wrote, 'Did he meet Truebloods?'⁵⁰ On the back cover of *The People Called Quakers*, Trueblood provided an autobiographical description that noted that he was 'an eighth-generation Quaker in an unbroken line'. In his preface to that book he lauded his ancestor Arnold Trueblood, who died in an English prison in 1658. Shortly after that, however, the surviving Truebloods migrated to North Carolina, where, according to Trueblood's autobiography, they 'lived in the area north of Albemarle Sound. They belonged to a strong Quaker community which was visited by travelling ministers, one of whom was John Woolman, of *Journal* fame, who came first in 1746 and later in 1757.'⁵¹ So Trueblood had a strong familial interest in exploring this part of Woolman's itinerary.

During this visit to North Carolina Woolman foresaw future consequences for the White inhabitants of the land being unwilling to concede the freedom of the Black people living there. In *The People Called Quakers*, Trueblood characterised Woolman's prescience in this fashion:

Woolman's remarkable sensitivity made him have a foreboding of tragic events to come. One hundred and fifteen years before the beginning of the Civil War, John Woolman saw the institution of slavery 'as a dark gloominess hanging over the Land', and predicted, with terrible accuracy that 'in future Consequence will be grievous to posterity'.⁵²

This corresponded to a section of the Gummere text that Trueblood marked heavily. Next to 'dark gloominess', in the left margin, Trueblood marked 'N.B.' (*Nota bene*, Latin for 'note well'.) In the right margin, he wrote 'Civil War'.⁵³

In a sermon Trueblood preached in Cambridge, England, six years after the publication of *The People Called Quakers*, he treated this part of Woolman's journal less carefully, and he made a couple of mistakes in transcribing it. Here is how it turned up in his Cambridge sermon:

I saw **in slavery** [sic] so many vices and corruptions increased by trade and this way of life that it appeared to me as a **dark, gloomy mass**, [sic] hanging over the land, and though now many willingly run into it, yet in the future the consequences will be grievous ...

The actual text of the Gummere edition of the *Journal* reads as follows:

I saw **in these Southern Provinces**, so many Vices and Corruptions increased by this trade and this way of life, that it appeared to me as a **dark gloominess**

50 AMG, p. 166. Of course, Trueblood intended this question only for himself as he enjoyed a private moment of connection with the text.

51 TPCQ, p. x; Trueblood, E., *While It Is Day*, Richmond, IN: Yokefellow Press, 1987, p. 2.

52 TPCQ, p. 157.

53 Trueblood mentions the American Civil War seven times in TPCQ, suggesting its great personal significance for him.

hanging over the Land, and though now many willingly run into it, yet in future the Consequence will be grievous to posterity.⁵⁴

In his Cambridge address he drew a vague moral, divorced from the American context of this writing: 'How marvellously true! How this has been verified! So many of our troubles in our generation have come as the moral consequences of a way of life in which people did not sufficiently feel the sufferings of others.'⁵⁵

Trueblood noted that Woolman composed the first part of his tract *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes* in 1746, directly after his return from North Carolina, but it was not published until eight years later, in 1754. By way of contrast, the second part of *Some Considerations* had only a two-year lag between writing and publication, a time interval that seems much more normal for those who write for publication. In wondering how to account for the eight-year gestation period for the first edition, Trueblood commented, 'When we begin to understand how bold Woolman's position seemed to his contemporaries, it is not surprising that he was unwilling to press for early publication.'⁵⁶ Trueblood was correct that this lag time does require an explanation. Additional historical research since Trueblood was writing in the 1960s provides some insights. There was a major transition in Philadelphia Quakerism in the late 1740s and early 1750s that gave more power to reform-minded Quakers such as Woolman.⁵⁷ Woolman's father Samuel urged his son John to publish his essay before Samuel's death in 1750, but the son waited four more years after his father's death.⁵⁸

An unnamed interlocutor in *The People Called Quakers* was the evangelical and pastoral Quakerism that was emerging at the time of Trueblood's birth in 1900 and that surrounded him in the Midwest during his time at Earlham. Trueblood did not take evangelical Quakerism at face value.⁵⁹ Instead, he

54 Compare Newby, J. R. (ed.), *Basic Christianity: addresses of D. Elton Trueblood*, Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1977, p. 103, with AMG, p. 167. Emphases added. Perhaps Trueblood was unconsciously conflating this passage with a phrase from Woolman's account of his vision of being mixed with 'a mass of matter of a dull, gloomy colour' (Moulton, *Journal*, p. 185; AMG, p. 308). He may have been quoting from memory. The Moulton edition notes no variant readings.

55 Newby, *Basic Christianity*, pp. 103–04.

56 TPCQ, p. 158.

57 See, for example, Marietta, J., *The Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748–1783*, Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984; Rediker, M., *The Fearless Benjamin Lay: the Quaker dwarf who became the first revolutionary abolitionist*, Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2017.

58 Plank, *John Woolman's Path*, p. 105.

59 As a leader in Indiana Yearly Meeting during the mid-twentieth century, Trueblood took an important part in the work of that predominantly evangelical Friends' body. The development of many Quakers in Indiana Yearly Meeting and other Midwestern Quaker bodies toward a form of evangelical Christianity is most thoroughly covered in Hamm, T. D., *The Transformation of American Quakerism: Orthodox Friends, 1800–1907*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988.

took terms that were significant to evangelical Quakerism, such as ‘renewal’, ‘mission’ and ‘revival’, words not generally used among Quakers until the late nineteenth-century outbreak of evangelical revivals in Quaker meetings, and then reinterpreted them in a way that he hoped would make sense of all of the three-plus centuries of Quaker witness, not just the actions of one branch of Quakerism in recent decades. An example is a chapter on Quaker missions and outreach (‘The Penetration of the World’). In it he sought to derive Quaker witness from its origins in terms of missions and missionary activity and then, at the conclusion of his closing paragraph for the chapter, presented Woolman as a model missionary:

In practice Quakerism is a religion of mission. Since the mission has taken many forms in the past, each unrecognised before its emergence, we can be reasonably sure that this process will continue. At least we know that it ought to continue. A religious movement is untrue to its genius when it becomes fixed and ceases to move. ... The most inspired Quaker utterance on the subject of outreach is still that of John Woolman when he said, ‘To turn all the treasures we possess into the channel of universal love becomes the business of our lives.’⁶⁰

This is an extraordinary passage. During the mid-twentieth century, when Trueblood was writing, there was already a gulf developing between Quaker service, as exemplified by the American Friends Service Committee, which had been founded in 1917 and that received a Nobel Peace Prize in 1947, less than two decades before the writing of *The People Called Quakers*, and the Quaker missionary movement that had largely grown out of the evangelical revivals among Friends in the late nineteenth century and that would, by the late twentieth century, produce numbers of Quaker members that were greater than those in the North Atlantic Quaker homelands.⁶¹ Trueblood audaciously sought to bridge Quaker impulses toward service and mission, and Woolman appeared to be his most promising candidate for constructing that bridge. Trueblood presented Woolman as the apostle of the kind of universal love that underlies both service and mission, as Quakers and other practice them. If this book were to succeed in bringing all the branches of Quakerism together because virtually all were and are interested in service, missions or both, it is not a far stretch to assert that he implicitly was propounding that the witness of Woolman was that that one could envision most easily as facilitating that conversation and eventual joint witness of separated branches of Friends.

If Trueblood categorised Woolman as a missionary in his chapter on missions, elsewhere in his book he used the more prosaic (and widely accepted among

60 TPCQ, p. 264; Trueblood is quoting from Woolman’s ‘Plea for the Poor’: Moulton, *Journal and Major Essays of Woolman*, p. 141.

61 Angell, S. W., ‘Quakers and Missions, 1861–1937’, in Angell, S. W., Dandelion, P. and Watt, D. H. (eds), *The Creation of Modern Quaker Diversity, 1830–1937*, University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2023, pp. 191–212.

Friends) term of travelling minister. Trueblood observed that, if Quakers were to maintain their unity, then the travelling ministry that someone like Woolman personified was essential: 'One important counterbalance to local aberrations was the beneficent practice of almost constant visiting, a practice brilliantly illustrated in John Woolman's visit to Friends in North Carolina.' Trueblood then hastened to observe that visits by Woolman and other travelling ministers like Woolman did not forestall separations among Friends, as, within six decades after Woolman's death, it became evident that 'opposing groups of Friends were on a collision course' resulting in 'a disastrous division between what we may term "liberal" and "orthodox" Friends in 1827'.⁶² Nevertheless, if Quakers were to work toward a restoration of their unity, the travelling ministry of Woolman would be necessary.

In addition to the travelling ministry, another manner in which Trueblood saw Woolman serving as a beneficial example was in Woolman's ministry of writing. Trueblood saw Woolman's writing as without artifice. Trueblood would probably have qualified his judgement that Woolman's *Journal* was produced 'with no conscious artistry'⁶³ if he had access to Phillips Moulton's definitive edition of the *Journal* and other major essays by Woolman, in which Moulton demonstrated how Woolman laboured over many portions of his writings. One advantage of Moulton's edition, as compared with Gummere's scholarly edition which Trueblood primarily consulted, was that Moulton provides variant readings from the three manuscripts of the *Journal* that Woolman wrote out by hand. Unfortunately, Moulton's edition was published only in 1971,⁶⁴ five years after the publication of *The People Called Quakers*. That comment by Trueblood aside, it is clear that Trueblood valued Woolman's writing immensely. Trueblood saw Woolman as adapting George Fox's pattern of Quaker autobiographical devotional writing. Probably Trueblood knew nothing of the Quaker autobiographical writing by Richard Farnworth and many others that preceded Fox.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, Trueblood's regard for Woolman's writing was heartfelt and genuine. Trueblood was inclined to believe that Woolman's written works were the only 'first class devotional writing' to come out of eighteenth-century Quakerism.⁶⁶

62 TPCQ, p. 17. Trueblood refers to the Hicksite–Orthodox schism in several American yearly meetings in 1827 and 1828. While some Hicksites were liberals, not all were. See Hamm, T. D., 'Hicksite, Orthodox, and Evangelical Quakerism, 1805–1887', in Angell and Dandelion (eds), *Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, pp. 64–69.

63 TPCQ, p. 267.

64 Moulton, *Journal*, pp. 273–82.

65 Farnworth, R., *The Heart Opened by Christ*, London: Giles Calvert, 1655. This writing by Farnworth is explored in Birkel, M. L. and Angell, S. W., 'The Witness of Richard Farnworth: prophet of light, apostle of church order', in Angell, S. W. and Pink Dandelion, B. (eds), *Early Quakers and their Theological Thought, 1647–1723*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 83–101.

66 TPCQ, p. 216.

If the travelling ministry and high-quality writing were two aspects of Woolman's ministry that Trueblood admired, Woolman's theology was a third such aspect. Trueblood's admiration for Woolman's theology is a little harder to describe precisely. But Trueblood especially rejoiced in Woolman's generous and tender acknowledgment of the Spirit in others, even non-Quakers and non-Christians. Like Steere, Trueblood was very interested in Woolman's visit to the Lenni Lenape at Wyalusing. When the Lenape spiritual leader Papunhank refused translation of Woolman's prayer because he loved 'to feel where the words come from', Woolman, in Trueblood's words, 'had both the wisdom and taste to see that prayer requires no interpretation'.⁶⁷ When Trueblood reflected on this episode elsewhere in his book, he found deeper levels of meaning:

Christ is, indeed, the Way, but men of different faith can teach one another what they have learned of the Way, and those who know of the historic Christ have a special responsibility. The humble and yet truly dedicated Christian missionary goes to others as a learner as well as a teacher. We are not so rich in spiritual resources that we can afford to neglect any. It is a striking fact that, when John Woolman, in the eighteenth century, went as a missionary to the American Indians, he told them that he had done so in order to learn something from them.⁶⁸

This inclusivist, if not pluralist, Woolman-inspired passage in Trueblood's writings has had rich resonance throughout much of Quaker history. Trueblood's footnote to this paragraph cited his treatment of world religions in his own *Philosophy of Religion*.⁶⁹ But a Quaker reader of this passage would be reminded that Trueblood was also a scholar of Robert Barclay, and that Barclay's largely universalistic spirit, as exemplified in such facets of his *Apology for the Christian Divinity* as Barclay's treatment of the universal and saving Light of Christ, were matters that Trueblood went to great lengths to explain with clarity in his own biography of Barclay.⁷⁰ Nearer in time to Trueblood's own writing, it is also very close in phrasing and sentiment to an influential yet controversial re-evaluation of Protestant missions, *Rethinking Missions*, produced by Quaker Rufus Jones and an ecumenical grouping of Protestant scholars in 1932.⁷¹

Much of Trueblood's exposition of Woolman is very similar to that of Douglas Steere, to the extent that one wonders how much the two Quaker scholars

67 TPCQ, p. 159; AMG, p. 250. In Trueblood's copy of the *Journal* this passage is heavily marked, with an 'NB' after Papunhank's statement.

68 TPCQ, p. 78.

69 The work cited was Trueblood, D. E., *The Philosophy of Religion*, New York: Harper & Row, 1957, chapter 16.

70 Trueblood, D. E., *Robert Barclay*, New York: Harper and Row, 1968, pp. 150–67.

71 Angell, S. W., 'Rufus Jones and the Laymen's Foreign Missions Inquiry: how a Quaker helped to shape modern ecumenical Christianity', *Quaker Theology* 3 (Autumn 2000), pp. 167–209; Laymen's Foreign Mission Inquiry Committee of Appraisal, *Re-thinking Missions*, New York: Harper, 1932.

influenced each other.⁷² For example, Trueblood also placed great weight on Woolman's last missionary trip to England, and he, like Steere, was particularly interested in Woolman's supposed initial rejection by English Quaker elders,⁷³ the matter that, as we show in a previous section, Trueblood's contemporary Henry Cadbury raised such penetrating questions about.⁷⁴

The last sentence of Trueblood's chapter on 'The Genius of John Woolman' is as follows: 'All who read Woolman have a chance to realise that the best thing in the world is a really good person.'⁷⁵ One can easily distinguish between various kinds of aspirational goodness. Scholars of ministry, in this regard, often distinguish between pastoral and prophetic ministry, with Woolman generally seen as an exemplar of the latter. Prophets often function as irritants, because they try to get their contemporaries to see what they do not want to see.⁷⁶ Woolman was not an exception here. Woolman and his co-labourers sometimes persuaded Quakers enslavers to free their slaves, but at other times the enslavers' response to the anti-slavery irritant of Woolman and others was to leave the Society of Friends altogether and to join another denomination where the ministers would exhibit more pastoral understanding of the enslavers' predicament.⁷⁷ Thus, if the pre-eminent aspect of one's definition of goodness is someone who can be entirely depended upon to extend comfort to the afflicted, Woolman, like Jeremiah from the Bible, would not necessarily be one's foremost choice.⁷⁸ For them, it depends very much upon who is feeling affliction, and why they are feeling that affliction.

In his 1972 lecture at the University Church in Cambridge, England, Trueblood offered a more nuanced evaluation of Woolman's witness. Woolman had two secrets, he averred. Woolman 'had a very tender sense of all suffering', and his 'faith was deeply Christ-centered, so that he had a strong basis of inner power'. Accordingly, Trueblood envisioned Woolman as bridging another gap:

I am frequently saddened when I see the way in which we are polarised; often there is a great division between the people on the one side who are concerned with social action, and nothing but social action, and the people on the other

72 We believe that Trueblood read Steere's *Doors into Life*, with it possibly serving as a source for TPCQ.

73 TPCQ, pp. 163–66.

74 See note 28.

75 TPCQ, p. 167.

76 Kershner, J. R., *John Woolman and the Government of Christ: a colonial Quaker's vision for the British Atlantic world*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018, p. 65: Woolman believed that 'acting in obedience to God's will, rather than economic interests, opened the way to spiritual treasures, even though it incurred the anger of his peers'.

77 Recent research suggests that most Quaker enslavers were unpersuaded by Woolman, and more than four-fifths changed denominations rather than submit to the pleas by Woolman and their colleagues to free their slaves. See Soderlund, J. R., *Quakers and Slavery: a divided spirit*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985.

78 On Woolman and Jeremiah see Birkel, M., *A Near Sympathy: the timeless quaker wisdom of John Woolman*, Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 2003, pp. 43–56.

side who are concerned with the development of the inner life of prayer and of worship and devotion, and nothing but that. I soon see that each of these alone is insufficient, for both are necessary. The wonderful thing about Woolman is that he demonstrated the two sides in equal strength.⁷⁹

Trueblood largely avoided the word ‘mysticism’, but when mentors and contemporaries such as Rufus Jones and Howard Thurman used the phrase ‘affirmative mysticism’ as an appropriate goal for human life, this balance between prayer and social action is what they meant. Trueblood is entirely correct, and insightful, to see Woolman as a leading example of this approach toward spirituality championed by Jones and Thurman.⁸⁰

Conclusions

John Woolman spoke to the moment during which Elton Trueblood wrote *The People Called Quakers*. As Elton was writing, the Civil Rights Movement was underway and the major protests against the war in Vietnam were yet to come. Quakers and other religious folk in Trueblood’s Midwest, including their pastors, were flooding their Congressional representatives with pleas to pass legislation to ensure civil rights.⁸¹ Civil rights was also a popular cause on the Earlham College campus where Trueblood taught, as Martin Luther King, Jr. (in 1959) and other civil rights activists in later years spoke on campus to broad acclaim, and some Earlham students went to Mississippi and other southern states to work for voting rights and civil rights.⁸² According to Tom Hamm, ‘none of this was controversial’ at Earlham,⁸³ at least during the mid-1960s timeframe when Trueblood was writing his book. John Woolman provided Trueblood (and Steere also) with

79 Newby, *Basic Christianity*, p. 105.

80 Our interpretation of Woolman differs in some respects from that of Jones. We agree with Jones that mysticism can be ‘direct, energizing, vital, and transforming’ (Jones, *Later Periods of Quakerism*, New York: Macmillan, 1921, vol. 1, p. xvi), and we find Jones’ comment that Woolman was the ‘consummate flower of eighteenth-century Quakerism’ (Jones, *Later Period*, p. 24) to be a fitting one. We would disagree with Jones that Woolman’s life demonstrates ‘the defects of over-negation’ (Jones, *Later Period*, p. 25). We would instead propose that Woolman is a fine example of the affirmative mysticism that Jones championed in his overall scholarship. Thurman does not address Woolman by name in his published works.

81 Findlay, Jr., J. F., *Church People in the Struggle: the national council of churches and the black freedom movement, 1950–1970*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. 51–64; Wilson, E. R., *Uphill for Peace: Quaker impact on congress*, Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1975, pp. 143–45.

82 As to the specific influence of John Woolman on these activist students, Michael Birkel recalls conversations with the late Paul Lacey, professor of English at Earlham in those turbulent times, who spoke of how students referred to John Woolman as an inspiration for their efforts in peace and justice.

83 Hamm, T. D., *Earlham College: a history, 1847–1997*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), p. 257.

Quaker precedent and a model to labour for social justice. John Woolman does not otherwise figure largely in Trueblood's prodigious output of books, but he clearly addressed the need of the hour.

Douglas Steere's appreciation of John Woolman was more longstanding, hailing back at least to the early 1930s. In Woolman's writings, he found inspiration for a life of both dedicated spiritual practice and efforts to better the world. While Steere promoted Woolman as a model for all, he found in him a deeply personal exemplar of the life that Steere longed to live. This is not so evident for Trueblood, even though he clearly admired Woolman.

Overall, Elton Trueblood and Douglas Steere attest to the enduring power of John Woolman to speak across the ages, and to invite readers into a more profound inward life and into greater commitment to seek a just society.

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