



The Christ of the Indian Road

E. Stanley Jones

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Jones recounts his experiences in India, where he arrived as a young and presumptuous missionary who later matured into a veteran who attempted to contextualize Jesus Christ within the Indian culture. He names the mistake many Christians make in trying to impose their culture on the existing culture where they are bringing Christ. Instead he makes the case that Christians learn from other cultures, respect the truth that can be found there, and let Christ and the existing culture do the rest.

The Christ of the Indian Road Details

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From Reader Review The Christ of the Indian Road for online ebook

Adam Parker says

There are three books which have drastically affected my daily life with profound teaching and wisdom; this book is one of them. E. Stanley Jones lays out very profound teachings in a simple way. He takes concepts I thought I've known my entire life, things I've taken for granted, and turned them on their head in a single paragraph. That could speak to the fact that I had a very weak understanding, and maybe it does, but more so, it speaks to the fact that Jones, through the Holy Spirit, taught and continues to teach through his books in a very enlightening way! Please, read this book if you are a follower of Jesus! If you aren't, read it, too! You won't walk away unchanged.

Joshua Moran says

As I continue my way through the 25 Essentials list, I finally had the joy of reading Christ of the Indian Road over winter break. I owe this privilege to Eric Mingle who hooked me up with a pretty sweet copy. This was my first exposure to E Stanley Jones and his writings and I can tell you it won't be my last.

At first glance I thought this was a book about his life but it turned out to be a book about missions. A book about Jesus. A book about taking Jesus to people and letting them accept Jesus, not Jesus and western culture. Just Jesus.

The more I think about this book, the more I like it. The more I think about what it means to take Jesus to people, to offer the Son of God and a relationship with him, the more excited I am. It also challenged me to know Jesus more. How I can I introduce someone that I don't know? I must know Him to introduce Him. I want to do this. This book helped me think through these things and understand the figure of Jesus better because He is the God that loved the world not just western civilization.

A few quotes from the ever quotable E Stanley Jones:

Besides, let it be noted that if Christianity isn't worth exporting it isn't worth keeping. If we cannot share it, we cannot keep it.

Experience and expression are the two sides of the Christian life, and one cannot exist without the other. Kill either and you kill both. We have tried to get the church to realize it's joyous privilege of soul-winning.

Jesus does not need to be protected. He needs to be presented. He protects Himself.

Check it out and let me know what you think!

Laura says

Powerful stuff. Convicting read. Great reminder to keep our focus on Christ. Jesus is the Way, the Truth and

the Life. Our focus is to be on Him, on the the 'who' of Christ, rather than getting sidetracked and overly caught up in the 'whats' of Christianity.

A couple quotes:

"We must call men not to loyalty to a belief, but loyalty to a Person. ...He creates belief."

"If some are afraid of what might happen if we were to give India Jesus without hard-and-fast systems of thought and ecclesiastical organization, lest the whole be corrupted, let our fears be allayed. Jesus is well able to take care of Himself."

"We who feel that we must be steadiers of the ark must remember that Jesus can take care of himself, even in moments when there seems most to fear." (pp. 166-167)

The book was written in the 1920s, so it's helpful to know that the Immigration Law that was a prominent discussion topic at the time established unequal quotas by country; the law was passed in 1924 and was basically repealed/replaced in 1965.

Rebecca says

I am somewhat stunned by how well written and thoughtful this book is, given that it was written in 1925. He records talking with Gandhi many times, and thinks of his campaign as a noble failure, which, of course, is what it was in 1925. Though his vocabulary of Christianization is not going to read well, his sense that Indian people should be encouraged to accept Jesus without the accompanying burden of Christianity as the west has practiced it is well thought through, especially for the time in which it was written.

Bryan Neuschwander says

What a hope saturated read! Jones seems to have deeply known the person of Jesus--the book practically oozes the gracious spirit of the King. This is a profound, mature, and lively reflection on learning to love and live across culture and religion in the way of Jesus. Highly recommend.

Nico Smith says

I read the Dutch translation of this book: Christus langs den Indischen heirweg.

Adam Gellert says

Wow! What a great book, so glad I discovered E. Stanley Jones recently! This is one of the best books I've ever read, with so many memorable quotes that I felt like I was marking up every page. I was also amazed that so many issues he writes about in 1925 are relevant to today, like racial divides and immigration policy - it makes me realize we haven't grown much as a society. E. Stanley Jones also emphasizes the need to keep it simple when going to other countries with the message of Christ, and let Him do the rest. Go out and get this book!

Blake Thompson says

E Stanley Jones is writing from a wealth of wisdom in missions to the Hindu populations of India. I was deeply struck by his love for India and her people. As I was reading, it felt as if I was just sitting at the feet of this man as he recounted his experiences and Christ's movements in India. Super cool book.

Matthew Showman says

I loved it. I loved it. I loved it.

Richard Bartholomew says

E. Stanley Jones has sometimes been dubbed the "Billy Graham of India" for his evangelism in that country; however, the evidence of *The Christ of the Indian Road* suggests that Jones was a man of broader experience and imagination than Graham. While remaining true to his evangelical experience, Jones had friends and associates among the Hindu intelligentsia – particularly M. K. Gandhi – and appreciated the need for Christianity to be interpreted by Indians within an Indian context, rather than conflated with Western civilization and imposed from the outside. Jones explains that Hindu intellectuals are increasingly coming to appreciate the significance of Christ and the problems with Hinduism, and that this would lead to a Christian future for India: "The Greeks were the brain of Europe and did its philosophic thinking, just as the Hindus are the brain of Asia and have done the philosophic thinking for Asia... Jesus stood midway between the Greeks and the Hindus..."

This is not, though, itself an intellectual volume: it is based on a series of addresses given in the USA in 1925-6, and "at the request of the publishers the spoken style has been retained". Much of the book consists of rapid-fire observations that range from the insightful to the glib (the above quote has something of both), and his argument depends to a large extent on the piling up of anecdotes. At the heart of the book is the notion of Jesus as "Personality", with a capital "P", whom Jones pitches with old-time sawdust enthusiasm ("there is literally non on else on the field and nothing else on the horizon"). His approach made me think of "Jesus Plus Nothing", a phrase associated with the Fellowship, and it is worth noting that Jones was also an associate of Abraham Vereide.

One chapter deals with "the Great Hindrance" to evangelism: western racism. This prompts one of the strangest passages in the book:

At question time a voice came out of the back of the crowd, "What do you think of the KKK?" This was about four years ago, when I had scarcely heard of the Klan myself. But here in the backwater of India, a place where I thought the least from the outside would penetrate, the loud speaker was speaking and was embarrassing our witness and message. I have many fine friends in the Klan, and they are sincere and earnest, but since they are a religious organization and have the cross at the center of their gatherings, their racial attitudes are a decided embarrassment to us.

The book also includes an amusing assessment of Krishnamurti:

I had a long interview with him, found him of average intelligence, of rather lovable disposition, of mediocre spiritual intuitions, and heard him swear in good, round English! I came away feeling that if he is all we, as a race, have to look to in order to get out of the muddle we are in, then God pity us.

Jeannie Marie says

One of my favorite books of all time. Mind-shifting. It changed my world view about Jesus and freed me up to just offer Jesus to my friends and not a religion.

John says

E. Stanley Jones (1884-1973) was a Methodist missionary from the U.S. who served primarily in India. This book, his first, was written in 1925. It seems remarkably contemporary, although Christians reading it today might feel a little less optimistic than Jones did then.

His overall thesis, as I understood it, is that he didn't come to India to bring Western civilization, or even to bring Christianity, but to bring Christ. His respect for the people of India and for their beliefs is apparent throughout.

Although this remains primarily a book for those of us who are interested in Christian missions, the historical backdrop is interesting because of course at the time India was still under the dominion of Great Britain.

Jones felt that needed to change for the West to have any relevance in India.

Jones was a contemporary and friend -- and eventually a biographer -- of Mahatma Gandhi, and the chapter on Gandhi is particularly interesting.

But the whole book is inspirational, powerful and oh so reasonable.

Here are a few excerpts:

Christ must be in an Indian setting. It must be the Christ of the Indian Road.

####

... we are not measuring ourselves by ourselves, but in the white light of the person of Jesus.

####

We announce that we believe that we have discovered the center of this moral and spiritual universe -- the person of Jesus. That causes confusion and upset. But when men once find that center they find that an orderly spiritual universe comes out of chaos. But we do not impose it upon men, we share it with them.

####

He and the facts not only command us to go, but he, standing in the East, beckons us to come. He is there -- deeply there, before us. We not only take him; we go to him.

####

If Christ is in this, I do not see how we can be out of it.

####

I have had no plans that I was not ready to scrap, if they did not seem to be vital, or did not work. There was one concern and one only: how could I help India to see in Jesus what I saw.

####

... if the East is crucified on a cross of servitude, we are being crucified on a cross of materialism. We both need thee -- desperately.

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I said, "Mahatma Gandhi, I am very anxious to see Christianity naturalized in India, so that it shall be no longer a foreign thing identified with a foreign people and a foreign government, but a part of the national life of India and contributing its power to India's uplift and redemption. What would you suggest that we do to make that possible?" He very gravely and thoughtfully replied: "I would suggest first, that all of you Christians, missionaries and all, must begin to live more like Jesus Christ."

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... we are inoculating the world with a mild form of Christianity, so that now it is practically immune against the real thing.

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We should be grateful for any truth found anywhere, knowing that it is the finger post that points to Jesus, who is the Truth.

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To lose one's temper would be to lose one's case, for we are not there to win arguments, but to win men.

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In my ministry I was to be not God's lawyer, but his witness. That would mean that there would have to be living communion with Christ so that there would always be something to pass on.

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They forget many, if not most, of my arguments, but they bring up this matter of experience again and again. It grips.

###

If the emphasis in our approach to Christianity is "What?" then it is divisive, but if the emphasis is "Whom?" then we are drawn together at the place of this Central Magnet.

###

Every nation has its peculiar contribution to make to the interpretation of Christianity. The Son of man is too great to be expressed by any one portion of humanity. Those that differ from us most will probably contribute most to our expression of Christianity.

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How is it possible to limit or demarcate the lines of the Kingdom any more? He steps beyond them, and shocked and frightened like the Pharisees of other days we stand and wonder how far he will go in his warm sympathy and understanding. He eats with publicans and sinners and with the Hindu too.

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I wish the publishers had included a biographical note, although that's found easily enough on Google. Most of the books I read are borrowed from the library, but I'm glad I bought this one. I already want to read it again.

Jim Dressner says

This book, published in 1925, is both dated and surprisingly fresh. E. Stanley Jones seems remarkably free of the standard colonial mindset and lavishes much praise for many aspects of the Indian cultural genius. This book communicates his passion to have Jesus understood not from a Western point of view but rather from an Indian point of view, and expresses his view that this Indian understanding would enrich the global church's understanding of Jesus. This is now standard mission thinking--however imperfectly realized--but

probably seemed radical at the time.

Jones' expressed optimism about Jesus' teaching becoming accepted widely all across India; I suspect he would be discouraged that respect for Jesus has not led to more followers of Jesus. It is disappointing to think of the lost opportunities and potential. Jones also projected the decline of Hinduism; I kept wondering how he would view the rise of Hindu nationalism and the recent electoral victory of the BJP.

The book is a surprisingly easy read, and has nuggets of wisdom that apply broadly to believers anywhere. I was particularly struck by the chapter entitled "The Concrete Christ"; while it didn't particularly fit the logical flow of the book, Jones made an interesting case for Jesus acting and teaching in strong, specific "concrete" ways.

Tony Noel says

Great book on missiology

There is much that can be extracted from this pivotal work regarding how to have a missional approach to the people/placed God has called you too.

E. Stanley Jones taught me to bring Jesus everywhere. Make Him simple. Proclaim unadulterated. Introduce Him to and trust Him with others. Be a learner of world-views and see where Christ is looking to fulfill because all truth is God's truth. Saturate in Him daily and let the saturation pour to the hungry souls searching for it though they don't know it yet.

So good. Read it.

Kathleen Dixon says

This book was published in 1925, and the author of this book had been a missionary in India for many years. He felt himself to be a part of the country. By his account he was highly successful in introducing Christ to India - because he didn't attempt to spread Western Christianity, but to witness to the Christ himself. In the words of 100CBCC 100 Christian Books That Changed the Century, he 'questioned standard missionary procedure as well as British colonialism,' and that this 'was a key book in preparing the way for the future (p.47)'.

For a man of his time he was quite remarkable, though he was still limited by his need to proclaim Jesus as the Only Way. Still, if he had moved further he would then have been completely lost to the Christianity of the time and would thus have had little influence. So I would say that the seeds he planted (e.g. his praise of Gandhi, and his call for people to interpret Christ within their own context) proved ultimately fruitful. Though it took a long time, there has been some excellent, recent scholarship on the culturally interpreted Christ. Jones would be pleased.
