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Jones' "Christian social innovation: Renewing Wesleyan witness" (Book Review)

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Book Reviews



Jones, L. G. (2016). *Christian social innovation: Renewing Wesleyan witness*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 118 pp. \$16.99. ISBN 9781501825774

Dr. L. Gregory Jones, executive vice president and provost at Baylor University as well as senior fellow of Duke Divinity School, addresses the issue of creative Christian solutions to social problems in his book, *Christian Social Innovation*, a well-researched scholarly publication made accessible to a wide audience. Jones' driving question is this: why are secular groups leading the way in changing the world for the better when Christians are the ones that have the central purpose, faith, and power to do so? Christians do not seek social innovation for the sole purpose of changing things; they seek it as part of their great mission, that is, to be like Christ.

In his opening definition of Christian social innovation, coupled with a call to keep the end, or *telos* (p. 32), in sight from the beginning, Jones writes that when Christians seek to promote change and make things new, they are following Christ's example and are empowered by Christ's Spirit to accomplish His work (p. 20). To illustrate this faith-based innovation, Jones draws on scriptural, historical, and current stories of God's people changing their world in obedience to His call.

While inspirational and mind-blowing, these stories are not abstract; Jones presents concrete examples of how to cultivate an "improvisational spirit" and a "scriptural imagination," concluding with a chapter of advice on practical application. He emphasizes the importance of community and "holy friendships" in establishing a culture of Christian social innovation.

Christian Social Innovation satisfies intellectual queries and challenges its readers to a practical application of its ideas. Jones clearly defines his terms throughout the book as he wrestles with social problems. Rather than providing a pat method for the solution of social ills, Jones presents a holistic way to cultivate an innovative mindset, rooted in Christianity, to combat social issues.

Reviewer

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