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Powe and Jacksons' "E. Stanley Jones & sharing the good news in a pluralistic society" (book review)

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Book Reviews



Powe Jr., F. D., Jackson, J. (Eds.). (2018). *E. Stanley Jones & sharing the good news in a pluralistic society*. Nashville, TN: Wesley's Foundery Books. 136 pp. \$16.99. ISBN 9781945935107

This book reviews E. Stanley Jones's approach to evangelism and social ethics as seen through the lenses of E. Stanley Jones Professors of Evangelism, who are placed in seminaries supported by the Foundation for Evangelism, a United Methodist-affiliated foundation that embodies principles of the Wesleyan tradition. This book is a compilation of essays written by these professors, who each write an insightful essay describing unique aspects of Jones's ministry.

E. Stanley Jones is considered one of the most influential Methodist missionaries who served from the 1920s through the 1960s in India, the United States, and Japan. He was able to converse peacefully among those with exclusivist religious beliefs. Pluralism claims that all truth is relative and contextual, yet Jones fiercely believed that Jesus Christ, Son of God, is the only hope for salvation. Therefore, this book conveys the meaningful ways he shared this message.

The methods utilized by Jones included evangelistic lecturing with question-and-answer sessions that took place in public spaces. He also held Round Table Conferences that focused on faith's practical impact regarding if and how people found God through their experience. Additionally, he established Christian Ashrams, which are retreats primarily targeting educated Indians who could come learn about God and partake in dialogue about why they were there, what they wanted, and what they needed from God. He focused on being engaging, relational, dialogical, posturing with frankness, humility, integrity, and openness, while calling people to follow Christ, not necessarily Christianity. Christ should be the center of the Church, which he thought often fails to embody Christ. Jones believed the deepest need for humans is conversion through self-surrender. He thought religion should be approached through experimentation, verification, and sharing of results (p. 63). Working to advocate on behalf of people with those in power, he practiced active listening as part of his public witness to the story of faith. Being accessible, reciprocal, and vulnerable with people are some ways to be a better Christian witness.

These are methods anyone can learn from and apply today. However, this book would be particularly useful for those in seminary education or ministry settings. It would also be helpful for anyone who is interested in evangelism and missions and looking for ways to contextualize the gospel in a pluralistic culture. Political theorists or social radicals may also find it intriguing. Overall, it is inspiring and an easy read whether a student or a lay person. It provides a good introduction to E. Stanley Jones's ministry, so achieves its purpose. It includes endnotes.

Reviewer

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