

***The Divine Yes (1975)***  
***Foreword by Robert Hayes***

To express an appreciation for the life and ministry of E. Stanley Jones is like trying to put into words what happens when one experiences the grandest of landscapes. Rev. Dr. Bob Tuttle, the first E. Stanley Jones Professor of Evangelism (Asbury Theological Seminary) and a mentor of mine, said that to interpret E. Stanley Jones is like trying to describe Mt. Everest: it is grand and impressive, but is made up of countless subtleties, crevices, and plateaus. It is more than a mere sum of its parts. *The Divine Yes*, Jones' last published work, gives us a unique view of the grandeur and the intricacies that comprise such a remarkable life.

In the modern public climate where civil discourse is hard to find, especially around issues of faith, learning from Jones' example is as important as ever. He did not seek to destroy the religions he found in India and rebuild his own version of Christianity on top of the ruins, though some of his contemporaries were trying to do so. Brother Stanley (he insisted that we remind one another that we are sisters and brothers) demonstrated a love and compassion for the people of India with whom he abided. He showed that abiding requires more than mere co-existence. It means learning from the other. It means becoming more Christ-like because of the encounter with the other. It means being willing to be molded and shaped by conversations, interactions, and observations. Brother Stanley did so while maintaining a steadfast faith in Christ. He rose above political persuasion, cultural influence, and national background. His approach provides important lessons and examples for the generations of Christians who follow.

Brother Stanley remains a household name in much of India. His notoriety is due to his dedication to loving and serving the people. He sought to emulate the example of the Savior that had transformed his life. That required living in such a way that people greatly admired not Brother Stanley, but Jesus-and nothing but Jesus. Brother Stanley discovered what remains so elusive to many of us today: making Jesus famous without trying make ourselves even more famous.

The ministry which I serve, World Methodist Evangelism, exists to serve the entire Wesleyan Methodist family: over 80 million people in 134 countries. I am blessed to join in ministry with people on nearly every continent—clergy and laity—who seek to follow Jesus in the company of the John and Charles Wesley. Through the great diversity in the Wesleyan Methodist witness, Jones' legacy remains a strong constant. The example of Brother Stanley to embody Jesus' message in whatever context one may be serving is universal. His faithful witness to share and show the love of Jesus remains an example for Christians worldwide, and particularly among the People Called Methodists.

What follows in these pages is a collection carefully preserved by a loving family of the last words Jones would write. When he could no longer write, he dictated his thoughts and reflections. The dictations were later transcribed to complete this work. They were his last chance to share the message of the gospel to which he had devoted his entire life. With urgency he wants all to know that he found his reason for being and to encourage everyone to embrace that Divine Yes. One's final message is often the most important. *The Divine Yes* is a perfect picture of that.

These messages come at the apex of an exceptional life. Jones preached to countless people. Though he was a graduate of Asbury College, he held numerous honorary degrees. He had audiences with heads of state of the most powerful nations in the world. He wrote profusely. His writings launched movements he could have never imagined. Martin Luther King, Jr. attributes Jones' work on Mahatma Gandhi as the source of his first vision for a non-violent Civil Rights Movement in the United States.

In addition, Brother Stanley's ministry was much more than that of a talented preacher speaking to the masses. He sought to minister to the mind, body, and soul of individuals and Churches alike. He and his wife, Mabel established schools and what was the only Christian psychiatric hospital in India in its day. They began a global movement in the Round Table Conferences and Christian Ashrams. All of these ministries remain active and vibrant today. He did all of this with humility and grace that pointed his admirers to the Savior he served.

Those who met E. Stanley Jones could tell that they had seen a true example of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth. When I learned that the E. Stanley Jones Foundation would be republishing all of his writings as a part of the 21 Century in Our Time Series, I was pleased to hear that a new generation of mission evangelists would have the benefit of the richness of learning from his wisdom. May we show such an example in this generation and in the generations to come to invite them to embrace The Divine Yes for themselves.

Rev. Dr. Robert E. Haynes, PhD

Director of Education and Leadership

World Methodist Evangelism

Fairhope, Alabama

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## ***The Divine Yes (1975)*** **Afterword by Sandra Gray**

Life is a precious gift. Every moment is at the disposal of us all, but individual choices are made as to what use the moments shall be spent. Then, when confronted with the reality of the brevity of life, the most earnest seize the opportunity to steward the final moments for the most supreme use known to humankind: proclaiming that the Truth of Jesus is both living and eternal and can be trusted. With the passing of time, what was formerly invisible becomes more visible. “*Days speak, but it is the multitude of years that teach wisdom.*” (Job 32:7).

E. Stanley Jones’s *The Divine Yes* is a powerful testimony in his final earthly journey that would take him home, affirming the message that “Jesus is Lord” as he had proclaimed for more than six decades in India and around the world.

On countless occasions, especially during my presidency of Asbury University, the *alma mater* of Jones, students and others have asked how one can know, without reservation, that Jesus Christ is for real. This is especially true of young people today known as Generation Z (born 1997-2012) and the Millennials (born 1991-1996). Their generations, more than any other, have been taught truth is relative, that it is based upon feelings rather than fact, which means that truth is unreliable. They desperately desire “*to know*” that which is lasting, eternal, and worthy of all of life’s moments and resources. Others, in the more senior years and having experienced the crucibles of life, are asking of life on earth, “*is there something more?*”

*The Divine Yes* offers such a conversation for the most serious questions of humanity no matter the life stage. It is a confident, steadfast “*knowing*” – that Jesus, out of His great love, came to seek and save the lost. He is the Divine “Yes” to the disappointing and painful human “No”. The message is persuasive and stirring, not by the manipulative use of words, but simply evidenced by the power of a life well lived. Jones lived his moments out of conviction and resolve that life has ultimate purpose as ordained by a Holy God. There is a vast foreverness to his final conversation. Only the

passage of time with unwavering faithfulness can so ripen the human character and develop the soul that shines forth in this manuscript.

To read *The Divine Yes* is to enter the atmosphere of one who is experiencing eternal reality, where faith is at the edge of becoming sight. Written during the poignant experience of weakness and failing health, Jones acknowledges he may soon be departing this life for his heavenly home. Unable to write as was his custom, care for his own needs, or deliver one last oratory message – Jones confirms by letting his life speak convincingly, that when one comes to the final hours of life on earth, when one has nothing else, Jesus is enough. He was determined to convey these parting thoughts and there was an urgency in his tone. It is as if the indwelling Holy Spirit prolonged his days to achieve this last message. For the reader of Jones' other works, this is a culmination of his earthly journey of following Jesus, encountering his Lord and sharing Christ at every turn.

Writing at this stage of life while dependent upon others to capture the heart and soul of a message, has many disadvantages: there are times of pause, times of struggle, and times of failure to communicate clearly. However, there are also distinct advantages. In his closing years on earth, Jones has unquestionably come to know God in an extraordinarily personal way and has proved Him again and again. He was no longer exploring the nature and character of the Almighty God and His Kingdom, or the depth and breadth of His love. Rather - he held the love and goodness of the Lord in his heart. "A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart ... What you say flows from what is in your heart." (Luke 6:45).

Though strength wanes, Jones demonstrates the inner man is purposeful and renewed. His vigorous mind continues to commune with God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, to bring forth the beauty and juxtaposition of the human and divine.

*Your life will be brighter than the noonday;  
Even darkness will be as bright as morning.*

*Having hope will give you courage.*

*You will be protected and will rest in safety." (Job 11:17,18)*

The irresistible, inevitable onward march of time for Jones reveals a confidence and blessed assurance of the timelessness of eternity. Jesus transcends all barriers known to humankind. There is an increasing brightness to those who are walking in the Light. Even if the span of life has reached its zenith, the eyes of the heart shall be clearer than the noonday. “In Christ’s Light we shall see light” (Psalm 36:9), we shall see it more clearly and reflect it more radiantly. The fruits of the Spirit flow from the intensity of Jones inner strength and determination. There is a splendid ripeness and a maturity to his faith, a grandeur in his weakness and a gentleness in his character. Surely this is what the Lord had in mind when He spoke through Isaiah (46:4), “... even to your old age, I am He,” the unchanging Christ, bearing and carrying us all the days of our lives. *The Divine Yes* expresses that it is through Jesus alone that the lives of His people can be fruitful in all seasons, filled with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

To read *The Divine Yes* as the first of Jones’ books is not the recommended order of his writings. It would be like reading the last chapter of a large volume without having read the preceding chapters. It is an important manuscript, reconciling all the qualities of a sovereign, loving Savior with the frailty of humanity, producing the fruit of resounding hope, joy and peace.

The literary canon is graced with the richness of this work as Jones transcends human limitations and embraces the limitless work of the Holy Spirit within.

Arguably, this writing may well be the most significant and impactful of all Jones’ works as it reveals the power of uniting a human yes with the Divine Yes. Lying at the threshold of heaven, Jones declares once again, “Jesus is Lord.”

*Dr. Sandra C. Gray*

*President, Asbury University (2007-2019)*