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Many people live in my biography, but there are three, in particular, in whose steps I walk. One I knew intimately in person, the others mainly through their writings. All three played key roles in my Christian faith, my concern for missions, and my love of learning.

The first was my father: a missionary to India, a person of wisdom and balance, and a man of God. As his only son, my father often took me with him on his evangelistic tours, both in India and the U.S. My earliest memories are of going from village to village, camping in mango orchards, climbing nearby hills, and sitting through services that ran late into the night. Later, on furlough, he led me to Christ after an evangelistic service in Minneapolis.

Dad was a missionary at heart. To him there was no higher calling. Moreover, in an age of colonial missions, he was strongly committed to the indigenization of the Indian church and its leadership. Dad was also a scholar. He completed graduate studies at USC in Indian history and was invited to teach there, but his heart was in India. His concern for missions and contextualization, practice and scholarship, played an important part in my interest in missions and anthropology.

The second person to deeply influence my thinking was E. Stanley Jones, an outstanding missionary statesman in India. I discovered him almost by accident as I was looking for some solid devotional books that went beyond simply offering a good thought for the day, and ran across *The Way*, and *Christian Maturity*. From these I graduated to his other writings.

Jones was the greatest mission evangelist in our generation. Each year until he was past 80 he toured India and the world, and tens of thousands point to him as the one who led them to Christ. He was equally at home

with presidents, and the poor and oppressed; with palaces and ghettos. His writings fill a library, and have moved millions.

But Jones not only preached a biblical approach to missions, he modeled it. In an age of liberalism, he was uncompromising in his declaration of Christ as the only way to salvation. In a conference in South India missionaries discussed how to begin proclaiming the Gospel in Indian villages. Some wanted to start with Genesis, others with sin and redemptive history. When they asked Jones, he said, there is only one place to begin: the person of Christ. His book on conversion is one of the classics in the field. The last message I, a beginning missionary, heard him preach, came when he was an old veteran past 80, but his message was clarion clear: preach Christ, the hope of the world.

In an age that divorced evangelism from social action, Jones proclaimed the whole Gospel. He was not willing to restrict the Christian message to salvation, or personal matters. The Gospel Jesus preached, he said, was the Kingdom of God, which has to do with peace, justice, health and reconciliation, as well as with individual salvation. It is the yardstick by which we measure human societies and lives. Jones drew these two emphases on Christ and the Kingdom together in *The Unshakable Kingdom and the Unchanging Person*, a book that captures the central passion of his life.

In an age of colonial missions, Jones called for radical indigenization of the church and the Gospel. When most missionaries supported the continuation of British rule in India so that mission work might continue,

Jones sided with the nationalist aspirations of Indian Christians. When mission agencies depended on Western methods of communicating the Gospel, Jones explored Indian ways. He started ashrams or spiritual retreats around the world for those seeking spiritual guidance. He initiated the round table method to reach the educated elite in which he invited Hindus, Muslims and Christians to share their personal experiences with God without condemning one another. Inevitably Muslims and Hindus later came seeking salvation, saying that while they were searching after God, the Christians had found him. No one did more to reach India's leaders for Christ.

Jones also sought to present the Gospel in terms people understood. His books *Christ of the Indian Road* and *Christ of the Japanese Road* were 50 years ahead of their time. But in his efforts to contextualize the understanding of the message, Jones never compromised the prophetic nature of the message itself. His was a call to radical discipleship.

Finally, Jones modeled for me the integration of science and faith. Working within a clear theological framework, he was not afraid to examine deeply the findings of psychology, sociology and the natural sciences. He was convinced not only that the Scriptures and Christian faith would stand the intense light of critical examination, but also would become more certain by it.

I was reminded of the relevance of Jones' message for the church today at some preachers' conferences I attended last year in South India. There again and again, I heard Indian leaders speak of the impact of Jones on their lives and ministries.

The third person to deeply influence my thinking was John C. Wenger. Strangely enough, it was on the mission field while I was struggling with questions of Indian theology

and theological diversity that I re-discovered through Wenger much of my Anabaptist theological heritage which I had imbibed in an unsystematic fashion in sermons and listening to elders in the church. This heritage provided me not only with a solid biblically based theology, but also a meta-theology—a theology about how theology should be done. The centrality of the Bible, and the need for the priesthood of all believers within a hermeneutical community became living realities in my mission experience, and changed my view of ministry. They enabled me not only to share what God was saying to me, but to hear what he was saying to my Indian Christian brothers and sisters.

There are many others in science and anthropology, such as Hoebel, Kuhn, Laudin, Geertz, Turner and Douglas; and in theology and missions, such as Spurgeon, Vos, Berkhof, Neill and Newbigin who have impacted my thinking, but these three met me at critical turns in my life, and pointed me the way.

