

Introduction by E. Stanley Jones 1971

“The church needs nothing so much as it needs a rediscovery of the absolute, the absolute of the Kingdom, that would bring life back into unity point it to new goals...”

This book was triggered by the suggestion of a prominent pastor on the west coast of America who spoke on over 80 radio stations each night each week. He heard me speak on the Kingdom of God and said: “Why don't you codify the laws of the Kingdom of God. They are too hazy. If the Kingdom of God is God's total answer to man's total need, as you say and the scriptures say, then they must be put into a form which we can see and obey.” My reply was, “I'm not a lawyer and I'm not a theologian. Technically, I'm a bearer of the Good News. I must stick to my focus.” “Yes,” he replied, “But you possess the Kingdom, and the Kingdom possesses you.” I slowly reply, playing for time and a legitimate way out of such a task, “Let me go over the New Testament and see what it says about the Kingdom of God. I've done it before, but this time I will do it intensely and it will take about a year. If at the end of the year I feel that there is no way to avoid this requested task, then I'll do it.” Well, I've spent the year with a rising excitement at what I found. There were many question marks at the beginning, but I have gone along, these question marks have become straightened out into exclamation points.

A modern girl in the jargon of the day said to me “You tell it like it is!” But as I've gone along, I had a growing question, “Are you telling it like it is?” For almost the whole of the New Testament is on the Kingdom of God. Is this the theme of the Bible? **Then I saw that the person of Christ was just as important as the message of Christ --- the Kingdom of God.** The two were linked, inseparable linked. So in midstream, I had to change horses. Instead of the total emphasis on the Order, I had to make both the Kingdom and Jesus my message --- the Order and the Person. So I had to change the title of the book from *the Laws, Principles, and Attitudes of the Kingdom of God to the Unshakable Kingdom and the Unchanging Person.*

An Anglican Bishop once said, “Stanley Jones seem to be obsessed with the Kingdom of God,” and my inner reply was: Would God that I were, for it would be a magnificent obsession. Jesus was obsessed with it, and to be obsessed with His obsession is to be on safe and universal ground. But I'm also obsessed with the person of Jesus, Jesus Christ. A Hindu said to me in India, “Jesus has got into your blood, hasn't He?” and my reply was, “yes, and He has raised my temperature. I am excited over Him.” Now that the Kingdom of God and the person of the Son of God (the message and the man) have come together in a living blend, I am doubly excited. For they are both absolute --- and they have taken absolute possession of me. At eighty-seven years of age, one is supposed to slow down and take life easy and calmly. I do, for His yoke is easy and His burden is light, and I do take things calmly, too, for this fire that burns in one's bones is like a burning bush of Moses which was afire but not consumed. This divine fire does not consume. It consummates. You walk out of it like the Hebrew captives without the smell of smoke upon you.

To change the image, there is no smoke from the exhaust, it does not exhaust, it exhilarates. If this is the gushing of an evangelist, then listen to the considered conclusion of historian, H. G. Wells who, when fumbling through history in search of the “relevant,” came across the fact of the Kingdom of God and was shocked as by an electric shock, “Why here is the most radical proposal ever presented to the mind of man, the proposal to replace the present world order with God's order, the Kingdom of God.” It is. So I'm excited with a divine excitement. As a possible last fling, I like to fling my blazing torch of the

Unshakable Kingdom and the Unchanging Person aimed the burned out heap of extinguished or dying enthusiasm, to set them ablaze again with the relevant --- the reality relevant, the fact of the Kingdom of God on earth exemplified in Jesus.

I find myself with an inner compulsion, boasted with confidence by the fact that the best and most influential man who ever lived, Jesus Christ, made the Kingdom of God His central emphasis. I can't go very wrong if I stick close to Him. If I fail, I fail in the right direction. I would rather fail with Him than succeed with anyone else.

Another element in this compulsion: if Jesus made the Kingdom of God the center of His message and the center of His endeavor, then the greatest need of man, as I see it, is the rediscovery the Kingdom of God. Men need nothing so much as he needs something to bring life together into total meaning and total goal. **Life for the modern man in East and West needs something to give total meaning to an otherwise fragmented life.** Modern man needs an absolute from which he can work down to the relativism of the day, a master light of all his seeing. Modern man is being pushed, pulled, beckoned, enticed, and bludgeoned from all directions. He is being pushed from relativism to relativism. He is confused --- the most confused, and yet the most intelligent person that ever existed. Modern man knows everything about life except how to live it.

The Modern man stands between two worlds --- one dead and the other not yet born. And he stands there empty, for meaning has dropped out of life. He could stand anything if there were meaning, purpose, goal, especially if that meaning, purpose, goal were worthwhile, worth living for and worth dying for. But he sees no such worthwhileness at the heart of things. Life is like the tale of an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. A woman arose in a spiritual meeting and asked: "Is there anyone with a car going anywhere?" She didn't care where, just so it was out of there. She was so bored with the here and now. A maid resigned a good job in a good household and when asked why, she replied with a sigh, "life is so daily here."

These two illustrations are among the comparatively inconsequential, but suppose this becomes the mode of youth --- the coming generation --- an among the leaders in literature among industrialists and those who guide the nations? Suppose it becomes the climate of an age, and suppose it has become the sincere mood of that age, for the members of that age are really convinced that there is no goal, no purpose, no real meaning to life? Then it is no longer an irritable rash on the skin of humanity. It is a creeping paralysis of the heart. We are dying where it counts --- at the heart.

Since the sickness is radical, the remedy must be radical; verbally radical, but vitally radical. the sickness is that mankind as a whole is losing, or has lost, an absolute from which to work down to all the relative isms of the hour, a master light of all its "seeings." We have no starting point and hence no goals.

But the modern man sighs and says, "The sickness is more serious still, for there are no absolutes. They have all been dissolved in the acids of modern thinking. More deeply, there are not supposed to be any absolutes. We are born into the relative, living the relative, and die in the relative. Life is a vast question mark. There are no exclamation points. It is all inherently uncertain --- the way it is supposed to be. We are all doomed to be like blind men, with white sticks tapping our way along the pathway of life to fill out a way of least obstructions. Life is made that way."

The god that would put drives within us. Drives that have heaven or hell wrapped within them as results or consequences, and then give us no plan and power for the handling of these drives, would not be my god. He would be my devil.

A professor said to his students, "Young man, play the game of life." A student spoke up and said, "Sir, but there are no goal posts. There is nothing to shoot at." Are there no goal posts? Is there nothing fixed in this moral and spiritual universe? No goal posts that are our guideposts? It is unthinkable. **A meaningless universe would be a mean universe. And the god behind it would be a mean god, which would mean: no god.**

In the physical universe, the same laws are seen in the cell and in the farthest stars. The universe has the marks of one creative God upon it --- it is a universe and not a multiverse. Then the plan for the universe must be one plan, valid and vital for all men everywhere. For we are discovering that humanity is one. Therefore, there must be one plan for this one humanity.

Has that one plan been provided for and has it been revealed? We believe that it has. However, for the revealing of that plan, there must have been a period or periods of preparation for revealing that plan. If the plan should be given without preparation, unprepared man could no more have understood it than a rabbit could understand higher mathematics. There are signs that intimation have been given of that total plan to all peoples and nations, enough intimation that when the plan is presented, it does not sound foreign, but as fulfillment.

But these intimations are not enough. The intimations had to become instructions, definite enough to understand and to follow. But how? A universal man must come to revealed in himself the one universal God, and the one universal Kingdom, the Kingdom of God.

We think that has happened and happened in history and is verified in experience, verify to the degree that it has been tried. In that verification, there is the growing feeling and conviction that this is it --- a feeling and conviction that this is my native land, the land for which I was born, that everything for which I was born is now fulfilled. It is a sense of universality and total acceptance. Such an experience could not be anything but the Kingdom of God.

However, this revelation of God and the Kingdom of God must not be a verbal revelation. It must be the Word become flesh, the idea of God and the idea of the Kingdom become real, become flesh. We must see it as well as hear it. We have.

Jesus was at once the revelation in the flesh of what God is like and what the Kingdom of God is like.

Both are important, all important. For what God is like in character we must be like in character. We cannot be at cross purposes with ultimate reality without getting hurt, vitally hurt. But how could we know what God is like unless we saw it --- saw it lived out before us? We must see God's character in a human character and see it in operation in human relationships, under the storm and stress of those relationships. Everything must fall on that character that falls on us. We must see His motives in actions and reactions, and then we will know what God is like in character. We have seen it. "He that has seen Me has seen the Father." Then God is Christ like. If so, He is a good God and trustable. I could ask nothing higher. I could be content with nothing less. One thing about the universe is settled and settled satisfactorily: There is a God, our heavenly Father, and He is Christ like in character. Nothing could be settled more satisfactorily.

But one thing remains: what is the nature of the Kingdom of God? After God's personal character, nothing is more important than the nature and character of God's reign, His Kingdom. For this is where the whole impinges upon us. His Kingdom must be by its very nature a total Kingdom, for God is not a half-god ruling over half-realm, ruling over the personal but not over the social, or ruling over the social and not over the personal. Nor must He be a God who fits into the unexplained facts of nature and not into the total facts of nature, with its regularity and its unexplained mysteries. He must be totally present and totally relevant or totally absent, and hence, totally irrelevant. He must be God and not a mere half-god. And His Kingdom must be totally present and totally relevant or totally nothing, hence, totally irrelevant. There is no middle ground. You cannot tuck God into the unexplained gaps in nature, for those unexplained gaps in nature have a way of being filled up and then where is God? He must be God of all or not God at all. And His Kingdom must be a total Kingdom or no Kingdom.

There are two possible ways of revealing the nature and extent of that Kingdom. One is to inaugurate it with a fanfare of physical accompaniment that would impose that rule with thunder and lightning and earthquakes which would say to quivering man: "Obey --- or else." That would create not men but slaves. The other way would be for God to hide the Kingdom in the facts of nature and life and gradually revealed it as men developed sufficiently to see that Kingdom and adapt it as his own. Then in the fullness of time, when God would find a people or nation most likely to be the people or nation to accept that Kingdom and make its own, He would overtly reveal the nature and the Implication of that Kingdom in understandable form --- human form and in human relationships.

We think that God choose the second way, He stole up on us in a disguised form --- the Babe, the Boy, the Carpenter, the Prophet, the Son of Man, the Son of God, the Redeemer, the Crucified, the risen and alive Redeemer, the One who set at the right hand of ultimate power in the universe --- thus He revealed the Kingdom in a Person.

Would man take that Kingdom in such a form? Some did and were transformed and showed a quality of life and power for beyond the ordinary. But many did not, and as a consequent lived half-lives by half-lights or fumbled and stumbled in the dark.

However, many who took the Kingdom took it in a modified form, as a personal spiritual refuge and to which they could run and be safe now or as a place of reward in heaven; they didn't reject it --- they reduced it. And in reducing it, they rendered it innocuous now. It wasn't "the Kingdom," Gods total answer to man's total need. It wasn't God's total plan and program for life, all life, now, but a reward thrown in at the end.

And now life has become so physically dynamic, so mentally and emotionally free, and so morally irresponsible that it is bursting at the scenes; It is going to pieces at the very moment of our greatest triumph in so many fields --- in every field except the field of living. **We know everything about life except how to live it. We need nothing as desperately as we need something to bring life into total unity and coherence in meaning and goal.** We have become ripe for a rediscovery of the Kingdom of God.

Everything else has broken down or is breaking down. The totalitarianisms, fascism, Nazism, communism, oligarchies have broken down or are breaking down. Fascism made the state supreme; Nazism may race supreme; communism made the proletariat supreme; oligarchy makes money supreme. All are half-gods and, hence, no gods.

I was speaking in a cathedral in West Germany on the Kingdom of God. On the front seats were prominent German leaders. As I spoke, they kept pounding their benches with their fists. I was puzzled. I did not know what it meant --- was it in support of my comments or against them? But at the close they revealed what the beating of the bench is meant: "You seem to sense why we turn to Nazism. Life for us was at loose ends --- compartmentalized. We needed something to bring life back into wholeness, and to total meaning and goal. We thought Nazism could bring that wholeness. But it let us down, let us drown in blood and ruined. We chose the wrong totalitarianism. We now see that what we were seeking was the Kingdom of God, but we didn't know it. That's why we pounded the benches, we missed the Kingdom of God." That opened my eyes. I saw as in a flash the meaning of these various revolts --- the totalitarian revolts, the revolts of youth, the revolt of the racist. Are they not all seeking for the Kingdom of God and don't know it? The answer is yes. We can see what they are revolting against --- various injustice in society --- but we cannot understand what they are revolting for. That is undefined and hazy. The key seems to be: They are seeking for the Kingdom of God, but they don't know it. Someday it will all dawn upon them and then we will have the greatest spiritual awakening that this planet has ever seen. **For man need nothing so much as they need an absolute from which they can work out to the relativisms of the hour --- some master light of all their seeing.**

Psychologists say there are three basic needs inherent in all human nature: the need to belong; the need for significance; and the need for reasonable security. The first need is to belong. Behavior health experts say that ninety-five percent of delinquencies among youth come out of broken homes. When the security of the home is broken, youth feels that he doesn't belong, so he turns to crime and delinquency. A Chinese proverb says: "in a broken nest there are no whole eggs." The rogue elephants in Bermuda, India, and Ceylon are elephants that have been put out of the herd by the younger males. They then turned to rogue, tearing up huts, gardens, villages --- anything in their pathway. Why? They don't belong." The central and acute sickness of this age is that people do not belong --- do not belong to anything significant. It was found up on the death of a certain man that he belonged to twenty-seven clubs; He tried to make up in quantity for what he liked in quality. The sum total had no significance. Hence the man had no significance, hence no security. We must belong to something that gives a sense of belonging and a sense of significance and security for now and forever.

Call the roll of the possible memberships and I know of none, except one, the Kingdom of God, that promises and brings a sense of total belonging and a sense of belonging now to ultimate significance and ultimate security. If there is another such possibility for the belonging, let men trot it out and people will follow it by the millions if it is real. Then why hasn't the church offered it? The answer is simple and tragic: the church has lost it. The church has lost the Kingdom of God.

Call the role of the tragedies in history and they all root in that loss of the Kingdom. Take Israel, when it was said of her: "the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it" (Matthew 21: 43 RSV). That refusal on the part of Israel began the long tragedy of a frustrated nation. Take the Crusades --- men of violence tried to take that Kingdom by force and succeeded in laying the foundation of hate and conflict through the centuries. Take Genghis Khan's requests through Marco Polo to the Pope: "please send us a hundred teachers, well learn in the seven arts and well able to prove that the way of Christ is best." Marco Polo, seeing the request was of great significance, hastened back to the Pope. Two years later, two teachers instead of a hundred were sent with this message, "Become politically and ecclesia-stically attached to Rome." They didn't offer the

Kingdom of God, a universal Kingdom; They offered a political ecclesiastical attachment to Rome. Genghis Khan turned it down, accepted Islam, and spread blood and fire through Asia and Europe.

When Russia was in the throes of a revolution instead of the church offering the Kingdom of God on earth, a church council was debating the question of whether garments of a certain color should be used in a certain time and place in the church service --- debating that triviality when Russia was moving towards communism. In Italy, the nation was not offered a universal Kingdom, the Kingdom of God, but a papal ecclesiastical system instead, so Italy made the state supreme, chose Fascism, and brought the nation into defeat and collapse. Germany chose Nazism, making the race supreme; when the church offered a Kingdom in heaven hereafter, it brought on his own ruin. When in the welter of conflicts, America rose supreme out of the chaos, we offer the American way of life, instead of God's way of life, the Kingdom of God, and are ending up plagued by our own racial, class, and economic conflicts, with little to offer the world.

The church is largely to blame because the church, instead of offering the Kingdom of God, offered various conflicts (fundamentalists-modernist; the social gospel --- the individual gospel; racial integration; the secular church; long hair; Short hair; beards and non-beards; the church building orgy; then vestments and candles and robes; conversion; abolition of property and the ghettos) every issue except the Kingdom of God.

If the Kingdom of God is missing in the magnificent and in the minute, then the key to meaning, goal, life redemption, and life fulfillment is missing. Life turns meaningless and sick, becomes a problem instead of a possibility. But if you have the key to the Kingdom, you find it a master key, the key to life now and hereafter, life individual and collective. That is important to the modern man: you have the key to relevancy in every situation. If you know the Kingdom by experience, then you know what to do in every situation. Do the Kingdom thing and you are relevant, and you are attached to the relevant and you do the relevant thing. You are at the center of relevancy.

So for the church to be relevant the answer is simple: Discover the Kingdom, surrender to the Kingdom, make the Kingdom your life loyalty and your life program; then in everything and everywhere you will be relevant. For the Kingdom of God is relevancy, ultimate and final relevancy. When you have it, and it has you, then you are relevancy itself.

Without the Kingdom, the church is irrelevant, except marginally. With the Kingdom, the church is relevant centrally and marginally. By its very nature it is relevant. It doesn't have to try to be relevant by adopting little dabs of relevancy here and there. It is relevant when it is attached in loyalty and love to the relevant --- the Kingdom.

Take two illustrations of what happens when the Kingdom is lost. The Christian Church founded by the Apostle Thomas has existed in India since the first century. The evangelical portion of that church is alive and advancing. They have the largest Christian convention in the world --- from fifty to seventy-five thousand persons participating. But many of the Christians had become communist. When I asked them why, they replied, "Christianity gives a social conscious, but no social program. So we are taking the communist program without its ideology and without its compulsions and tyrannies." I spoke to thirty thousand men on Christianity and communism at the convention. The communist officials were there, many of them Christians. The atmosphere was electric and tense. I spoke for an hour, and they asked questions for two hours afterwards. Two years later I spoke to the same number of people, in the same

convention, on the same subject. They gave a Pindrop silence, but the tense electric atmosphere was gone from the audience. When I asked what had happened they reply: "The Christians have given up communism and have turned to the National Congress and to socialism, because they said, 'we could not obey two totalitarianisms; both communism and Christianity demand a total allegiance. So we decided to remain Christians, and we are shifting politically to socialism and the National Congress.'"

Now note, The Christians turned to communism because they had no absolute allegiance to an absolute order --- the Kingdom of God. So they changed tentatively to communism. Then they returned tentatively to Christianity. They adopted the National Congress and socialism as their medium of political expression, both of them sub-Christians and often in practice anti-Christian. But they had no alternative. They had lost the absolute of the Kingdom of God; Hence: they turned to another relativism for guidance and received half-lights.

Take another example. In the World Conference of missions in 1938, a time when fascism, Nazism, and communism were rising to ascendancy and when the ecumenical movement was rising aimed the Christian churches, the thought of that missionary conference in Madras began flowing towards the ecumenical church as the answer to those earth-born totalitarianisms. I pleaded that we make the Kingdom of God our stand and thus match against these earth-bound relativism's Gods absolute --- the Kingdom. They prefer to make the ecumenical church their stand --- to match against relativisms and other relativism, the ecumenical church. "suppose" I said, "You go out and cry, 'Repent for the ecumenical church is at hand,' what would be the reaction? The people would laugh at you, as they do laugh when I suggest it to audiences. But you don't laugh when I say, 'Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand,' that is, if you have any sense, you don't laugh, you bend the knee."

So the church having lost is absolute --- the Kingdom of God --- is now in a welter of conflicting relativisms, all bidding for the Christians attention and loyalty. So the church leaves a blur instead of a mark. Where Paul could say, "This one thing I do," The church says, "These forty things I dabbled in." **The Church needs nothing to see so much as it needs a recovery of the absolute, the absolute of the Kingdom, that would bring life back into unity, point it to new goals (individuals an collective), discover new power, the power of the Spirit, to move on to those goals, and give it nerve to face a hesitating and confused world with, "Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand."**

When I say that the church has lost the Kingdom, I do not mean that it has total lost the conception of the Kingdom. It has as a marginal concept, something you get into for security by the new birth now, something you will inherit hereafter as a reward in heaven, something you receive at the Second Coming, something to which you point to as an ideal. These conceptions of the Kingdom are generally dehydrated because they are marginal. They are not the starting point and the ending point, not the total program now for all life, not the head-on and total answer to man's total need, individual and collective. In other words, we do not seek first, last, and always the Kingdom of God as our way of life now, and we do not offer it to the world as our answer to the world's ills now. **What we have lost in God's redemptive totalitarianism, the Kingdom of God. That is the central sickness of our age.** Until we find that all our endeavors for amelioration are a sparkling of rosewater on a cancer. Not that we do not appreciate attempts at amelioration --- we do. But if we substitute attempts at amelioration as a substitute for the Kingdom of God, then we must come under the rosewater condemnation.

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