

From the Archives: E. Stanley Jones and Nellie Logan

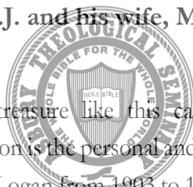
Every archives and special collections has a few collections that are the true treasures of their collections; those collections that they are known for, and for which scholars travel on a regular basis to use.¹ For the B.L. Fisher Library at Asbury Theological Seminary, the E. Stanley Jones Collection is one of these special treasures. E. Stanley Jones (1884-1973) is known worldwide for his writing, his missionary work in India for the Methodist Episcopal Church, his political endeavors to avoid World War II as he served as a liaison between President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Japanese Embassy in the days leading up to Pearl Harbor. Nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, friend of Mahatma Gandhi, and founder of the Christian Ashram Movement as a brilliant example of contextual theology, he has been written about in numerous books and articles.





E.S.J. and his wife, Mabel

However, even a treasure like this can hold surprises. Among the correspondence in this collection is the personal and very moving letters between E. Stanley Jones and Miss Nellie Logan from 1903 to 1943. Miss Logan is as forgotten



a person, as Jones is exalted in history. Mary Nellie Logan was born May 6, 1870 in Maryland, where she lived with her parents, Berkley and Ellen R. Logan and her older brother Wesley M. Logan. On April 5, 1894 her mother died, and shortly afterward Nellie became a schoolteacher in Baltimore. She would live with her widowed father and brother until her father's death on November 3, 1914, when she continued living with her bachelor brother until his death on October 19, 1934. From then on she lived alone with a housekeeper until she died on November 14, 1950. She never left Baltimore for more than a few short trips. She never married or had children or nieces or nephews. She was a schoolteacher her entire life, and when she died she was buried in the same small family plot in Mt. Olivet Cemetery in Baltimore as her parents and her brother, forgotten as the end of any family line with no descendants.

Mary Nellie Logan is not the subject of books or articles. Her passing made barely a ripple in the waves of history. And yet, she was connected to one of the most important religious figures of her day. He wrote to her with deep love and affection, would visit her in Baltimore when able, and could not bring himself to call her plain "Nellie," but always "Miss Nellie." So who was this person, and what brought her into the heart of a spiritual giant like E. Stanley Jones? In his spiritual autobiography, *Song of Ascents*, written when he was 83, Jones writes,

I am a very blessed person, for I had a friend, a real friend, a lifelong friend, and the memory of her lingers like a benediction. Everyone called her "Miss Nellie." Miss Nellie Logan was her full name. She was tall, stately, queenly, and affectionate, with a streak of sternness in her commanding presence. I went to her as my teacher when I first started school. A lifelong friendship grew up. She was with me in the great crises of my life with counsel and understanding wisdom.²

Miss Nellie Logan also played a key part in E. Stanley Jones' conversion, as he notes,

... on one of those times my beloved teacher, Miss Nellie Logan, knelt alongside of me and repeated John 3:16 this way: "God so loved Stanley Jones, that he gave his only begotten Son, that if Stanley Jones will believe on him he shall not perish, but have everlasting life." I repeated it after her, but no spark of assurance kindled my darkened heart. The third night came; before going to a meeting I knelt beside my bed and prayed the sincerest prayer I had prayed so far in my life. My whole life was behind that simple prayer: "O Jesus, save me tonight." And he did!

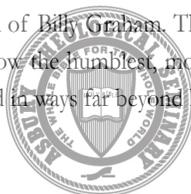


E.S.J. at Leisure

E. Stanley Jones writes later in the same book,

Miss Nellie could take me to the threshold of the Holy of Holies, but only my Redeemer could take me to the heavenly Father, Jesus my one mediator... When my mother was dying she called Miss Nellie and said to her: "These years I have prayed for Stanley. Now I am going. I'm turning him over to you, for you will take up my vigil of prayer for him." Miss Nellie said to me years later: "I've been true to the entrustment." I cannot think of Miss Nellie without thinking of that phrase: "I've been true." She was "true" as a friend, a counselor, a Christian- everything that a noble woman could be. "How blest are they who have had a friend." I've had a friend- Miss Nellie, - my schoolteacher, my teacher. I adore Christ; I reverence Miss Nellie."⁴

From this time, she became a close confidant to a man considered to have no equal in his time, with the exception of Billy Graham. The correspondence between the two is a touching tribute to how the humblest, most faithful servant of God, can influence the kingdom of God in ways far beyond human understanding.



In a letter written to Miss Nellie from Asbury College about 1904 (but only dated Sept. 28), a young E. Stanley Jones writes, “Really Miss Nellie you do not know what an inspiration your life is to me and how your thoughts open up to me new avenues that I otherwise would never have got an insight into. I’m better for having known you.”⁵ In another letter from Asbury College, perhaps in 1906, E. Stanley Jones writes Miss Nellie desiring her to experience sanctification. He writes, “How I long to see you have it [sanctification]- Miss Nellie, for which I have long been burdened in prayer knowing of what use you would be in the service of God. You have been a help (for I shall never forget your words of kindness as I knelt, broken-hearted and sinful at Memorial altar) and an inspiration to me... how I now treasure your advice and of what service you have been to me. Then I covet for you, both on your own account and for your usefulness in the service of the Master, a deeper experience in Him. The Lord grant it.”⁶

After Jones went to India, he continued his correspondence with Miss Nellie, writing in 1913,

I awoke this morning with a feeling of homesickness or something akin to it. I had dreamed nearly all night- so it seemed- of you. And in what capacity? A missionary! I thought that you had arrived unexpectedly and I could hardly believe my eyes. But the thing that made me feel kind of troubled was that you looked so pensive and sad and worried as if you had done something terrible in coming out! Then I was playing Bishop a good part of the night and trying to get you located. I chose school work for you, but there were so many schools clamouring for you (after I had made a speech on your fine qualities before the Cabinet) that we hardly knew what to do with you! And then your letter came. So I’ve been feeling “Baltamorish” all day. And really it isn’t a bad feeling.⁷





E.S.J. in India

In October of 1915, almost a year after Miss Nellie's father had passed away, Jones heard of his death and wrote,

How glad I was to receive your letter the other day. But was pained to hear that your father had passed away. A year and I did not know it all that time. I am sorry, but I know how you must have felt. I always looked on him as my boyhood favorite. He always seemed to take such an interest in me. The box of tools he gave me made me have a very warm spot in my heart for him. But more than that he always impressed me with his gentle kindness. I know you know where the Everlasting Arms are and you are leaning upon them.⁸

In 1926 and 1928, E. Stanley Jones tries to drop the "Miss" from his address to "Miss Nellie," but by 1931 he seems to have given up and gone back to using the old affectionate term. Letters show "Miss Nellie" supported his mission work with money, often gathered from the women at the church, and in sending him gifts of some of the latest books, or small mementos. There are also letters from Jones' wife and daughter showing she thought of their work as well.

In a trip to the U.S. in 1928 and 1929, E. Stanley Jones apparently spoke very highly of Miss Nellie in front of the people of the Memorial Church in Baltimore. She apparently chided him on this and he responded,



Your splendid letter came and I felt apologetic that I had made you feel that way. It was a very unfair advantage I took of you on that occasion and I don't blame you for being flustered (?) but I meant every word of it and more. It was not flattery, it was sheer gratitude. Yours has been one of the noblest lives I have ever seen. I felt the Memorial people just took you so for granted that I should speak and call attention to an obvious fact.⁹



Portrait of a Young E.S.J.



In 1934, on hearing of the death of Miss Nellie's brother, E. Stanley Jones wrote to her,

I have just heard indirectly (from Mrs. House in fact) that your brother has passed on. This is a very delayed note, but it comes with my deepest sympathy at this hour of your lonesomeness. But I know what kind of Christian you are and I know that you will not merely bear all this, but will use it. You are fine and beautiful and Christian and this will make you more so. God bless you.

I talked to a group of teachers out here the other day and I told them what you as a teacher had meant to me. I meant it. It has meant more than almost anything in my life.¹⁰

However, E. Stanley Jones wrote more than just personal praise and familial condolences. In 1931, he wrote to Miss Nellie,

I have been having some interesting times with Gandhi and the national leaders. Gandhi and some of the leaders took a strong attitude of opposition to organized Christian Missions. I wrote him an open letter. He saw that it was hurting his cause badly so he explained away his sharp phrases and when I saw him he took back the whole thing. At least it appeared so to me, though I am not saying that in print. Then this week in the *Indian Social Reformer* the editor who had been very bitter against missionaries printed an article from the *Fellowship*, the paper in which I discuss, "To Proselyte or to Convert- Which?" He printed it with approval! I was amazed. The fight is now over for they have accepted our position. It is too good for words. I was afraid that they would take the attitude of Turkey under swaraj. Gandhi is going to stay with a friend of mine while in Britain. It is fine for she is a fine Christian woman.¹¹



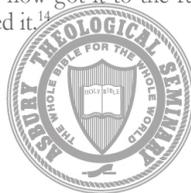
Meal at one of E.S.J.'s Christian Ashrams

Besides political news, he also told colorful stories from India, including the following about a leopard hunt at Sat Tal,

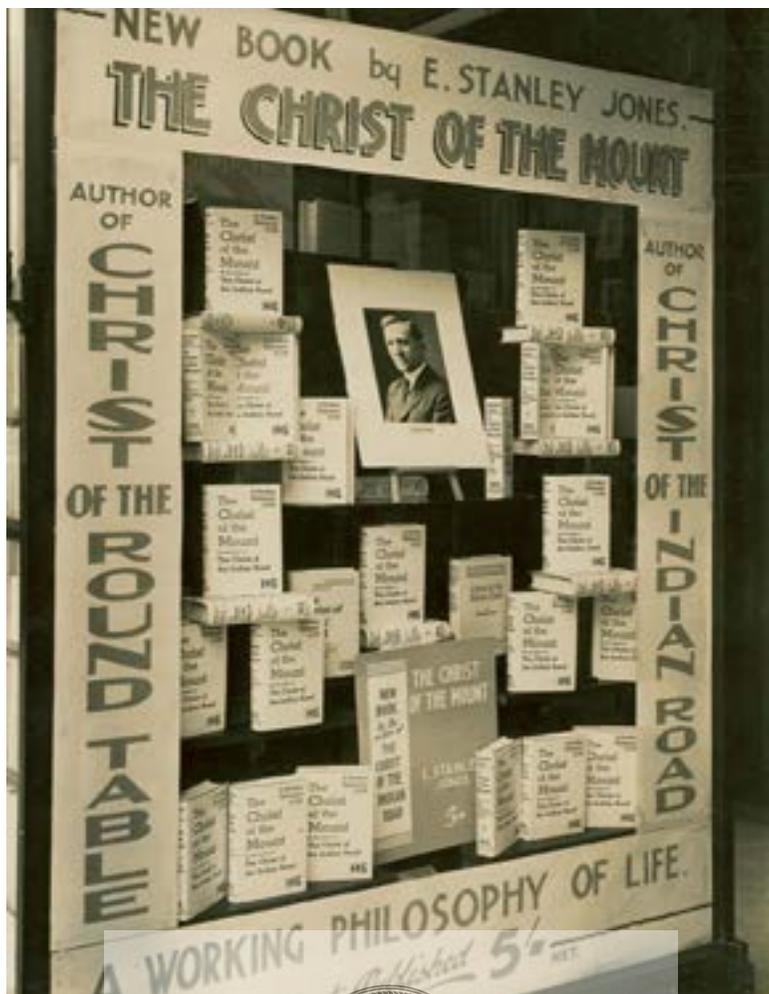
I have not given myself to big game shooting in India, but when the villagers came and told me that a leopard had killed a large lungur (black-faced monkey) and begged me to kill it I consented. The leopard always comes back for a second feed the second night so the villagers built me a machan up in a tree nearby which was a bed covered with branches so that it made a little hut up there. There was just enough place to peek out at the leopard when he came. A villager and I got up in the machan at 5 o'clock in the evening and the leopard appeared twice but was very wary and each time went back. The third time he came into full view about 8:30 at night and I let go and there was a terrific roar. He rolled down under our machan to about a hundred and fifty feet below us. We did not dare to go down at night to see as a wounded leopard is a very dangerous beast, but the next morning the men found him and brought him in triumph back to the bungalow. It was a very happy set of villagers who brought him back, for the leopards ravage their cattle a great deal. The lower monkey fell into the hands of the leopard but the higher monkey through cunning and firearms got the leopard! They say the way a leopard gets the lungur is to sit down under the tree in which a lungur is found and sway back and forth with glaring eyes until the lungur with sheer fright falls out of the tree into the leopard's clutches.¹²

E. Stanley Jones also wrote to Miss Nellie about his failed efforts to arrange a last minute peace between Japan and the U.S. government in December of 1941,

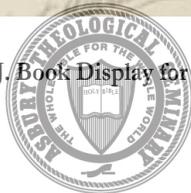
You must feel badly, as I do, about the break-down of our peace efforts. I am quite sure that the Japanese at Washington were entirely sincere. They entrusted me with a message to take to the President by word of mouth. They would not even allow me to write it. I saw him on last Wednesday and had a most satisfactory visit with him. I was taken in a back way—off the record as it were, so that I didn't have to face newspaper people at the close. As late as Saturday night¹³ the Japanese sent me a wire asking me to be sure to come to Washington on Monday. They even wanted to have a dinner for me to thank me for what I had done. They said the "Embassy is your home." Alas, it is now their prison. But I have no regrets that I tried. Those who want war have now got it to the full. God forgive them that they ever wanted it.¹⁴



From the letters written to “Miss Nellie” it also appears that she collected information to help Jones with some of his books, and he in turn always had his publishers send her a copy of his work. He even sent some writings he received from others to her for editing and her opinion on if something was publishable or not.



Early Image of an E.S.J. Book Display for One of His Many Books



In one of the last letters the archives has from Miss Nellie (or more likely a draft of a letter), she writes her thoughts on Jones' 60th birthday,

In thinking of your 60th birthday thoughts wandered back to the first time I saw you as a little boy, and to your deployment into the powerful preacher and deep thinker of today. And in that development, Stanley, I can now see where I have helped to shape your life, so don't be grateful to me- I am grateful to you every day for the blessings that I have received thro' you. So [...] with gratitude! You owe me nothing. I only wish I could claim such honor. You are too extravagant in your statements for in my letter you said you owed me much- almost your soul. What did you mean by that, Stanley?¹⁵

In an earlier letter (or possibly a draft of a letter) to Jones from the same year, Miss Nellie wrote,

You said last June when you visited me, "To think of living in one place all these years"- meaning me. It is strange that my fate has been to do that very thing because of home conditions when the one desire of my life has always been to travel and see the world. As I look back over my life I have no regrets for I have tried to keep solemn promises made with the full consent of my will. However I have traveled thro' books, lectures, and letters from my friends who were more fortunate than I. And now you have shown me a bit of Mexico. My imagination enabled me to hear your donkeys bray, your canaries singing and to enjoy your beautiful sunset- thank you so much! Thro' these avenues I have gone all over the world and enjoyed it. I am grateful to my Heavenly Father for giving me imagination!¹⁶

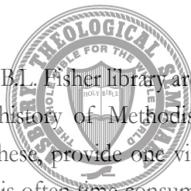
The correspondence seems to end around 1946, although Miss Nellie did not pass away until November 14, 1950 in Baltimore at 80 years of age. E. Stanley Jones would die on January 25, 1973 in India at 89 years of age. These two individuals could not have been more different in terms of fame and recognition, but God brought these two kindred souls together, so that Miss Nellie could encourage and advise E. Stanley Jones, covering his work with prayer, and E. Stanley Jones could inspire and encourage a lonely school teacher rich in faith, to see the wonders of God's world.





**An Elderly E.S.J. Giving the Three-Fingered Sign of the Ashram Movement
for “Jesus is Lord”**

The archives of the B.L. Fisher library are open to researchers and works to promote research in the history of Methodism and the Wesleyan-Holiness movement. Images, such as these, provide one vital way to bring history to life. Preservation of such material is often time consuming and costly, but are essential



to helping fulfill Asbury Theological Seminary's mission. If you are interested in donating items of historic significance to the archives of the B.L. Fisher Library, or in donating funds to help purchase or process significant collections, please contact the archivist at archives@asburyseminary.edu.

End Notes

¹ All images used courtesy of the Archives of the B.L. Fisher Library of Asbury Theological Seminary who own all copyrights to these digital images. Please contact them directly if interested in obtaining permission to reuse these images.

² *Song of Ascents*, E. Stanley Jones. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1968, p.43.

³ *Song of Ascents*, E. Stanley Jones. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1968, p.27.

⁴ *Song of Ascents*, E. Stanley Jones. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1968, p.44.

⁵ Letter dated "Asbury Sept 28" from ARC 1982-002, box 2, folder 3.

⁶ Letter dated "Asbury College Mar. [1906?]" from ARC 1982-002, box 2, folder 3.

⁷ Letter dated "Sitapur Mar 16 '13" from ARC 1982-002, box 2, folder 6.

⁸ Letter dated "Lucknow Oct. 21 '15" from ARC 1982-002, box 2, folder 6.

⁹ Letter dated "Kendallville, Ind. Jan. 26, '29" from ARC 1982-002, box 2, folder 7.

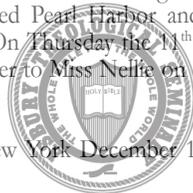
¹⁰ Letter dated "Peshawar, Feb. 20, 1934" from ARC 1982-002, box 2, folder 7.

¹¹ Letter dated "Sitapur July 9, 31" from ARC 1982-002, box 2, folder 7.

¹² Letter dated "Lucknow January 28, 1940" from ARC 1982-002, box 2, folder 7.

¹³ This would have been the evening of December 6th. Early the next morning the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and on Monday the 8th war was officially declared on Japan. On Thursday the 11th war was declared on Germany and Italy. E.S.J. wrote this letter to Miss Nellie on the next day, Friday, the 12th of December.

¹⁴ Letter dated "New York December 12, 1941" from ARC 1982-002, box 2, folder 8.



¹⁵ Draft of letter dated “Baltimore Dec. 25, 1943” from ARC 1982-002, box 2, folder 11.

¹⁶ Draft of letter dated “June 21 or 22, 1943” from ARC 1982-002, box 2, folder 11.

