

Why are Christians Outraged about the New Feature Documentary “Jesus in India” ?

by Paul Davids, Producer/Director of “Jesus in India”

www.jesus-in-india-the-movie.com

Movie reviewer Pete Hammond says of my new film, the feature documentary, “**Jesus in India**” that it’s “*a fascinating and profound film, a deeply spiritual journey.*” While, Jeff Wilser figures it will “*make Bill O’Reilly choke on his eggnog.*”

On the other hand, Nancy Dewolf Smith of the *WSJ* called the film “*pseudo-history*” and “*a cavalcade of crackpots.*”

In fact, Jesus was a consummate crackpot in his own time. If you had asked Jews of his day what they thought of the man who declared “*The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath,*” they would have told you: a nut-case. So, who was that upstart?

Is it true that Jesus survived the crucifixion and spent some years in India? The *NY Times* says that “Jesus in India” sifts “*through legends, myths and historical evidence in an attempt to unravel the mysteries of the life of Jesus of Nazareth from ages 12 to 30.*”

Some among the Christian orthodox would prefer you never saw this movie, which is based on the quest of the maverick author, Edward T. Martin, to prove that Jesus traveled in India for several years. After decades of exploration in remote, exotic locations in India, Nepal and elsewhere in Central Asia, from Afghanistan to the Himalayas in search of the mysterious missing 18 years of Jesus’ life, Martin distilled his quest for the truth and his research into the

book, *King of Travelers: Jesus' Lost Years in India* (now in a new revised edition).

While working as a Peace Corps volunteer in Afghanistan, Martin had his first encounter with East Asian accounts of the historic Jesus Christ, including the Indian legend that young Jesus joined a caravan and took the Silk Road to the East, where he lived in India with both Hindus and Buddhists before returning to the Holy Land to begin his ministry.

An upstart himself among the fundamentalist Christians of his hometown of Lampasas, Texas, Martin sold his house to complete his research and travel, and publish his book, and remains a pariah in his community for suggesting that some years of Jesus' life are unaccounted for in the Bible, and that there is evidence that he spent those years in India, and that he sent St. Thomas there. Martin was ousted from his provincial church, and some members of his family never spoke to him again, nor did they do more than flip through the pages of his book. The title told them all they needed to know—they “knew” that Jesus was never in India, so why should they read the book? Everyone was of the same opinion—that every word of the Bible is true, without question, and that Jesus' “missing years” have no impact on whether you go to heaven or hell.

So, why should I produce and direct a documentary tracing Martin's journeys and revealing his controversial assertions that, among other things, Jesus survived his crucifixion and is buried in India? First, I met Martin and read his compelling book and found him to be a passionate man involved in a David-vs.-Goliath battle like the protagonists in virtually all my films, and second, Jesus as a historical figure has captivated me since my college years at Princeton, but I was interested in a different interpretation of Jesus than the one that is almost universally accepted. My studies of the writings of the Hindu guru and philosopher, Paramahansa Yogananda, convinced me that it's very possible that Jesus traveled to India in response to the birth visits of the Three Magi from the East. I also found out that the Ahmadiyya Muslims believe that Jesus—Issa, as they call him—did not die on the cross, and lived to travel to India after most assumed he

was dead (or ascended to heaven), and that the Ahmadiyyas insist Jesus is buried in the Rozabal in Srinagar, the very ancient “Prophet’s Tomb” that dates back to the era of Christ and has carvings of the prophet’s feet showing the scars of crucifixion.

Adding to the compelling nature of Martin’s research, I also learned from some of the most famous Biblical scholars in the United States, including Professor Elaine Pagels of Princeton’s Department of Religion, that “*We cannot rule out that Jesus may have traveled to India.*”

And the third reason why I took on a film project that I knew had the potential to set off an international storm of controversy was—it’s what I do. Each of my films has challenged conventional thinking—from “**She Dances Alone**,” the movie starring Max von Sydow about the great Russian ballet dancer who refused to perform as a protest against WWI, to the Golden Globe-nominated “**Roswell**,” starring Martin Sheen, a movie that I co-wrote and produced about the notorious 1947 UFO incident that many believe marked the beginning of the government’s coverup of the existence of extraterrestrials. I also tackled two other subjects perfect for that “cavalcade of crackpots” the WSJ spoke about: Vincent van Gogh, in “**Starry Night**,” and LSD guru, Timothy Leary, in the film “**Timothy Leary’s Dead**.”

Upsetting religious tradition? Revealing hidden truths about Jesus? A thrilling worldwide journey of spiritual and historical discovery? Stirring up outrage and controversy? I knew that making “Jesus in India” would be an adventure of a lifetime.

It was six weeks of filming in India, making a movie about the Prince of Peace while dealing with monsoons and flooded roads, temperatures hotter than an Iraqi desert and incidents of terrorism and violence in Kashmir. This was followed by months of travel and filming at locations in London, the Vatican and throughout the United States. Now three years later, after a lengthy and arduous phase of post-production, the film has had its U.S. premiere on the

Sundance Channel (which showed it three times in December of 2008), and the DVD has been released with an additional 80 minutes of provocative bonus materials. The film even has a magnificent music score by Brian Thomas Lambert, which we've released as a soundtrack CD.

And the debate rages on! Some have accused the film of advocating religious "revisionism," although it is not an attempt to revise so much an attempt to address omission. The Bible does not discuss the activities and travels of Jesus from ages 12 to 30, and so we are not revising anything, we are trying, as the *New York Times* indicated, to "sift through" legends, myths and historical evidence in an attempt to plug a hole. In the world of film, we call the problem of the lost years of Jesus a "jump cut." In one sentence in the Bible, 12-year-old Jesus is expounding to the rabbis in the Temple in Jerusalem. In practically the next sentence, he is thirty years old being baptized by John the Baptist at the River Jordan. That's a tough edit. What fell on the cutting room floor? What was left out?

Once you open the door to Jesus' youth having been partially spent in India (after a lengthy journey with merchants on the Silk Road), you open the door to other questions and issues, a door that orthodox Christians, from the fundamentalists of Texas to the Catholic clergy at the Vatican, have locked shut. "Jesus in India" pulls the door from its hinges, while giving experts on all sides the chance to state their case. Such luminaries as the Dalai Lama, two professors at Georgetown University, an apostolic nuncio of Pope John Paul II, and the "Pope" of Hinduism (the Shankaracharya) are featured in the film.

The Self-Realization Fellowship of Paramahansa Yogananda, in a full page at their website, declares "Jesus in India" to be "groundbreaking" and commends it to their members and devotees for viewing.

Len Kasten, in the March-April 2009 issue of *Atlantis Rising*, writes: "*This film . . . has the*

potential to revolutionize Christianity by virtue of the humanization of Jesus. By taking away the godlike status conferred upon him by Constantine, and showing him as the brilliant and courageous spiritual teacher who succeeded in bringing together three great religions of the world, it removes the superstition and ritual from Christianity yet leaves the world with a magnificent message of hope and renewal.”

The implications of the film promise an upheaval that may ultimately be unsettling to those who hold inflexible and orthodox views about Christianity, Biblical accuracy and religious history. You can read all about it in Edward T. Martin’s second book: ***Jesus in India: King of Wisdom—The Making of the Film and New Findings on Jesus’ Lost Years.***

Watch the trailer, hear music from the soundtrack, and get more information about the movie, **“Jesus in India,”** at www.jesus-in-india-the-movie.com. (A Presentation of Paul Davids Productions, Inc. and Yellow Hat Productions, Inc., Distributed to Television Worldwide by NBC-Universal) **Available to the media are review copies** of the DVD, **“Jesus in India”** and the new book, *Jesus in India: King of Wisdom -- The Making of the Film and New Findings on Jesus’ Lost Years.*

###

Paul Davids was Marvel Productions’ production coordinator for the original **“The Transformers”** TV series (many episodes of which he also wrote), and he went on to executive produce and co-write Showtime’s now-classic film, **“Roswell”** (1994), nominated for a Golden Globe as Best Motion Picture for Television. He made his directorial debut with the feature documentary **“Timothy Leary’s Dead”** in 1997. The husband and wife team of Paul and Hollace Davids are also noted for authoring six **“Star Wars”** sequel books in the early 1990’s for Lucasfilm, published by Bantam, which sold millions of copies worldwide and which came out in many languages. Those books include *The Glove of Darth Vader, The Lost City of the*

Jedi, Zorba the Hutt's Revenge, Mission From Mount Yoda, Queen of the Empire and Prophets of the Dark Side.

Paul Davids, who wrote and directed “**Starry Night**,” followed that Yellow Hat Productions film with two other Yellow Hat independent features that he wrote and directed, and which he produced with Hollace Davids: “**The Artist and the Shaman**” (2002) and “**The Sci-Fi Boys**” (2006). Both “**Starry Night**” and “**The Sci-Fi Boys**” were picked up for distribution by Universal Pictures Home Entertainment and NBC-Universal’s International Television division (Universal City Studios Productions LLLC). “**The Sci-Fi Boys**” won the prestigious Saturn Award in Hollywood from the Academy of Science-Fiction, Fantasy and Horror as Best DVD of 2006. It also won the coveted international fan-based Rondo Award as Best Independent Film on DVD and three EBE Awards. More information is available on these films at www.pauldavids.com and also at www.starrynightmovie.com