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The Christian Attitude: Holy or Unholy

Joseph Lancaster
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As the New Age movement flourished in the late twentieth century more and more religious seekers sought ways to incorporate psychological insights into religion. Many of them turned a cold eye on what they thought of as the literalism and dogmatism of most forms of Christianity. The quest of most New-Age seekers was to reject the fundamentalism of traditional Christianity in favor of a more holistic spiritual experience in which the body and mind were tuned into one another and seekers were free to explore other ways of being spiritual beings.

Lancaster's book simply picks up where the New Age left off. A psychologist who has written on Carl Jung and religion in Fundamental vs. Non-Fundamental Christians in Relation to Dogma Self-Awareness and Narcissism Lancaster here explores the unholiness of most Christians' attitudes toward others and advocates a return to Gnostic Christianity.

In a typical rant against mainstream Christians Lancaster argues that "they have always been known as a group with controlling domineering and forceful traits." The mainstream Christian Church is in Lancaster's eyes "not in Christ's loving spirit where people all think of others before themselves and show acceptance behaviors."

Lancaster suggests returning to Gnosticism as an alternative to this narcissistic and unholy mainstream Christianity. He provides a generous profile of the development of Gnosticism in first through the fourth centuries offering brief biographies of Gnostic leaders ranging from Valentinus to Marcion. Gnostics taught that the material world was an evil place and that humans' goals should be to escape or transcend this world through esoteric teachings.

Lancaster concludes from his study of Gnostic Christianity that Gnostic Christians express love more freely toward members of other religions. They are also more open to many more truths about the world and God than mainstream Christianity and they look for answers not in religious ideologies but in their souls and their experiences of true religion.

Regrettably Lancaster is so caught up in rejecting mainstream Christianity that he fails to recognize the shortcomings of Gnostic Christianity. For example he contends that "Gnostic Christians have a love and acceptance of all other religions." On the contrary Gnosticism in all of its forms is an exclusive religion. Only people who meet certain criteria were ever welcomed and accepted by the Gnostics.

While he often misleads in the name of truth in his single-minded effort to paint Christian attitudes as unholy Lancaster accumulates enough information to spur thinking about various alternatives to mainstream Christianity.
HENRY L. CARRIGAN (August 2, 2006)

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