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The Gnostic Religion: The Message Of The Alien God And The Beginnings Of Christianity



Synopsis

The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity

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Customer Reviews

"Using the few sources available to him with penetrating insight, Jonas reconstructed the Gnostic worldview ... The Gnostic Religion" remains, even today, the classic introduction" [Elaine Pagels](#), author of *The Origin of Satan*"A fascinating exposition with copious quotations, of what is known of Gnosticism ... Dr. Jonas writes with authority, passion, and precision about this long-forgotten religion" [The New Yorker](#)

Hans Jonas (1903-1993) was a distinguished philosopher specializing in political science, theology, and bioethics. His published works include *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God & the Beginning of Christianity*; *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology*; and *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of Ethics for the Technological Age*.

This was written before the Egyptian discovery of all those gnostic texts. So is it still worth reading? Yes it is. Gnosticism was never a religion anyway and this book is an incredible collection of biographies of ancient sorcerers, witches and holy men. The enthusiasm of Hans Jonas holds the readers' attention.

Highly informative and eloquently written. Though outdated by today's standards, Hans Jonas has

written a wonderful and insightful study into Gnosticism's foundational teachings, the faith's context within the Greco-Roman world of late antiquity, and its modern relevancies. Though dense and somewhat rigidly academic in structure and approach, the text is a valuable asset to any student of Gnosticism. It is not, however, recommended as introductory reading for the reasons stated above.

Reading Jonas is always a pleasure; the way he divides and presents the field is still useful, despite the many discoveries that have occurred since book's publication. Most useful for people with a philosophical background: while (excepting the final chapter) the book is in no way 'philosophy,' Jonas thinks like a philosopher; he brings Gnostic figures and myths into a kind of dialogue with philosophy (especially Stoicism).

Good history.

great

One of Jung's great works, about the lonely alien who is a stranger, but related to Christ in many ways.

Excellent

I have read every book in English on Gnosticism. This and Kurt Rudolph's 'Gnosis' are far and away the best, aside of course from the English translations of the Nag Hammadi scrolls by Robinson et al. Obviously, everything in Jonas' book is tentative, as the Nag Hammadi scrolls had just been found, and not yet translated at the time of writing, and this is its weak point. It's a weak point that Rudolph's super-detailed book, being more recent, doesn't have. Still, Jonas has a particularly eloquent flair for analyzing and evoking the particular flavor or character of Gnosticism that Rudolph doesn't even attempt. The fact that Nag Hammadi is as of yet unaccounted for here is compensated by including more info from the Mandeans, which is annoying to a casual reader seeking general knowledge, but awesome for a reader already versed in more common information. The Gnostic Religion, by Hans Jonas (this book) is one of the best books I have read, and I have read over a thousand. Readers who do enjoy this book will also enjoy Couliano's 'Tree of Gnosis,' although that work only utilizes Gnosticism as a way to propagate a new methodology on the history of ideas. Still, it is a treasure-trove of information. Thank you.

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