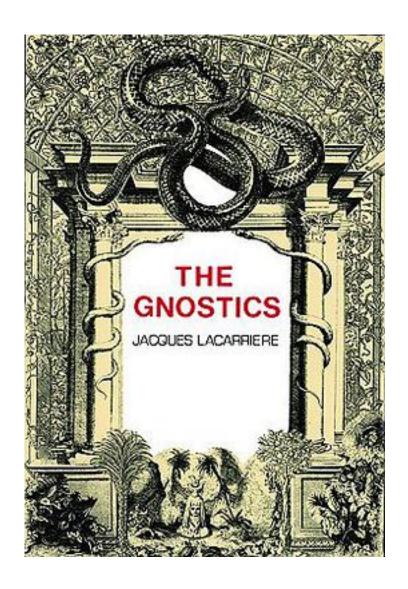
## The Gnostics



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出版者:T.& T.Clark Ltd

出版时间:2006-6-15

装帧:Hardcover

isbn:9780567040725

"The Gnostics" demonstrates the existence and explore the character, theology, liturgy and cultic beliefs and practices of the Gnostic movement. Engaging in the current debates engendered by M.A. Williams' 'Rethinking Gnosticism' (1996), Alastair Logan develops the work introduced in his own 'Gnostic Truth and Christian Heresy' (1996), continuing his quest to identify the Gnostics as a cult movement originating in the late first century and arising out of Christianity. He does so first by examining the evidence of the early Christian heresiologists in the light of the Nag Hammadui Library of Coptic Texts, to test the reliability of the heresiological accounts and to attempt to establish the character of the Library as in fact the work of the Gnostic cult movement. He then examines the evidence of the pagan critics with a clear knowledge of the movement (Celsus, Plotinus, Porphyry). He explores the Gnostics' own sense of identity against the Catholics, seeks to reconstruct the unique Gnostic rite of initiation from "Nag Hammadi" and related texts and, finally, argues that the early third century Hypogeum of the Aurelii in Rome, with its remarkable series of paintings (illustrated), represents a cult centre of Gnostics, where they recalled their initiation and theology and buried their dead.

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