

*'In this valuable volume, David G. Robertson critically analyzes diverse constructions of "Gnosticism" with impressive insight and skill. This book is a unique contribution and deserves a place as essential reading for anyone with serious interest in the topic of "Gnosticism" so-called.'*

**Michael A. Williams**, Professor of Comparative Religion and Near Eastern Languages and Civilization, University of Washington, USA

*'Both scholarly and accessible, David G. Robertson's book is challenging and original and will prove essential reading for students and scholars of "Gnosticism" alike for decades to come. David G. Robertson's work reconfigures how we speak about "Gnosticism," but perhaps more importantly, how we speak about religion and spirituality in the contemporary world. A must-read!'*

**Bernard Doherty**, Lecturer in History, School of Theology, Charles Sturt University, Australia

Building on critical work in biblical studies, which shows how a historically-bounded heretical tradition called Gnosticism was 'invented', this work focuses on the following stage in which it was 'essentialised' into a sui generis, universal category of religion. At the same time, it shows how Gnosticism became a religious self-identifier, with a number of sizeable contemporary groups identifying as Gnostics today, drawing on the same discourses.

This book provides a history of this problematic category, and its relationship with scholarly and popular discourse on religion in the 20th century. It uses a critical-historical method to show how and why Gnosis, Gnostic and Gnosticism were taken up by specific groups and individuals – practitioners and scholars – at different times. It shows how ideas about Gnosticism developed in late 19th- and 20th-century scholarship, drawing from continental phenomenology, Jungian psychology and post-Holocaust theology, to be constructed as a perennial religious current based on special knowledge of the divine in a corrupt world.

David G. Robertson challenges how scholars interact with the category of Gnosticism, and contributes to our understanding of the complex relationship between primary sources, academics and practitioners in category formation.

**David G. Robertson** is Lecturer in Religious Studies at the Open University, UK. He is co-founder of the Religious Studies Project, and co-editor of the journal *Implicit Religion*. He is the author of *UFOs, the New Age and Conspiracy Theories* (Bloomsbury, 2016) and co-editor of *After World Religions: Reconstructing Religious Studies* (2016) and the *Handbook of Conspiracy Theories and Contemporary Religion* (2018).