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## GNOSTIC RELIGION IN ANTIQUITY

Gnostic religion is the expression of a religious worldview which is dominated by the concept of Gnosis, an esoteric knowledge of God and the human being which grants salvation to those who possess it. Roelof van den Broek presents here a fresh approach to the gnostic current of Late Antiquity within its historical and religious context, based on sources in Greek, Latin and Coptic, including discussions of the individual works of preserved gnostic literature. Van den Broek explores the various gnostic interpretations of the Christian faith that were current in the second and third centuries, whilst showing that despite its influence on early Christianity, gnostic religion was not a typically Christian phenomenon. This book will be of interest to theologians, historians of religion, students and scholars of the history of Late Antiquity and early Christianity, as well as specialists in ancient gnostic and hermetic traditions.

ROELOF VAN DEN BROEK is Emeritus Professor of History of Christianity at the University of Utrecht. His books include *Studies in Gnosticism and Alexandrian Christianity* (1996), Dutch translations, with introductions and notes, of ancient hermetic and gnostic texts (2006 and 2010) and *Pseudo-Cyril of Jerusalem, On the Life and the Passion of Christ: A Coptic Apocryphon* (2013). He is co-editor of several books, the most recent being the *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, 2 vols. (with Wouter J. Hanegraaff, Antoine Faivre and Jean-Pierre Brach, 2005).

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## *Preface*

This book is a thoroughly revised and expanded version of the introduction to my Dutch translation of five gnostic texts from Nag Hammadi, which was published in 2010. Its primary aim is to provide information about the gnostic movement in Antiquity, with emphasis on its literature and forms of expression.

I have tried to let the sources speak for themselves and to avoid detailed academic discussions as much as possible, though differences of opinion among scholars have been recorded and evaluated. It was unavoidable, however, to make my position clear with respect to two hotly debated issues in gnostic studies, the definition of the gnostic phenomenon and the question of its origin.

The English translations of Latin, Greek and Coptic texts are my own; biblical texts, however, have been quoted after the Anglicized Edition of the New Revised Standard Version.

My thanks are due to Mrs. Rosalie Basten, who made the translation from the Dutch possible, and to Mr. Anthony Runia, who realized it.

## *Abbreviations*

<i>AH</i>	Adversus Haereses
BCNH-É	Bibliothèque Copte de Nag Hammadi. 'Études'
BCNH-T	Bibliothèque Copte de Nag Hammadi. 'Textes'
BG	Berlin Gnostic Papyrus (Papyrus Codex 8502)
EPRO	Études Préliminaires aux Religions Orientales dans l'Empire Romain
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und des Neuen Testaments
GCS	Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller
<i>J ECS</i>	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
NHC	Nag Hammadi Codex (cited as, for example, NHC 1, 4 = Nag Hammadi Codex 1, tractate 4; NHC 1, 51, 1 = Nag Hammadi Codex 1, page 51, line 1)
NHMS	Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies (continuation of NHS)
NHS	Nag Hammadi Studies
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version, Anglicized Edition
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
OBE0	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
<i>PGM</i>	<i>Papyri Graecae Magicae</i> (Greek Magical Papyri)
<i>RAC</i>	<i>Reallexicon für Antike und Christentum</i>
RGRW	Religions in the Graeco-Roman World
SC	Sources Chrésiennes
SHR	Studies in the History of Religions (Supplements to <i>Numen</i> )
STAC	Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
VC	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>



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*List of abbreviations*

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WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAC	<i>Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>