

Antiquity Matters!
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The Mithraic Mysteries: a religious manifestation of Platonic soteriological cosmology

Since the efforts of Franz Cumont, scholarly opinion concerning the Roman cult known as Mithraism has been divided. The lack of written evidence has led to a wide variety of opinions concerning every aspect of the cult from the purpose of its astronomical imagery, to the gender and status of its members. This disparity has led to an abundance of theories, some of which strive to present Mithraism from the point of view of a single dogma, but all suffer from the necessary flaws of conjecture. There are some scholars such as Beck, Ulansey, and Turcan who believe that on some level or another, a Platonic influence pervades every aspect of this cult, and furthermore, that we can find answers to the Mithraic Mysteries in the texts of Plato. This paper agrees with these scholars inasmuch as it argues that Platonic philosophy, especially Platonic cosmology and astronomy, does indeed pervade the cult. A brief overview of the transmission of Platonic doctrine will at least suggest the likelihood of Plato's influence. However, this paper also aims to show how far this influence has indeed spread, and suggests that Platonic theory might even explain once for all, why Mithraism was androcentric, and how the initiates sought salvation in the sky.