



The Ancient Mysteries: A Sourcebook of Sacred Texts

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Zeus and the other gods of shining Olympus were in reality divine only by popular consent. Over the course of time Olympian luster diminished in favor of religious experiences more immediate to the concerns of people living in an increasingly cosmopolitan ancient world. These experiences were provided by the mysteries, religions that flourished particularly during the Hellenistic period and were secretly practiced by groups of adherents who decided, through personal choice, to be initiated into the profound realities of one deity or another. Unlike the official state religions, in which people were expected to make an outward show of allegiance to the local gods, the mysteries emphasized an inwardness and privacy of worship within a closed band of initiates.

In this book, Marvin W. Meyer explores the sacrifices and prayers, the public celebrations and secret ceremonies, the theatrical performances and literary works, the gods and goddesses that were a part of the mystery religions of Greece in the seventh century B.C. to the Judaism and Christianity of the Roman world of the seventh century A.D.

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