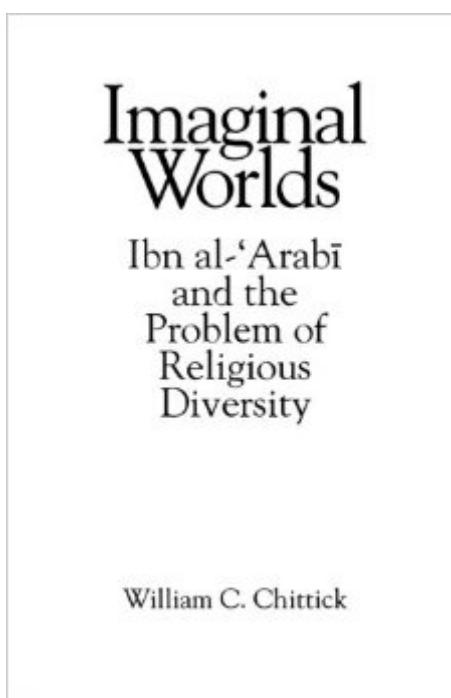


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Imaginal Worlds: Ibn Al-'Arabi And The Problem Of Religious Diversity (Suny Series, Islam)



Synopsis

In this book Chittick explains Ibn al-Arabi's concept of human perfection, his World of Imagination, and his teachings on why God's wisdom demands diversity of religious expression. He then suggests how these teachings can be employed to conceptualize the study of world religions in a contemporary context. "Imaginal Worlds is an excellent summary and a solid interpretation of Ibn al-Arabi's teachings." -- Gerhard Bowering, Yale University Ibn al-Arabi, known as the "Greatest Master," is the most influential Muslim thinker of the past 600 years. This book is an introduction to his thought concerning the ultimate destiny of human beings, God and the cosmos, and the reasons for religious diversity. It summarizes many of Ibn al-Arabi's teachings in a simple manner. The ideas discussed are explained in detail. The book is divided into three parts. In the first part Chittick explains Ibn al-Arabi's concept of human perfection; in the second part he looks at various implications of the World of Imagination; and in the third part he exposes Ibn al-Arabi's teachings on why God's wisdom demands diversity of religious expression, and he suggests how these teachings can be employed to conceptualize the study of world religions in a contemporary context.

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Customer Reviews

The full title of this book is "Imaginal Worlds: Ibn al- `ArabÄ« and the Problem of Religious Diversity". Ibn al- `ArabÄ« was a great Sufi mystic and philosopher who died in the mid thirteenth century. Religious diversity is a problem for all multi-cultural Empires; and it was a problem throughout the medieval world of the Islamicate. Not only was Islam born in the midst of several

long established religious traditions in the Middle East, it encountered still more when the Muslim Conquests spread into India and Southeast Asia. Now, every empire certainly desires internal peace; but one wonders how this peace can be achieved, and also endure, given the fact of religious diversity within their own ever (at least in intent) expanding borders. The thought of Ibn al-`Arabî regarding religious diversity provided one possible solution for the Islamic world. And it is his unique understanding of religious diversity that I would like to pursue in this review. Unlike modern secularists, whose 'solution' to the problem of religious diversity is based on some form of historicist evolution (basically, 'stupid then - all wised up now') and the eventual elimination of all religion, the Shaykh based his explanation upon a certain understanding of the very nature of Reality. And it turns out, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, that our religious diversity is itself an ontological necessity! What! How? Well, there are several reasons for (and implications of) this, and they involve understanding some of his technical terms too. Okay, let's start with his understanding of the Real. The Shaykh used the term 'Wujûd' for this. Our author, William Chittick, leaves this term untranslated throughout this book. (Usual English translations of this word are either 'being' or 'existence').

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