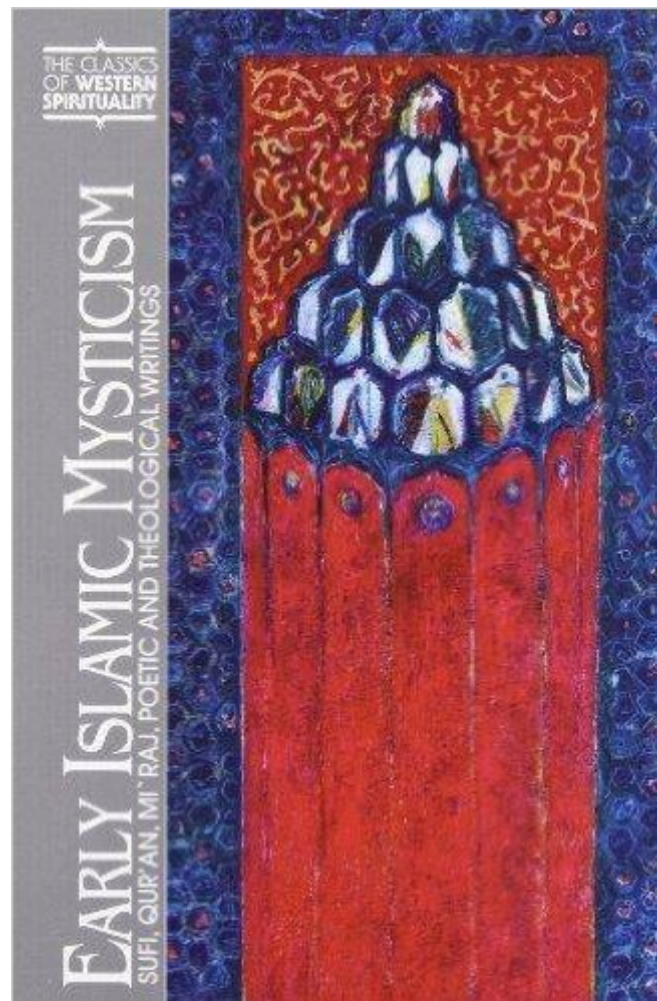


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Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur'an, Mi'raj, Poetic And Theological Writings (Classics Of Western Spirituality)



Synopsis

The first centuries of Islam saw the development of Sufism as one of the world's major mystical traditions. Although the later Sufi writings by mystics such as Rumi are known and available in translation, access to the crucial early period of Islamic mysticism has been far more limited. This volume opens with an essay on the place of spirituality within the Islamic tradition. Immediately following are the foundation texts of the pre-Sufi spirituality: the Qur'an passages most important to the mystical tradition; the accounts of Muhammad's heavenly ascent (Mi'raj); and the crucial work of early poets in setting a poetic sensibility for speaking of union with the divine beloved. The volume then presents the sayings attributed to the key early figures of Islamic spirituality: Ja'far as-Saddiq, the Sixth Imam of the Shi'ite Tradition; Rabi'a, the most famous woman saint of classical Islam; Muhasibi, the founder of Islamic moral psychology; Bistami, whose sayings on mystical union have generated fascination and controversy throughout the Islamic tradition; Tustari, a pioneer in the mystical interpretation of the Qur'an; Junayd, who helped place Sufi mysticism at the center of the Islamic tradition; Hallaj, famous for his ecstatic utterances and martyrdom; and Niffari, whose sayings are considered among the deepest mystical expressions within Islam. The sayings of these pioneers are embedded in the later stratum of analytical and synoptic writings of later Sufi thinkers: Sarraj; Sulami; Qushayri; and 'Attar. Extensive portions of these writers are translated into English for the first time.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This volume, compiled and translated by Michael Sells, is really an excellent resource for those of

us who are interested in early Sufism. Sells has compiled a very useful collection of extracts from early Sufi writings. I was surprised to know that writings of Junaid apparently even still exist (and this book includes some of those writings)! A remarkable and very valuable book -- not only from a historical perspective, but also for those wanting to increase their own spirituality. (For this purpose, I also recommend W. C. Chittick's book, "The Sufi Path of Love," a collection of translations from Jalaluddin Rumi.)

I am a seeker on the spiritual path, on which I embarked only a few years ago. Trying to read and absorb, but with a full time job and other commitments time is an issue. This book is fantastic in that it brings so many of the great Sufi expositions in a condensed version. This book has exposed me to so much which otherwise I would have missed. Recommend this to all serious truth seekers.

Quick delivery, good product

OK

After reading this book, I got interested and bought a few other books. I came across this statement from famous Ibn Ul-Arabi "If the believer understood the meaning of the saying 'the color of the water is the color of the receptacle', he would admit the validity of all beliefs and he would recognize God in every form and every object of faith." I thought if he really meant this, then why bother writing so many books and trying to prove or disprove this or that belief. Ibn-UlArabi does this many times, he criticizes many of his fellow theologians, philosophers, even other sufi's. If he really thinks all are right, why then bother by criticism, trying to prove so many are under "illusions" except him and a few like him. Besides would Ibn-ulArabi tell us that "Satan worshipping" is also right? The second factor that is troubling to me is the authenticity and objectivity of their "theophonic experiences". If one examines the content of their "experience" it quickly become clear that what they "witness" is nothing more than the "content" of their beliefs. Whatever they already believed in, they "witness" it. Not a single one of them, as far as I know, has claimed that he /she "witnessed" a reality which made him realize a certain portion of his/her beliefs about this or that was wrong. Their experiences seem to be in perfect harmony with the "content" of their already established beliefs. If they believed that there are spheres in the heaven, then that is what they "see", if they believed in certain historical "facts" they also see it. If they believe in say in crucification, as Padre Pio, they also "see" it (though it may or may not have really happened. If you are a Hindu mystic then you will "see" say,

reincarnation and how it happens, if you are a Sufi or Christian mystic who doesn't believe in reincarnation then you "see" the opposite of the fellow Hindu, you "see" how "reincarnation" doesn't happen. So my guess is that, under certain condition and practices, all the beliefs of a person turns into "Images/forms" and like a dream, a person experiences them. But these experiences are no more "objective" and reflective of "reality" out there, than the good old dreams we have.

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