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The Angelic Way: Angels through the Ages and Their Meaning for Us

Rami Shapiro
BlueBridge (October 2009)
Unknown $15.95 (240pp)
978-1-933346-19-9

From ancient times, legends of angels and angel-like beings have fascinated us. Such stories exist in every major faith system. Why do they draw us so compellingly, and what is their meaning for our lives? Rami Shapiro offers answers to these questions in *The Angelic Way.*

Shapiro argues that angel myths provide metaphors for our spiritual growth from a self-centered, ego-driven self to one that recognizes the humanity in others and then eventually sees God in everyone and everything. He does not believe that angels are actual beings. Instead, he says, “We understand angels as symbolic personifications of higherÂ…levels of human consciousness and stories about angels as mythic signposts pointing us toward the insights such consciousness reveals.”

The book discusses angels and angel-like beings in Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism. It then examines angel encounters; the angel hierarchy; Satan and demons; and people said to have ascended to heaven. Shapiro deconstructs the symbolism in angel stories to unveil insights that illuminate his central thesis. For example, he contends that people who ascended to and returned from heaven are those who achieved the greatest enlightenment and returned to show others the way.

Formerly a rabbi, Shapiro serves as adjunct professor of religious studies at Middle Tennessee State University. He has authored *The Sacred Art of Lovingkindness* and *The Way of Solomon*. Shapiro’s Jewish background does not provide the theoretical foundation for this book, although he draws heavily from Jewish religious literature. His discussions of Christian, Islamic, and Eastern angel stories reveal that he does not utilize a traditional understanding of these religions, either. While Shapiro seeks inclusiveness, he ultimately touts a more new-age philosophy. He believes angel myths lead us to an awareness that “the whole universe is a single system of interconnected lives whoÂ…are all manifestations of the One Being, God.”

The Angelic Way probably won’t draw many devout or even moderate religious believers. It will mainly appeal to people seeking a less orthodox belief system and to those not affiliated with a particular religion, but who remain fascinated by angels. Largely focusing on symbolism, the book poses a challenging read. However, it includes an intriguing study of angels throughout world religion. And it calls readers to look at angel stories in a fresh way. It invites them to peer more deeply into the legends, myths, and accounts of angels to discover greater meaning in their own spiritual journeys.
(November / December 2009)

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