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Omens Of Millennium: The Gnosis Of Angels, Dreams, And Resurrection



Synopsis

The author of *The Book of J* explores the origins and significance of angels, symbolic dreams, and near-death experiences, showing how the contemporary interest in them is a basic aspect of humanity. QPB & One Spirit Alt.

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Customer Reviews

Angels, prophetic dreams, and resurrection -- as we approach the millennium, American culture is increasingly fascinated with what many consider to be "new age" phenomena. Yet our current millennial preoccupations are derived from the ancient Hebraic, Christian, and Sufi traditions; they are neither ephemeral nor trivial. They have inspired and captivated the greatest of Western thinkers, from antiquity to Milton, Blake and Shakespeare. What are the angels? And where does our notion of them originate? What role have dreams played in the history of human consciousness? What is the link between angels, prophetic dreams, and near-death experiences? How are these phenomena relevant to us today, as we approach the 21st century? In this commanding and impassioned inquiry, Harold Bloom draws on a life-long study of religion and, in particular, of Gnosticism, the knowledge that God is not an external force but resides within each one of us. Through the ancient literature of Jewish Kabbalah, Christian Gnosticism, and Muslim Shi'ite Sufism, he reveals to us the angels not as the kitschy cherubs we know today, but as magnificent, terrifying, sublime beings who have always played a central role in Western culture. He allows us to feel their splendor, and to experience the powerful role that dreams and near-death experiences have held throughout the centuries. And in the dazzling final chapter, he delivers a

Gnostic sermon in which he urges us toward transcendence. In *Omens of Millennium*, Harold Bloom has written a book whose triumph is not only its synthesis of centuries of religious thought, but its deep spirituality, through which we come to know - and to mourn - a religious experience no longer available to us. A brilliant and provocative book, sure to engender as much discussion as his books *The Western Canon* and *The Book of J*.

A fascination with near-death experiences, alien abductions, angels and prophetic dreams has reached a "particular intensity" in the U.S. as the millennium approaches. Or so says Bloom (*The Western Canon*) in this dazzling, maverick study in literature and comparative religion. Pausing often to unpack his own religious convictions, which are rooted in Gnosticism, a mystical belief system whose elusive history he traces to early Christianity, Kabbalistic Judaism and Islamic Sufism, Bloom contends that such "omens of the Millennium" are in fact debased forms of Gnosticism. Gnosis, he writes, is a spiritual orientation at odds with orthodox religion. It eschews faith in an outward God for knowledge of the divinity of the deepest self and retells the story of creation as a fall away from a Godhead and a Fullness that, Bloom says, is more humane than the God of institutional religion. Contrasting the "inspired vacuity" of New Age writers like Arianna Huffington and Raymond A. Moody to authentic Gnostic authors (who, according to Bloom, include ancient sages like Valentinus, medieval Kabbalists like Isaac Luria and more modern writers like Blake, Emerson and Shakespeare), Bloom explores how images of angels, prophecies and resurrection have always mirrored anxieties about the end of time, and how these images have been domesticated by popular culture. Bloom frequently injects himself into his study, discussing with rueful irony his own experiments with the outer limits of consciousness, including his own "near-death experience" (in a hospital while convalescing from a bleeding ulcer). The final chapter is a Gnostic sermon on self-transcendence. This book's brevity and eccentricities (Huffington and Moody are easy targets who don't exemplify the range and complexity of New Age thought) diminish its force as polemic. As a critical performance, however, it's a tour de force, highlighting a secret history of mystical thought whose visionaries and poets call out to each other over the centuries. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Bloom is a clear-thinking critic who seriously considers the mystical content of much Eastern tradition a fascinating and thought-provoking read

This was really interesting, at least in the beginning. Unfortunately, I didn't get any further than the

first few pages. My dog decided she would have a go at it and was so interested that she ate it. I'm afraid I'll have to buy another copy (now if it were only on Kindle...).

Yes, Harold Bloom can be infuriating at times, as when he finds Mormonism to be intellectually rigorous and shoves Jung aside as hardly worthy of comment. Yet OMENS OF MILLENNIUM has tremendous heart, and I, for one, feel, well, blessed that Bloom has spent untold hundreds of hours sounding out the depths of gnosticism so that he could return with something to enrich all our lives. For Bloom is himself a gnostic prophet in this book, and his connection with the inmost mystery of life is astonishing. I have never read such an honest and hard-won work. In comparison with this, what usually passes for spiritual discernment in America at this time is the merest piffle. Everyone is free to imagine that they inhabit some lofty plateau from which they can observe the grunting, sweating Bloom with superiority and amusement, but there are places in this book that will take you closer to the light than anything written in the last century. It will be your very great loss if you read OMENS OF MILLENNIUM with a mind that is less than fully open.

This book is very insightful, like other reviewers I do not agree with a few things, but over all the book is filled with interesting and historical views on Angels, dreams, resurrection, and religion. I really enjoyed the section on near death experiences, and Freud's ideas of dreams were a bit strange but I am not well read on Freud's psychoanalysis work however sometimes I wonder if he was drinking a bit too much Absinthe. I am also far from anything of an expert on Judaism, Islamic Sufism or basically any other beliefs outside of Catholic or Christian, so the chance to learn a bit on all of them was a wonderful opportunity. The last section there was some part that he brought up the fact that some religions predict the end of the world, like Millerites and Jehovah's witnesses by the way how many times did they predict the world was going to end? I have to ask them the next time they come to my door. Over all I have to say what a wonderful book.

This is a readable & enjoyable book. If one takes it as a *confessio fidei gnosticae* tinged with hilarious malicious remarks on American & global fads (NDEs etc.)- the study fulfills the purpose. However: when scrutinized as a scholarly (even gnostic) effort to disentangle various threads in Western esoteric tradition, the comparativist monologue miserably fails. Just a few illustrations: 1. Bloom stubbornly equates "astral body" with the Sufi "Man of Light". However, *jism-i-latif* (subtle/astral body) is a banality in Sufism. 2. He misreads shamanistic practices as extraphysical journeys of the "Higher Self". Just, the trademark of shamanism is a multiplicity of "souls", psychic

selves; the Self ("Atman") is an extraneous, Indian invention grafted onto a foreign milieu. 3. Bloom bizarrely misinterprets (p. 171.) Shaikh Ahsa'i doctrine of Resurrection - the point 2,. "spiritual flesh", is just jism-i-latif, not a divine spark Bloom so desperately searches for and fails to locate it in the point 4. where it tacitly abides. 4. And much, much more: a) Bloom's neglect of spiritual worlds (olam atziluth, alam-i-jabarut, Shivaloka, the world of Platonic ideas/forms,..) b) complete neglect & conspicuous avoidance of Jung's heritage (particularly concerning the subjects as enthralling as dreams & Self) c) false characterization of Christian religions in the US as quasi-gnostic (sorry Harold-only a piece of wishful thinking, St.Paul was even more triumphant than you can bear.) d)averting the eyes from Indo-Tibetan traditions that would disperse much of the fog in Harold's head.. Yet-it's a good read.

Omens of Millennium is a personal and erudite synthesis of Gnosticism, Hermetism, Sufism, and Jewish Kabbalah (and Emersonism). Prof. Bloom writes with the conviction of a "believer" and the rigor of a disinterested scholar. I first read this book three years ago and since then I have come back to it in many occasions. Omens of Millennium is a wake-up call to Knowledge. The book also introduced me to the extraordinary works of Hans Jonas, Mose Idel, and Henry Corbin.

Omens of Millennium is a consistently enjoyable, delightful work. Bloom is especially insightful when discussing Freud, and in his focus on the relationship of Enoch and Metatron. I don't agree entirely with everything Bloom says, of course, but still, this has been an enormously influential, important and loved book for me. I highly recommend it.

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