

**Fripp, Robert.** *Let There Be Life: A Scientific and Poetic Retelling of the Genesis Creation Story.* Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, HiddenSpring, 2001. xii + 196 pp.

Robert Fripp's little book of creation consists of introduction, text, and commentary centered around the question, "If the first chapter of the book of Genesis were written today, what would it say?" (1). Fripp commences his introduction by narrating a sequence of events beginning when Christians first started to read Genesis 1 literally. Since that time a power struggle has ensued between the Church's interpretation of Genesis and scientists' observations about the universe. At first the Church dominated, but soon science gained control. Today, the abundance of scientific facts disproves any literal reading of Genesis. To many people, Fripp observes, Genesis 1 is an archaic, outdated text, irrelevant for today. Yet, Fripp argues, "The mistake of our age has been to dismiss the intent of the work along with the literal interpretation once placed upon it" (5). Furthermore, he observes, Genesis 1 was never intended to be read as a scientific account, but as a mythic tale with theological and moral implications. By throwing out the text altogether the modern reader misses its relevant message about our interconnectedness with the universe and the responsibilities that arise out of that union.

One way to handle this dilemma, as Fripp sees it, is to write an account of creation for the modern reader. His account blends "the spirit and the sense of Genesis with the con-

ventional wisdom of current scientific thought" (5). So he pens verses such as

And God fashioned proteins, and  
complex large molecules, and to  
some he gave power of self-genera-  
tion.

And God swaddled each one in a  
cellular membrane, and he blessed  
them saying: Be fruitful and multi-  
ply, each according to his own  
kind" (9).

Yet Fripp also incorporates elements from other biblical accounts in order to highlight significant points. Most notably, his retelling of Genesis 1 includes a reference to human disobedience of the divine will which the biblical text does not record until Genesis 3.

Each verse and any additions receive ample explanation within the commentary section. Comprising the largest portion of the book, the commentary reads somewhat like an extended expository sermon, peppered with quips and quotes from some of religion's and science's greatest thinkers. In this section, Fripp attempts to explain how the universe became what it is today, all the while trying to evoke awe and respect for creation.

Throughout the commentary the author endeavors to highlight how religion and science complement each other. While the beginning of the book discusses the problem of religion controlling and dismissing science, the end of the book cautions scientists not to ignore religion: "There is danger here. It is that science runs on alone, indulged to operate within the closed circle of its self-important self-concern" (180). Thereupon,

Fripp draws several parallels between religion and science in order to highlight how they might cooperate. He asserts that "an age when mass and energy are equivalent gives significant scope for wonder. That includes rediscovering something of the wonder of religion" (185). He notes that the debate about dark matter sounds like the search for heaven (187), and that aspects of quantum mechanics support the concept of free will (188). He sees the physicists' notion that certain laws pertain to all space and time as a derivative of the concept of one omnipotent God. He views God's omnipresence as parallel to "the cosmological principle, which states that the universe is the same everywhere and has no center" (189).

All of these points lead to Fripp's plea for the reader to act:

If we are to heal the biosphere of which we are a part, the human species must pool its resources. Together, religion and science have much to offer. The patient in our care needs treatment, as much by our right spirit as by the healing touch of human technology (190).

This point of cooperation is the central theme and purpose of the book. For Fripp, the world is in such a state that science can no longer be pitted against religion, and debates about creation or evolution are wholly misguided. The human race must unite its greatest thinkers in order to heal the damage we have inflicted upon the world.

This book is a combination of scientific overview with a few sermon-like flurries. It is indeed educative and, in some places, quite inspiring. The book seems to be deliberately presented in a format easy to read and is more appropriate for a nightstand than a classroom. However, *Let There Be Life* does raise a significant question about how science and religion should cooperate in order to heal the world. Most notably, by creating a new Genesis text, Fripp prompts the reader to consider the extent to which religion has its own voice in modern debates. If religious texts need to be rewritten for modern audiences, will they not lose something of their character? Can the "spirit and sense" of Genesis be

communicated in a manuscript that reads more like a science textbook than a biblical pericope? Is not something always lost in translation? At issue here is whether one sacrifices Genesis 1 in order to bring its message in part to people who have long dismissed it, or whether one sacrifices a larger audience in order to bring the full message of Genesis to modern discussions.

Perhaps, in the end, there is another option that Fripp had in mind. Many biblical scholars today speak of Genesis 1 as an addition to the earlier creation account of chapter 2 ff. This addition, thought to be penned by the priestly writer in the sixth century, was composed as an introduction to the older creation account. Genesis 1 intends to highlight significant theological points for a people confounded by the experience of devastation and exile who are struggling to make sense of their new situation. Perhaps Fripp is doing nothing more in *Let There Be Life* than what the priestly writer did for his audience. Perhaps Fripp's biggest contribution is that he provides an introduction and window into Genesis for readers living in a world dominated by science.

David M. Stark  
Boston College  
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

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**Kreeft, Peter.** *Three Approaches to Abortion: A Thoughtful and Compassionate Guide to Today's Most Controversial Issue.* San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002. 134 pp.

Of the possible solutions that can be applied to the abortion issue, using reason to thoughtfully and compassionately convince one side that it is wrong is the hope of Dr. Peter Kreeft in this work. As the title indicates, the book has a threefold division: The Apple Argument against Abortion, Why We Fight: A Pro-Life Motivational Map, and A Typical Pro-Life/Pro-Choice Dialogue.