Clarion Review

Religion

Soldier Boy: The War Between Michael & Lucifer
Raymond Dennehy
Trafford Publishing
978-1-4251-3652-9
Three Stars (out of Five)

The mythical battle for civilization and humankind alike is depicted in this almost theatrical tale of the angel Michael and the fallen Lucifer.

Author and philosophy professor Raymond Dennehy offers this well-written yet misguided effort that calls itself “a frolic of imagination and a truth-seeking.” This is certainly an accurate description, but the story fails in that it seems to take the form of a stage production, with the entire work consisting only of dialogue. The problem arises from the sheer lack of any action here; the author fails to set the scenes with a brief description of the settings and the basis for the characters’ heated discussions.

Take, for example, the opening of the chapter titled, “Revelation.” While the reader is already aware of the book’s plot from the cover and back description, the chapter opens simply with a dialogue between two characters named Michael and Uriel. While readers may discover the basis for the conversation between the pair through the dialogue, they are left in the dark as to what exactly is going on. A simple one-line description of action or setting at the onset would help keep readers informed and involved. This is the case for every subsequent chapter in the tale; no action and all dialogue. This is also a problem at the climax of the tale when the two angels, good and evil, confront each other in the much hyped battle. Sadly there is no fight, other than a war of words, and long-winded at that. This is a let down given the subject matter.

Ultimately, though this tale is well-written, it would better serve as a stage production similar to classical works. The language is straightforward and modern, which isn’t necessarily a bad thing to appeal to the average reader, but by simply adding a few lines of action and stage direction throughout, the author would have written an entertaining and intriguing stage production to say the least.

Nevertheless, it’s clear that the author understands his subject and he captures the

essence of the story through the interactions of its protagonist and antagonist. The writing is, mostly, succinct and powerful, yet when the characters drone on in long soliloquies the reader may lose interest given the lack of action.

Dennehy would do well to remember the rule, “show—don’t tell.”

Liam Brennan