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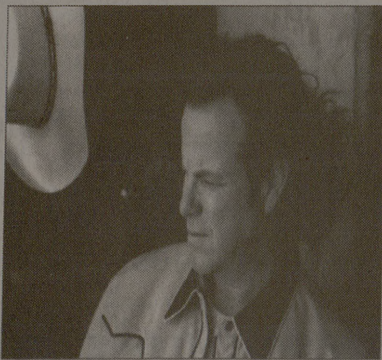
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BOOK WORMS

"Lamb"
By Christopher Moore
Harper Collins Publishers

Recently released in paperback, Christopher Moore's ambitious attempt to create a fictional account of what Jesus Christ might have done during the period of time between his childhood and his highly-chronicled teaching years, will leave readers laughing. That is — if they know how to take a joke.

Moore by no means meant for "Lamb" to be taken as "The Gospel." If readers enjoy the novel for its hilarious dialogue and creative wordplay, "Lamb" will surely please.

In the novel we are introduced to Biff, childhood pal of Jesus H. Christ. Through Biff's eyes, the readers witness the childhood and maturation of the man who will one day be king. Biff is a striking foil to young Jesus. Enjoying the finer things in life, such as girls and sex, Biff is the downright opposite of the pious and faithful Christ. The debates and philosophical exchanges between the two characters serve to define Christ's teachings and offer insight into how he might have developed his beliefs.

Throughout the course of the novel, Biff protects the "naive" boy-messiah from the world. He travels with Jesus throughout his journeys, which include learning Kung Fu from a group of monks, fighting demons in a temple ruled by an ancient magician and teaching an elephant yoga. Full of excellent pacing and hilarious misadventures, "Lamb" transcends its potentially blasphemous nature with the sheer joy of reading such comedic genius.

Like all good stories, "Lamb" is full of raw human emotion. Moore manages to capture Biff and Christ's friendship with such believability, readers will not doubt for a minute why Jesus considers such a blatant sinner as Biff his best friend.

As Biff seeks to protect Jesus, he falls in love with Mary of Magdelena, whose heart belongs solely to Jesus. Plot twists such as this bring out the human side of characters of the Bible. Stunningly well researched, "Lamb" is full of interesting facts and information about the way of life in the past. Facts permeate and augment the story. Facts that appear in the book include the information that the name Jesus is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Yeshua, which translates to Joshua in English.

The novel is not completely without fault, though. Near the ending, the author could not decide whether to continue with his comedic journey through Jesus' life or suddenly sober up to tell of

his crucifixion.

The result is that one of the most tragic deaths in literature is told with a half-hearted attempt to evoke sadness. The scattering of jokes throughout the final chapters leave readers feeling conflicted about whether to laugh or cry. With a superb beginning and an excellent middle, the ending leaves readers with a bitter aftertaste.

The epilogue is a redeeming element for the author, as it contains the hope and joy that was Moore's intent to convey.

Overall, "Lamb" is an excellent experience that is not only affordable, but recommended. For believers and non-believers alike, Biff's tale of his pal Jesus of Nazareth will not fail to please.



— Robert Saucedo

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PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Pete Sampras returns to tennis for work

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Pete Sampras is keeping his hand in tennis.

He has become an investor, partner and consultant at Tennis Magazine — his first corporate commitment since his retirement in August at the U.S. Open.

Sampras will be involved in marketing and will contribute articles and instructional pieces.

The decision was announced Monday by Bob Miller, the magazine's chief executive officer, and Bob Kain, co-chief executive officer of IMG, which represents Sampras.

Sampras won a record 14 Grand Slam

singles titles — Wimbledon (seven), U.S. Open (five) and Australian Open (two).

Sampras was also No. 1 for six straight seasons (1993-98), and he won his final tournament, the 2002 U.S. Open.

Crow stalker caught in the act, arrested

NEW YORK (AP) — A Queens man suspected of stalking singer Sheryl Crow was arrested after he sneaked into the arena where she was doing a sound check, police said.

After the Monday evening sound check, 37-year-old Ambrose Kappos allegedly followed Crow out of the Hammerstein Ballroom on West 34th

Street and tried squeezing into her limousine, police said.

Ballroom employees went to the police station around the corner from the ballroom and summoned help.

Police arrested Kappos on charges of burglary, stalking, harassment, aggravated harassment and criminal possession of marijuana.

Kappos' brother, Van Kappos, told the Daily News that his brother is not dangerous.

"I want to apologize, from my whole family and myself, to Sheryl Crow and her family," Van Kappos said.

"We are sorry if my brother caused her any grief. It must be somewhat frightening to the singer and her family. He's infatuated."

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