FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Clarion Review

The Jerome Conspiracy
Michael Wood
iUniverse
Softcover $12.95 (153pp)
978-1-4401-0015-4
★★★☆☆
(January 2009)

Author Michael Wood has created a fictional account surrounding one of Christianity's most basic tenets: that unbelievers will be sent to hell for all eternity. Wood works a fictional storyline around actual documents unearthed by the Catholic Church in a tomb back in the early 1950s and presents his theory that ancient church leader Jerome falsified scripture and thus has misled sincere Christian believers ever since.

Wood opens his story with the tragic death of an uptight evangelical couple's gay son. Samantha and Jonathon Webber are horrified that their adult son Jamie didn't accept Christ into his heart before dying. Unable to reconcile the fact that their beloved son is destined to eternity in hell Samantha and Jonathon attempt to work through their grief by studying scripture more thoroughly. Seeking answers to difficult questions about Bible translations takes these grief-stricken parents to various "authorities" where they find information that conflicts with what they have been taught by their church. Throughout their quest for the true doctrine on heaven and hell the Webbers continue to unearth more and more inconsistencies that eventually lead them the peaceful conclusion that their unsaved son will join them in heaven after all.

Readers will appreciate the obvious study and in-depth research that Wood has put into this book. However the many tables and even the endnotes at the close of the text may leave many frustrated as they attempt to follow the author's step-by-step journey to his conclusions. Further while readers will empathize with the fictional Webbers' grief Wood portrays Christians as legalistic narrow-minded non-thinkers. This sweeping generalization is not only inaccurate it will likely put off the very audience Wood hopes to persuade.

Wood has a number of US and international patents to his credit. His aptitude for research and systematically putting together facts and drawing parallels and summations is clearly a strongpoint. Still readers with little biblical background may well feel confused and

abandon the text before reaching its pivotal and concluding end. Overall a lighter hand on the details would have made this book more palatable to a general fiction audience.

Michele Howe