

New Bible features C.S. Lewis

There's a new Bible on the market from HarperOne that features annotations taken from the spiritual writings of C.S. Lewis, one of the greatest Christian writers of all time best known for his "Chronicles of Narnia." The newly released "C.S. Lewis Bible" incorporates passages from some of Lewis's greatest works, including "Mere Christianity," "The Screwtape Letters," "The Great Divorce," "The Problem of Pain," "Miracles" and "A Grief Observed."

The New York Times has the story:

✖ (Lewis') most famous apologetic is "Mere Christianity," based on radio talks given during World War II. That book has helped convert Christians as dissimilar as the Watergate felon Charles W. Colson and the National Institutes of Health director, Francis S. Collins.

In "Mere Christianity," Lewis writes of Jesus: "I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell."

This famous passage does not, on a second read, make much sense. After all, could not a great moral teacher have messianic delusions? But on a first read, it is quite persuasive, and classic Lewis. It is clear, confident and a bit humorous, and it offers a stark choice as it firmly suggests the right answer.

According to (Michael) Maudlin, an executive editor at HarperOne, the "Narnia" books are still "huge backlist sellers that dominate everything else" his company publishes by Lewis. But "Mere Christianity" still sells about 150,000 copies a year, as does "The Screwtape Letters" (1942), a satirical correspondence from an uncle demon to his nephew demon about how to lead a human astray.

"I would say in the last 10 years, C. S. Lewis has sold more books than any other 10-year span since he started publishing," Mr. Maudlin said. "He's not only not declining, he is in his sweet spot."

No wonder HarperOne, owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, repackages Lewis so. The Lewis Bible, available in cloth (18,000 copies sold since its November debut) or leather (6,000), shares a recycling genre with "A Year with C. S. Lewis," a collection of 365 Lewis readings, which since 2003 has sold 200,000 copies.

The new Bible splices in quotations from Lewis's books and unpublished papers. For example, in Genesis, next to the story of Noah's drunkenness, appears an excerpt from a 1955 letter to one Mrs. Johnson. "One can understand," it reads in part, "the bitterness of some 'temperance' fanatics if one has ever lived with a drunkard." But, Lewis suggests, teetotalers are wrong if they write alcohol out of the Bible.

More here.