

When I became an evangelical Christian in high school, my first introduction to “apologetics” was through the works of C. S. Lewis. Apologetics involves establishing reasoned ways to “defend the faith” against intellectual attack and to “demonstrate” the superiority of the faith, intellectually, for inquiring minds, in order to convince people. C. S. Lewis was many things: a brilliant scholar of early modern English at both Oxford and Cambridge (many people don’t know he wrote serious academic scholarship, e.g., on seventeenth-century English); an author of enormously popular children books (Chronicles of Narnia); and a Christian apologist (e.g., Mere Christianity; The Problem of Pain).

In evangelical circles at the time – and still today, in places – Lewis was/is revered almost as a demi-god, or at least an angel, if not the fourth member of the Trinity. Not so much in other circles. In graduate school, when I told my Oxford-trained philosophy professor (who was also a Christian theologian) that I was interested in C. S. Lewis, he grimaced and said with some considerable force, “He’s a complete amateur.” I thought, “What the hell are *you* talking about???” How can you possibly call him an amateur? He’s one of the greatest thinkers in the modern world! And who are you???

It’s true, this professor was in fact the most astute I knew. And he was professionally trained as a philosopher. I later came to realize that C. S. Lewis was not. And that in fact (well, it’s a fact in my mind), my professor was right.

Lewis was indeed brilliant. He was massively ...

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