

From Vocal Agnostic to Reluctant Convert:  
The Influence of C.S. Lewis on the Conversion C.E.M. Joad  
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He spoke often on BBC radio, appeared at the Oxford Socratic Club, had a background in philosophy, and a high view of reason. He left the church in his youth and returned to the Christian faith later in life. He disliked the automobile and thought that cigarette ashes were good for the carpet. He valued highly the Golden Rule, and he had a longing for another world. He loved Oxford University and argued for the so-called Free Will Defense. He rated friendship as one of life's greatest pleasures, and he enjoyed walking tours in the countryside.

While most people think this describes C.S. Lewis, in reality it also describes C.E.M. Joad. Like Lewis, Joad left the church during his youth, but he returned to the faith later in life, in part due to the influence of Lewis. This paper will argue that in Joad we see some of the fruits of Lewis' evangelistic work, in this case with one of the prominent intellectuals of the day. Their similar academic pursuits, their reading of one another's work, their 1941 debate in writing, and their 1944 live debate at the Oxford Socratic Club comprise the central events of a relationship that helped usher Joad into the kingdom of God.

Cyril Edwin Mitchinson Joad (1891–1953) was born on August 12, 1891. He attended Balliol College, Oxford (1910–1914), just a few years before Lewis started at University College, Oxford (1917). During his university years, he read the plays of George Bernard Shaw<sup>1</sup> and the novels H.G. Wells,<sup>2</sup> and, as a result, he joined the socialistic Fabian Society. At approximately the same time, he discarded his Christian beliefs.<sup>3</sup> “In those four years at Oxford,” he wrote, “I became an ardent Socialist.”<sup>4</sup>

Joad once described Christianity as a dying religion. Organized Christianity, he wrote, “will disappear within the next hundred years.”<sup>5</sup> While he claimed to admire the church, he stated, “I know too much of its record.”<sup>6</sup> The world needed was more rational thinking, not redemption. No creed was worth dying for, and “to hold any belief with fervor is illogical.”<sup>7</sup> Instead he considered reason a higher creed than Christianity.

Such rational thinking, he thought, required reforms such as legalized abortion, sterilization, disarmament, and less frequent baths.<sup>8</sup> His irascible self surfaced when he wrote of his countryside walking, “Whenever I can, I trespass.”<sup>9</sup> And his Lewisian dislike of cars was well known, but he disliked almost all machines, branding them noisy products of the Industrial

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<sup>1</sup> Cyril Joad, *The Recovery of Belief: A Restatement of Christian Philosophy* (London, 1951), 59. In *The Book of Joad*, he called Shaw and Wells “the gods of my generation” and says they “were like men opening the windows of a rather stuffy room, letting in air and light and laughter.” Pages 12f. He also considered Shaw “the greatest English writer of all time,” Cyril Joad, *The Book of Joad*. (London, 1932), 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Book*, 14.

<sup>3</sup> Cyril Joad, *God and Evil*. (London, 1942), 13.

<sup>4</sup> *Book*, 11.

<sup>5</sup> Cyril Joad, *The Testament of Joad* (London, 1937), 211.

<sup>6</sup> *Testament*, 207.

<sup>7</sup> *Testament*, 25.

<sup>8</sup> Tomes, “Joad, Cyril Edwin Mitchinson (1891–1953)”, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34193>, accessed 26 April 2005]. See especially Joad's “Charter for Rationalists” in *The Book of Joad*, 68.

<sup>9</sup> *Testament*, 46.

Revolution and arguing that the worship of machines was both the symbol and the cause of mistaking the means for the end.<sup>10</sup>

After marrying in 1915, Joad's left his wife in 1921. That this marriage ended should not surprise us, given Joad's early thoughts about women: "What I fell in love with was not a woman but the aura of fictitious qualities with which my sentimentality invested her."<sup>11</sup> When Joad separated from his wife, he moved to Hampstead in London with a student teacher, who was the first of many mistresses. He explained one of the reasons that during most of his early life he had been opposed to the family: "I have liked women too much to pay them the poor compliment of cold shouldering all for the sake of one."<sup>12</sup> In 1925 he was expelled from the Fabian Society for sexual misbehavior at the society's summer school. It's no wonder that Leonard Woolf later described him as "high-minded, loose-living, loose-thinking ... a selfish, quick-witted, amusing intellectual scallywag."<sup>13</sup> Joad rejoined the Fabian Society in 1943.

Some of Joad's preferences showed his similarity to Lewis and, perhaps, paved the way for communication between the two men. He enjoyed hiking. He read with pleasure the works of George Eliot, Mrs. Gaskell, Jane Austen, H.G. Wells, Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, and Anthony Trollope. He thought highly of poetry, lamenting the fact that the writing of poetry was a dying art.<sup>14</sup> Philosophy was his life and his first love, and he liked to "rub [his] brains against those of [his] fellows in argument and discussion."<sup>15</sup> "In the world of ideas ... I feel at home; I take to them so readily, I am so quickly and so easily their master that I can be at play with them."<sup>16</sup>

After graduating from Balliol, he worked as a civil servant until 1930,<sup>17</sup> when he became the head of the philosophy department at Birkbeck College, University of London. Gifted at teaching, he learned also to write well and to popularize philosophy. He received a D.Litt. in 1936 and was promoted to Reader at Birkbeck in 1945. In spite of his personal lifestyle, he believed that ethics and aesthetics were objective,<sup>18</sup> a trait that undoubtedly inclined him towards the Natural Law that C.S. Lewis enunciated. He also felt that existentialism and logical positivism were leading the country to an unhealthy subjectivism and relativism. For him, the ultimate values were truth, beauty, and goodness.<sup>19</sup>

During his years at Birkbeck, Joad was involved in the most famous debate in the history of the Oxford Union Society. Debated on Thursday, 9 February 1933, was this question: "That this House will in no circumstances fight for its King and Country." The topic illustrates both the attitude of Oxford and the state of Europe, as the Second World War approached. Adolph Hitler had become chancellor of Germany just ten days prior to the debate. After five speakers, including Joad as the principal and last speaker, the motion passed by a vote of 275 to 153. Joad's speech was described as "well-organized and well-received," probably the single most

<sup>10</sup> *Testament*, 108, 112.

<sup>11</sup> *Book*, 35.

<sup>12</sup> *Testament*, 20f.

<sup>13</sup> Leonard Woolf, *Downhill all the way: an autobiography of the years 1919-1939*, London, 1967, p. 81, cited in Martin Ceadel, "The 'King and Country' Debate, 1933: Student Politics, Pacifism and the Dictators," in *The Historical Journal*, 1979, 401.

<sup>14</sup> *Testament*, 160.

<sup>15</sup> *Testament*, 133.

<sup>16</sup> *Testament*, 135.

<sup>17</sup> [www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/Jjoad.htm](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/Jjoad.htm). See also Joad, *Book*, 45.

<sup>18</sup> For example, Joad wrote, "... many people still subscribe to the subjectivist fallacy of supposing that the merit of a work of art depends upon its effects." *Book*, 167.

<sup>19</sup> *God and Evil*, 229.

important reason for the outcome of the debate.<sup>20</sup> As a result, the reputation of the Oxford Union Society was damaged and Winston Churchill refused to speak at the Union until it acquired “a sense of responsibility.” Those who passed this resolution were accused of aiding the enemy, but Martin Ceadel has shown that this accusation was greatly exaggerated. Several years later, when on 10 November 1938 the Oxford Union debated the motion “That war between nations can sometimes be justified,” the motion was carried in spite of Joad’s return to stand against that motion.<sup>21</sup>

Joad believed that some of the tragedy of World War One was due to the government’s use of jargon to cajole young people to fight for their country. We fight wars, he wrote, “because we mistake words and phrases for realities.”<sup>22</sup> The 1933 debate on “King and Country” was essentially about patriotism and duty. It opposed the patriotism of the popular press of 1914, the persecution of conscientious objectors, and also stood against the language which stated that it was sweet and proper to die for one’s country.<sup>23</sup>

World War One began on 28 July 1914, and England declared war on Germany on 4 August. The government’s recruitment effort began with the words, “Your King and Country Need You,” words that appeared daily in *The Times* beginning on 5 August 1914. Lord Kitchener used the same language to make a full-page appeal on 11 August for 100,000 men to sign up for the duration of the war.<sup>24</sup> Doris Myers pointed out that between the two wars many people felt duped by language, used by the media, and affected by propaganda. Some people thought of the war as a spiritual conflict, while newspapers glamorized the fighting and created a false sense of optimism.<sup>25</sup>

Joad’s pacifism, however, did not last to the end of the Second World War. The reality of Nazi death camps took its toll on Joad’s agnosticism, and a Labour government helped him to think differently about socialism.<sup>26</sup> He was beginning to turn from his agnosticism to Christianity, a change that is chronicled in his book, *The Recovery of Belief*. There were early anticipations of this conversion. When he wrote of Beethoven’s musical compositions, he described the last four sonatas, the ninth symphony, and the posthumous quartets as conveying “unearthly tranquility which to my mind can only receive adequate interpretation on mystical lines. There is another world, it seems, static, permanent and perfect, in a sense in which ours is fluctuating, transitory and faulty, of which we may catch fleeting intimations in this last-period music.”<sup>27</sup> He wrote similarly about art, stating, “That all great art has this power of suggesting a world beyond is undeniable. In some moods Nature shares it.”<sup>28</sup> He might better have spoken of longings, expressed in music, art, and Nature, that demonstrated a human desire for something he knew not what, something theological rather than mystical, namely God. In this he paralleled

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<sup>20</sup> Ceadel, 404. Joad later wrote articles about the debate, as did the creator of Winnie-the-Pooh, A. A. Milne. Joad’s articles appeared in the *Daily Herald* on Feb. 20, 1933, and the *Sunday Referee*, March 5, 1933. They were reprinted in the pamphlet *The fight—for peace* and in *The Oxford resolution*, respectively. He also wrote an article for the *Sunday Dispatch* on Feb. 19, 1933. See Ceadel, 408, n. 43.

<sup>21</sup> Ceadel, 419.

<sup>22</sup> *Testament*, 193.

<sup>23</sup> J.M. Winter, “Oxford and the First World War,” Chapter 1 in *The History of the University of Oxford*, 8 vols. Vol. VIII: The Twentieth Century (Oxford, 1994), 24–5.

<sup>24</sup> Ceadel, 418, n. 77.

<sup>25</sup> Myers, *C. S. Lewis in Context* (Kent, Ohio, 1994), 2, 27.

<sup>26</sup> Tomes; *God and Evil*, 15.

<sup>27</sup> Joad, *Book*, 164. Joad said much the same of Bach on the same page, even stating that a part of Bach “quite obviously lived in heaven.”

<sup>28</sup> *Book*, 218.

Lewis' experience of *Sehnsucht*, or Joy, which eventually led to Lewis' conversion and probably had an influence on Joad's conversion.<sup>29</sup> But in 1932 he was still an agnostic. Such longings, Joad wrote, do not "mean that the universe is good, that life has a purpose, that God is in heaven."<sup>30</sup>

During World War Two Joad participated in a BBC radio program called *The Brains Trust*, a panel of thinkers who answered various questions from listeners. Launched on 1 January 1941, this weekly program invited panelists who had a sharp wit and a quick tongue. The program was very successful, making Joad's name well known in the UK. With his careful distinction between words, Joad's favorite expression, "It depends what you mean by..." became quite popular.<sup>31</sup> Joad, biologist Julian Huxley, and retired naval officer A.B. Campbell were the three original panelists.<sup>32</sup> Other panelists included philosopher A.J. Ayer, philosopher and historian Isaiah Berlin, civil servant Norman Fisher, and economist Barbara Ward.

Extracts from a program in *The Brains Trust* series, held on 31 December 1945, give a flavor of the discussion on the program and Joad's significant role. The Question Master was Donald McCullough, and the speakers were Joad, Julian Huxley, Mrs. H.A. Hamilton, Barbara Ward, and Prof. J.M. Mackintosh. One of the questions that McCullough asked was this: "Should there be international control over discoveries affecting methods of warfare?" Joad regarded control as the only alternative to destruction, though impractical, and he forecast various scientific discoveries (putting atomic warfare 150 years down the road). The only feasible solution, that of international government, seemed impossible to achieve. Huxley felt that control would check both scientific discovery and the wrongful use of discoveries. He predicted atomic warfare in the much less distant future. Mackintosh felt like Joad, that is, that international control would not be practical and that anti-war publicity was the only answer. Joad was permitted to give a "short parable" about the last survivors of the human race.<sup>33</sup>

After having once boasted in print that "I cheat the railway company whenever I can,"<sup>34</sup> Joad got in trouble with the law in April 1948 for traveling on a Waterloo-Exeter train without a ticket, being convicted of "unlawfully traveling on the railway without having previously paid his fare and with intent to avoid payment."<sup>35</sup> This led to him being dropped from *The Brains Trust* panel that same year.

Joad died of cancer at his home in Hampstead on 9 April 1953 at the age of 61. Among his more than seventy-five works were *Modern Philosophy* (1924), *Matter, Life and Value*, the book that provided an academic foundation for creative evolution (1929), *The Present and Future of Religion*, a book critical of the religious view (1930), *The Book of Joad*, subtitled "a belligerent autobiography" (1932), *Guide to Modern Thought* (1933), *Guide to Philosophy* (1936), *The Testament of Joad* (1937), *Guide to the Philosophy of Morals and Politics* (1938), *Why War?* (1939), *God and Evil* (1942), *Teach Yourself Philosophy* (1944), *The English Counties* (1948), and *The Recovery of Belief* (1951), which seems to be the last piece he published. His *Guide to Modern Thought* and *Guide to Philosophy* helped to make him a public figure. The popularity of his works suggests both the value of his writing and, in the main, the

<sup>29</sup> See C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life* (San Diego, 1955), 7, 16, 72, 155, 166, 169, 175, 177, 203, and especially 217.

<sup>30</sup> *Book*, 218f.

<sup>31</sup> [www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/Jjoad.htm](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/Jjoad.htm).

<sup>32</sup> Tomes.

<sup>33</sup> [http://www.spokenword.ac.uk/record\\_view.php?pbd=gcu-a0a0d7-b](http://www.spokenword.ac.uk/record_view.php?pbd=gcu-a0a0d7-b).

<sup>34</sup> *Testament*, 54.

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/Jjoad.htm>

trustworthiness of his insights, including *The Book of Joad* and *The Testament of Joad*. His clear thinking further suggests that, like the apostle Paul, he brought the same mind and personality into the Christian faith that he had prior to his conversion.

In spite of some significant differences, Lewis and Joad were very much alike, from their mutual dislike of the automobile to their training in philosophy to their unusual belief that tobacco ashes were good for the carpet.<sup>36</sup> Both had the advantage of an Oxford liberal arts education. Eventually, Joad would echo Lewis' Free Will Defense, made in *Mere Christianity*, that the creation of beings who could do no wrong would be the creation of automata rather than free human beings with the capability of choice.<sup>37</sup> Both men, therefore, believed in free will and rejected determinism. Joad and Lewis also held reason in high regard. When Screwtape wrote to Wormwood about the temptation of his patient, for example, he advocated strategies that were aimed at preventing the patient from engaging in rational argument.<sup>38</sup>

Joad expressed an opinion about psychology that was similar to Lewis' critique of Naturalism, stating, "If the conclusions of this psychology are correct, there is no reason to think them true."<sup>39</sup> That is, if behaviorist psychology is true and behavior merely follows the laws of physics and does not reflect free will or a capable reason, then even the positions held by behaviorists about human behavior are determined by the laws of physics and we can have no assurance of their validity. Joad also wrote about Bulverism almost a decade before Lewis did, stating his dismay that objective truth is not what concerns people most, but "the reasons which lead people to formulate their particular brands of error."<sup>40</sup> In 1941, Lewis wrote, "Assume that your opponent is wrong, and then explain his error, and the world will be at your feet."<sup>41</sup> Both men also thought precisely about the meanings of words, being careful to define their terms precisely.

Joad was sympathetic to Lewis' views of Sir Arthur Eddington. Eddington was the physicist whose published observations of a solar eclipse confirmed Einstein's theory of relativity. Joad wrote, "There is a celebrated passage in Eddington's writing in which he describes how the physicist, when he wishes to establish contact with his world, is required to divest himself one by one of his sense-organs."<sup>42</sup> Joad was probably referring to Eddington's *Science and the Unseen World*, in which he stated that science could not discover the meaning of the world and that such meaning must be sought in spiritual reality. Since Eddington, a devout Quaker, believed there was more to the physical world than met the eye, he concluded that physics doesn't deal with the actuality of real things, only "a set of abstracted appearances and the relations between them."<sup>43</sup> For Eddington, "Mind is the first and most direct thing in our experience; all else is remote inference."<sup>44</sup> To his credit, Eddington also understood the limits of science and natural law, stating, "Dismiss the idea that natural law can swallow up religion; it

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<sup>36</sup> *Testament*, 170.

<sup>37</sup> *Recovery*, 221.

<sup>38</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York, 1996), 2. See Letter I, paragraph two, in several other places in the letters, and elsewhere in the writings of Lewis; on Joad, see above on the elevation of reason about Christianity.

*Book*, 15f.

<sup>39</sup> *Book*, 99.

<sup>40</sup> *Book*, 103.

<sup>41</sup> C.S. Lewis, "Bulverism," in *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids, 1970), 273.

<sup>42</sup> *Recovery*, 116.

<sup>43</sup> *Recovery*, 124.

<sup>44</sup> Eddington, cited in Joad, *Recovery*, 125.

cannot even tackle the multiplication table single-handed.”<sup>45</sup> Lewis, who had read Eddington’s *The Nature of the Physical World*, cited Eddington more than a dozen times in his works.<sup>46</sup>

Speaking of the Golden Rule after his return to Christianity, Joad wrote, “. . . the adoption of the Christian view of the world . . . has complicated the problem of conduct. . . .”<sup>47</sup> One of those complications is the fact that “I do not do unto others as I would be done by,” a characteristically Lewisian formulation of the Golden Rule.<sup>48</sup> Given that complication, forgiveness is necessary. Some of the similarities between Joad and Lewis may well be due to Joad’s reading of Lewis, although we have only minimal evidence for this.

Among the major similarities are these five. First, both men were brought up in the Church of England and left it in their youth,<sup>49</sup> but both men came back to it in their adulthood, only after adopting theism for a time and then, later, Christianity, and that reluctantly.<sup>50</sup> Second, for both Joad and Lewis, a longing for something was a major factor in their conversion. Joad once wrote about a different world in shadowlands language, stating, “One never quite got to this world; but the sense of its nearness. . . .” was like one “sitting chained under the shadow of a hill on the other side of which was a great light. . . . he knew for a certainty that the lighted place was there,” but he could not see it directly.<sup>51</sup> Third, both men were popular radio voices over the BBC during the 1940s, even beginning on the radio in the same year, Joad with *The Brains Trust* and Lewis with the broadcasts that were later incorporated into *Mere Christianity*.

Fourth, the two men expressed similar views of friendship. Joad described friendship as that which “springs up between those whose interests and enthusiasms are centered upon something else,”<sup>52</sup> while Lewis described it as “Friends, side by side, absorbed in some common interest.”<sup>53</sup> Both men liked a good intellectual argument. Joad once wrote like Lewis in a lament against the self-centeredness of modern Western man, who “still conceives of himself as the center of the universe; often, indeed, he behaves as if the only function of the universe is to put him in its center.”<sup>54</sup>

Fifth, in his essays “Religion and Rocketry” (1958) and “The Seeing Eye” (1963), Lewis mentioned Professor Fred B. Hoyle (1915–2001), a Cambridge astronomer. In “The Seeing Eye,” Lewis noted that Hoyle and others were claiming that life must have originated in many, many times and places, given the vast size of the universe. He was referring to a series of broadcast talks that Hoyle had given in the summer of 1950, later published as *The Nature of the Universe*. That series of talks argued against a Christian view of origins and the uniqueness of the Christian faith. Hoyle was a naturalist who claimed to be unable to think of immortality except as a mind animated by some sort of body.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Eddington, cited in Joad, *Recovery*, 144.

<sup>46</sup> See especially C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York, 2001), 55, and *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (New York, 1996), 138, 199.

<sup>47</sup> *Recovery* 15.

<sup>48</sup> C.E.M. Joad, *Recovery*, 16. Lewis said, “Do as you would be done by.” C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man or Reflections on education with special reference to the teaching of English in the upper forms of schools*. (New York, 1996), 52 and 57.

<sup>49</sup> “I had been brought up in the Church. All my childhood I had regularly attended, once every Sunday morning, the country church of a Midland village.” Joad, *Testament*, 209.

<sup>50</sup> *Recovery*, 21; *Joy*, 228f.

<sup>51</sup> *Testament*, 215.

<sup>52</sup> *Book*, 17.

<sup>53</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, (New York, 1988), 61.

<sup>54</sup> *Testament*, 228.

<sup>55</sup> Hoyle cited in Joad, *Recovery*, 188.

According to Lewis, however, the enlargement of the scale of the universe did not reduce the importance of mankind. Partly agreeing with Hoyle, Lewis thought it unlikely that life existed anywhere else in our solar system, but that it was at least possible elsewhere in the galaxy. Lewis further argued that “those who do not find Him on earth are unlikely to find Him in space.”<sup>56</sup> Science is not equipped to do theology and evaluate the arguments for the existence of God, and, furthermore, the discovery of life in other parts of the universe would have no effect upon Christianity.

Against Hoyle, Joad earlier had made Lewis’ argument, stating that the size of the universe or the span of time in which it formed did not have “any *necessary* bearing upon our views as to the nature of the universe as a whole, more particularly as regards its origin, purpose, destiny and end.”<sup>57</sup> The enlargement of the scale of the universe did not reduce the importance of mankind.<sup>58</sup> In fact, “vastness and majesty are, surely, precisely what we should expect to find as characteristics of God’s creation.”<sup>59</sup> In this he wrote what Lewis later stated in “Religion and Rocketry”:

Each new discovery, even every new theory, is held at first to have the most wide-reaching theological and philosophical consequences. It is seized by unbelievers as the basis for a new attack on Christianity; it is often, and more embarrassingly, seized by injudicious believers as the basis for a new defense.

But usually, when the popular hubbub has subsided and the novelty has been chewed over by real theologians, real scientists and real philosophers; both sides find themselves pretty much where they were before. So it was with Copernican astronomy, with Darwinism, with biblical criticism, with the new psychology. So, I cannot help expecting it will be with the discovery of ‘life on other planets’—if that discovery is ever made.<sup>60</sup>

These two men also had many differences, but they were more alike than different. They had very different opinions of writers such as Hume, Gibbon, Thackeray, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Dr. Johnson. Lewis loved poetry, while Joad, though he thought highly of poetry, admitted, “I have little use for poetry.”<sup>61</sup> Lewis saw much value in Romance, while Joad, the rationalist, did not. Lewis loved the music of Wagner, while Joad did not.

Although a rationalist and a socialist who once rejoiced that clergymen would be extinct by 1960,<sup>62</sup> Joad himself later returned to the Christianity of his youth. That change took place over a number of years and in several steps, the first of which seems to have been World War Two. An exchange between Joad and Lewis in *The Spectator* occurred at about the same time, so it is reasonable to conclude that the writings of Lewis first nudged Joad in the direction of God.

Joad wrote an article entitled “Evil and God” for *The Spectator*, which was published on 31 January 1941. Writing in reply, Lewis’ article of 7 February 1941 carried the same title.<sup>63</sup> In this article, Lewis anticipated some of the arguments that he would later deliver over the BBC and that would appear in *Mere Christianity*, such as the attraction of monotheism or dualism and

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<sup>56</sup> C.S. Lewis, “The Seeing Eye,” in *Christian Reflections*. (Grand Rapids, 1967), 171.

<sup>57</sup> *Recovery*, 32, 109.

<sup>58</sup> *Recovery*, 33.

<sup>59</sup> *Recovery*, 110.

<sup>60</sup> C.S. Lewis, “Religion and Rocketry.” *Fern-Seed and Elephants and other essays on Christianity* (Glasgow, 1975), 86f.

<sup>61</sup> *Book*, 77.

<sup>62</sup> *Tomes*.

<sup>63</sup> Cyril Joad, “Evil and God,” in *The Spectator* (31 January 1941), 112–13, reprinted in *God and the Dock* (Grand Rapids: 1970), 161–66. C. S. Lewis, “Evil and God,” in *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids: 1970), 21–4.

the emergent evolution of Henri Bergson, both of which Joad had also rejected in his article. Evil is parasitic, a corruption of the good and not on the same level as good. Therefore, dualism should be rejected also.

Although Joad once thought that there was “no fundamental and incurable wickedness in human beings”<sup>64</sup> and that “calamity and suffering have no purpose whatever,”<sup>65</sup> Shaw’s expression of human evil eventually seemed to Joad to be “intolerably shallow.”<sup>66</sup> With the conviction, drawn from his observation of World War Two, that mankind is evil came the conviction that evil was resident also in himself.<sup>67</sup> And that conviction eventually led Joad to conclude that taking seriously the facts of moral experience required a supernatural view of life.<sup>68</sup> In addition, Joad began to notice that others possessed something that he did not, something he would like to have.<sup>69</sup> He claimed, “I would like to cultivate virtue and to be a better man, but I simply do not know how to do it.”<sup>70</sup>

Joad later wrote, “I was for years baffled by the problem of pain and evil; in fact, it was this problem that for years denied belief in the Christian religion.”<sup>71</sup> This quotation, with its mention of “the problem of pain,” echoes the title of Lewis’ 1940 book, *The Problem of Pain* and suggests a greater influence by Lewis than Joad formally acknowledged. That Joad attributed to Lewis much influence through *The Abolition of Man* (1943) suggests that he had previously been influenced by *The Problem of Pain*, a book that Joad had read.<sup>72</sup> Lewis had dealt with the very issue that most bothered Joad, an issue that Joad addressed in his book in a section entitled “The Pain of Animals.” That topic Lewis also addressed in one of the chapters of *The Problem of Pain*.<sup>73</sup> In this section of Joad’s *The Recovery of Belief*, he mentioned Lewis’ proposal that the Fall affected all of life, including animal life.<sup>74</sup>

Shortly after the exchange in *The Spectator*, C.E.M. Joad wrote favorably in the *New Statesman and Nation* (16 May 1942) about Lewis’ *Screwtape Letters*, which had just been published. These comments expressed a profound respect for the position of Lewis, which Joad knew to be contrary to his own. He wrote, “Mr. Lewis possesses the rare gift of being able to make righteousness readable, and has produced a pretty piece of homily lit by flashes of insight.”<sup>75</sup>

Then, on 24 January 1944, Joad debated Lewis at a meeting of the Oxford Socratic Club on the topic “On Being Reviewed by Christians.” More than 250 students, the largest number ever to attend a Socratic Club meeting, attended this debate in Lady Margaret Hall.<sup>76</sup> Normally about sixty to a hundred attended Socratic Club meetings.<sup>77</sup> Joad’s topic was a defense of his

<sup>64</sup> Joad, *Testament*, 13. See also Joad, *Book*, 88, where he wrote, “It is not because men are bad at heart, but because they are weak in the head that they so harry and torment one another and make their world a hell.”

<sup>65</sup> *Testament*, 68.

<sup>66</sup> *Recovery*, 63.

<sup>67</sup> *Recovery*, 64, 76. He does not tie this conviction to any particular event or series of events.

<sup>68</sup> *Recovery*, 78.

<sup>69</sup> *Testament*, 89.

<sup>70</sup> *Testament*, 102.

<sup>71</sup> *Recovery*, 23.

<sup>72</sup> *God and Evil*, 298.

<sup>73</sup> Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York, 1996), Chapter 9, “Animal Pain,” 132-47

<sup>74</sup> *Recovery*, 24.

<sup>75</sup> Hooper, Walter. *C. S. Lewis: A Companion & Guide* (New York, 1996), 276.

<sup>76</sup> Roger Green and Walter Hooper, *C.S. Lewis: A Biography*, 2d edition (San Diego, 1994), 216.

<sup>77</sup> Walter Hooper, “Oxford’s Bonny Fighter,” *C.S. Lewis at the Breakfast Table and Other Reminiscences* (New York: Macmillan, 1979), 145.

book, *God and Evil*, released in November of 1942. The book mentioned Lewis by name fifty-three times. Joad stated that he had contracted with himself not to think about religion for thirty years, but that the thirty years were over. After an initial chapter setting forth the relevance of his topic, the next six chapters of the book contained a discussion of the arguments for Theism, and chapter eight contained his reasons for rejecting Christianity.

The contents of that book likely provide the general nature of what Joad presented that night. He must have stated that the balance of the logical argument seemed to be against the view that an omnipotent, benevolent God created the universe, but data from aesthetic and moral experience suggested a level of reality beyond pure logic. Mystics seemed to make direct contact with this level of reality. After rejecting subjectivism, creative evolution, emergent evolution, and impersonal consciousness, Joad offered a tentative conclusion that pointed toward the religious view of the world, concluding that man's desire to accept the religious hypothesis was evidence itself in favor of the hypothesis. Joad then concluded that the evidence did not favor the case for Christianity.

Joad also stated that he considered both atheist and Christian reviews of his book to be disgraceful.<sup>78</sup> Given the skill of each man in conversation, the evening must have been lively. John Wain later described the atmosphere as “positively gladiatorial.”<sup>79</sup> The minutes record the only comment about Lewis' reply: “Mr. Lewis opened the discussion. He agreed with Dr. Joad that the standard of reviewing today was disgraceful, and that the Christian's refusal to take agnosticism seriously was perturbing. Dr. Joad had however not admitted the possibility that the Christian hypothesis might be true.”<sup>80</sup> The last sentence makes it clear that Joad presented arguments against Christianity, those that appear in his book *God and Evil* and suggests that Lewis defended the Christian hypothesis. Walter Hooper mentions the warmth of the debate in spite of the freezing temperatures outside. In spite of the January weather, both Joad and Lewis engaged in the debate so energetically that they were “dripping with perspiration.” Joad wanted to remove his coat, and Lewis was invited to do the same. However, he told the moderator that he couldn't because of a large hole in his shirt.<sup>81</sup>

A book chapter entitled “The Churches,” which Joad wrote for a 1943 publication, tells us more of what he said that night, for this chapter expresses his dismay over the reviews of *God and Evil*.<sup>82</sup> The chapter is largely a complaint about those reviews, some from rationalists who deplored Joad's favorable view of theism and others from Christians who deplored Joad's rejection of Christianity. Clearly the topic of his talk, “On Being Reviewed by Christians,” refers to the same subject as addressed in this chapter. Christians, Joad wrote, too quickly patronized him, stating, “Mr. Joad travels well-worn ground without perhaps much originality.” Of the evidence for the existence of God, one wrote that Joad came to the obvious conclusion that there was a God.<sup>83</sup> Other Christians offered condolence: “It is unlikely that this is Mr. Joad's last word. So honest a searcher after truth who has already traveled so far is bound to travel further.”

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<sup>78</sup> Minutes of the Oxford Socratic Club, 24 January 1944, reported in an email from Christopher Mitchell on 11 February 2008.

<sup>79</sup> John Wain, *Sprightly Running* (New York: 1963), 141.

<sup>80</sup> Unprocessed Stella Aldwinckle Archive, “Socratic Minutes,” The Marion E. Wade Center, Wheaton College, Wheaton Illinois, 24 January 1944.

<sup>81</sup> Hooper, “Oxford's Bonny Fighters,” 145.

<sup>82</sup> Cyril Joad, “The Churches—Diagnosis and Recipe.” *In Search of Faith: A Symposium* (London, 1943).

<sup>83</sup> “The Churches,” 61.

“The pilgrim is half way home.” “When honest searchers after truth” have gone this far, “it is best to leave them to their own journeying and not to press them indiscreetly.”<sup>84</sup>

One Father Brodrick, S.J., said that Joad had been “educated on Tit-bits and/or the *Reader’s Digest*,” suggesting that only professional Christians can offer coherent thought on the topics that Joad addressed. Brodrick’s further complaints led Joad to write, “his anger is only one more proof of the inability of a Christian to put himself into the shoes of an enquirer who is not yet convinced of the truth of Christianity, the consequence being that, lacking charity and supplying its place with presumption, he proceeds to denounce the enquirer for his lack of conviction.”<sup>85</sup> Others questioned Joad’s numbers when he claimed that most churches were nearly empty, and they questioned his judgment when he suggested that Christians had been more cruel in the name of Christ than those of any other creed or cause. They denounced him when he took issue with the exclusiveness of this statement in the Athanasian Creed: “which faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled: without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.”<sup>86</sup> More complaints came against Joad for not having read Christian books more widely, or for not understanding history or the Gospels in their historical setting.<sup>87</sup>

Taking the offensive in “The Churches,” Joad then wondered why his reviewers didn’t ask him to read both sides, why the churches don’t live up to the faith they claim to believe, why the churches claim an exclusive corner on the truth, and why his critics belittle reason.<sup>88</sup> He concluded with some advice for clergy—that they avoid the topics of geography and the history of man and that they not speak in unnatural voices.<sup>89</sup> One suspects that this chapter contains a significant section of Joad’s talk before the Socratic Club.

Clyde Kilby and Lewis met in 1953. Kilby wrote about this meeting, “We talked of C. E. M. Joad, professor of philosophy at the University of London who had died a few weeks earlier. Lewis said he and Joad had talked on two different occasions until far into the night and that in light of these experiences he had changed his mind about him. He had found him sincere—vain but unconscious of his vanity and fundamentally honest in his thinking. He had respect, he said, for Joad’s turn to Christianity and was sure he was no charlatan.”<sup>90</sup> This Socratic Club debate is likely one of the times when Lewis spoke at length with Joad, since Lewis sometimes hosted guest speakers overnight. The congenial Lewis could easily converse with those with whom he disagreed, and his influence for the Christian faith probably came through that night, even though it is unlikely that Lewis was overtly evangelistic. He probably did not need to be.

By the time of this appearance at the Socratic Club, some say, Joad was already well on his way to Christianity. Certainly the fifty-three references to Lewis in *God and Evil* are an indication of the growing influence of Lewis on Joad. He must have become a Christian at some point between this debate in 1944 and 1950. Very possibly the conviction for traveling on a train without a ticket in April 1948, with his subsequent dismissal by the BBC from *The Brains Trust*, resulted in his recognition of the need for forgiveness of sins, which then led to belief in Jesus Christ. The law has to do its work before the Gospel will make sense.

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<sup>84</sup> “The Churches,” 62.

<sup>85</sup> Joad, “The Churches,” 63.

<sup>86</sup> “The Churches,” 63, 65.

<sup>87</sup> “The Churches,” 67.

<sup>88</sup> “The Churches,” 68–71.

<sup>89</sup> “The Churches,” 76.

<sup>90</sup> Clyde S. Kilby, “The Creative Logician Speaking” in *C.S. Lewis: Speaker and Teacher*, ed. Carolyn Keefe (Grand Rapids, 1971), 16.

A few years after the debate, Lewis would engage C.E.M. Joad in a literary and theological exchange in an inquiry and a reply to “The Pains of Animals.” This essay echoed Lewis’ thoughts in *The Problem of Pain*, which was published in 1940 and included a chapter on animal pain. Joad raised certain questions about Lewis’ ninth chapter in *The Problem of Pain*. The inquiry by Joad and the reply by Lewis were first published in February 1950 in the British periodical *The Month* and reprinted in the *Atlantic Monthly* that April.<sup>91</sup> Joad’s critique challenged the Lewisian idea that animals have sentience but not consciousness, that domestic animals will achieve immortality through the family to which they belonged, and that Satan might have tempted monkeys. He also argued that an animal seems to remember pain when it cringes at the sight of the whip by which it had previously been beaten, suggesting both sentience *and* consciousness. The essay did not contain any indication that Joad had returned to the faith, nor did it make it clear that he hadn’t.

Lewis replied that most of chapter nine contained his guesses. He conceded that Satan had not tempted monkeys, since that would assume a will. He proposed that instead of speaking of moral *corruption* in animals he could have written, more accurately, about moral *distortion*. He also defended the argument that animals have a lack of consciousness, stating that the more coherently conscious the animal, the more pity its pains deserve. And when animals act as if from memory, that does not prove memory in the conscious sense, especially since our blinking of the eyes at the approach of an object is due to reflex action rather than remembering. But all this is speculation, Lewis admitted, and should be taken only as an attempt to understand better. We lack the kind of data for animals that we have for humans, and Lewis was confident that the appearance of divine cruelty toward animals is a false appearance.

Joad’s book, *The Recovery of Belief: A Restatement of Christian Philosophy*, was published in 1951, shortly before his death two years later. He stated the purpose of the book in the first sentence: “The following book is an account of some of the reasons which have converted me to the religious view of the universe in its Christian version.”

Joad gave major credit to Lewis’ book, *The Abolition of Man*, for the change in his thinking that led to his conversion.<sup>92</sup> He quoted from the third of the Riddell lectures that later formed Lewis’ book, stating that Christianity had tempered his idealism and given him a discipline by which he could learn to conform his wishes to the world, rather than the narcissistic opposite, and recognize that optimism about human nature was one of the failures of the Left:

For the wise men of old the cardinal problem had been how to conform the soul to reality, and the solution had been knowledge, self-discipline, and virtue. For magic and applied science alike the problem is how to subdue reality to the wishes of men: the solution is a technique; and both, in the practice of this technique, are ready to do things hitherto regarded as disgusting and impious—such as digging up and mutilating the dead.<sup>93</sup>

Joad also showed more of Lewis’ influence from *The Abolition of Man*, particularly its Appendix on the Tao, by stating that many of Christ’s ethical precepts appear in the teachings of other higher religions and even the Greek philosophers.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> C.E. M. Joad, “The Pain of Animals: A Problem in Theology,” *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids: 1970), 161–66, and C. S. Lewis, “The Reply,” 166–71.

<sup>92</sup> *Recovery*, 81.

<sup>93</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, 83f., cited in Joad, *Recovery*, 81.

<sup>94</sup> *Recovery*, 164.

In *The Recovery of Belief*, Joad admitted that "...a belief in religion comes with a quite special degree of difficulty to persons of my training and equipment..."<sup>95</sup> He made clear the fact that he did not come to a Christian position easily, since "...the findings of the contemporary intellect tell heavily against religion...the climate of the time is hostile to it...For most of my life I have been not only an agnostic but a vocal and militant agnostic."<sup>96</sup> Lewis' similar portrayal of himself as a "reluctant convert" is well known.<sup>97</sup>

What really brought Joad to Christianity was what he called "The Significance Evil," the title of Chapter III in *The Recovery of Belief*. After being influenced in the pre-World War One years by the works of Shaw and Bergson, Joad saw that making man the master of his fate had brought death and destruction. Perfection, thought Shaw, Bergson, and also Herbert Spencer, was achievable,<sup>98</sup> evolution was moving mankind toward improvement without the assistance of God, and the imperfection of the world was due to external conditions, able to be remedied by science or through eugenics, scientific breeding, and education.<sup>99</sup> However, if the future of the world is in our hands, Joad concluded, we are making a mess of it and the hopeful optimism of the age is ill-founded.

Joad made his Christian faith personal in these words:

Christianity, moreover, tells me that He will not only assist me personally by the bestowal of grace, but that He has assisted mankind as a whole by sending His Son into the world to win for men by His suffering and death the chance of eternal life and to provide them with an example of right living, by following which they may come to deserve it.<sup>100</sup>

Like Lewis, Joad began attending worship services at the village church long before he came to believe in the truth of what they taught. But he eventually came to appreciate the Church of England, which he finally rejoined.<sup>101</sup> He concluded that the history of Christianity, including the changed lives of the disciples, was impossible to explain unless it was of supernatural origin and that Christianity did, in fact, work in practice.<sup>102</sup> But, again like Lewis, he also admitted "doubts and reservations," which came to him at times, when he wondered if the entire set of events surrounding the life of Jesus ever happened at all.<sup>103</sup>

Joad was a philosopher and scallywag, to be sure, and he had a lot in common with Lewis, but the one thing that most united C.E.M. Joad with C.S. Lewis, and ultimately eliminated the reputation of scallywag by the grace of God, was the Christian faith.

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<sup>95</sup> *Recovery*, 20.

<sup>96</sup> *Recovery*, 21.

<sup>97</sup> Lewis, *Joy* 228f.

<sup>98</sup> *Recovery*, 49f.

<sup>99</sup> *Recovery*, 56f.

<sup>100</sup> *Recovery*, 174f.

<sup>101</sup> *Recovery*, 242.

<sup>102</sup> *Recovery*, 243, 248.

<sup>103</sup> Joad, *Recovery*, 248. See Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Book 3, Chapter 11, 140.