



Race with the Devil

Joseph Pearce

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Joseph Pearce is foremost Catholic biographer of our time, but it wasn't always so.

Imagine discovering God for the first time in the confines of a jail cell. Imagine spending the first half your life amidst the seedy underground of the white supremacy movement before becoming one of the foremost Religious scholars in the world.

Imagine being converted by the writings of Chesterton, and years later writing a biography on him. Joseph Pearce doesn't have to imagine it - he lived it.

Growing up on the rough streets of Dagenham, England, Joseph Pearce was thrown into a life that led anywhere but to God and salvation. A world of hate and violence was all he knew, until one day he picked up the writings of G.K Chesterton and everything changed.

"In Race With the Devil: My Journey from Racial Hatred to Rational Love" take a journey through the peaks and valleys of one of the most fascinating conversion stories of our time, written first-hand by Pearce himself.

Even those who are unfamiliar with him will not be able to put the book down!

Race with the Devil Details

Date : Published August 2013 by Saint Benedict Press

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Author : Joseph Pearce

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From Reader Review Race with the Devil for online ebook

Chris Harvey says

Thank you, Joseph Pearce for your honesty in sharing your conversion story with us. A powerful, oft disturbing, emotional and beautifully written book, "warts 'n' all"... although those warts finally fade and heal into the beautiful complexion of Truth... ***** stars

Linda says

Interesting book. However it wasn't until three quarters of the way through the book that he mentioned Jesus and I couldn't find once where he talked about the Bible in relation to his conversion. Felt like something was missing.

Camille says

Wonderful conversion story, written without arrogance or smugness. Absolutely not a self-serving account. Have enjoyed Pearce's literary criticism, but did not know his backstory. In this book he offers a no-excuses examination of his past as an activist and supporter of racist ideology. His call to conversion is subtle, insistent, and finally epiphanic.

Diane says

This autobiography tells the story of an English man who became a white supremacist as a teenager, and then converted to Catholicism while in jail. It is well-written, and the author has obviously thought a lot about his life and the decisions that he made. It provides insight into a view of the world that is unfamiliar to most people. However, I thought that the author showed signs of a generalized nostalgia that I've seen in many religious and conservative authors, that I think tends to be a dead end.

Rosemary Daly says

Wow. I have the good fortune to be acquainted with Mr. Pearce, and can truthfully say that I was amazed by his story. He is such a different person than he characterizes his pre-conversion life. God is good and works through us all, no matter our past. We just need to let God in and he will make everything new.

Phil Melton says

Excellent memoir and conversion story. A 5 star volume in content and writing, but docked a point (perhaps unfairly) for brevity. What is written is so engaging I wanted more.

Gonzaga Escauriaza says

Very well written and very enjoyable.

Changing the world of the National Front to the Catholic one is very good news.

As a catholic is also very encouraging and make me very happy.

Well done Joseph and i hope it has been for the good.

Carol Marschel says

An honest self portrait of Joseph Pearce's turbulent life.

The author is honest and courageously writes about his past as an active, full time revolutionary, top member of the National Front, a British nationalist, white supremacist group. He was also the editor of its paper, 'The Bulldog'. He was imprisoned in 1982 and again years later for hate speech. Pearce takes the reader through his incredible journey from a racist revolutionary to his conversion to Christianity. This book gives hope and inspiration that people can change for the better. It is a testament of God's infinite grace and love for each one of us. Great read and very moving.

A.K. Frailey says

I met Mr. Pearce at an OSMM Retreat and I enjoyed his talk on Tolkien and Catholicism so much that I decided to buy his book – Race with the Devil. Now I am more impressed with the author than ever. Race with the Devil is an outstandingly honest account of his years as a racist through his conversion years into his current "rational-love" orientated life. There are times when I wonder, much like everyone else, if people can ever really change. Mr. Pearce answers this question unequivocally. The metamorphosis from his youth to his adulthood is transformative not only for the author, but for the reader as well. As a reader, I found myself totally disgusted by his early life, his family, and the culture that he lived in. But before the end of the book, I found myself admitting the humanity of the situation, the honest truth that Mr. Pearce was reflecting in all our darker selves, and the yearnings we all have to be whole, good, and just. Over all, the book was a clarion call: "Awake!" There is more that haunts us than we like to admit and in facing that, we can become transformed toward our better selves.

Lola says

This book by Joseph Pearce, a Catholic biographer, starts out as a compelling conversion story that, unfortunately, gets bogged down by seemingly irrelevant tangents. This book is poorly edited, with repetitive sections down to the sentence. Further problems with this story include a confusing timeline, wherein the author doesn't transition well when jumping (constantly) from past to present to past to present, and so on. Jumping between time-frames helps to color in context and motivation to stories, but only if done well. Moreover, this book contains a jarring overuse of adverbs.

By way of context, Pearce admits that he used to head racist political parties and magazines in England as a teenager. He is now a converted Catholic, and a multi-published author, despite this (very) poor showing. Something about Pearce rings untrue and almost charlatan-ish. Maybe it's the plethora of excuses he advances to minimize extremely racist and antisocial behavior; maybe it's the fact that the author's arrogance bleeds through the pages.

There is an inspiring story somewhere in this book. It is the author's story to tell; however, he dropped the ball. Maybe a biographer one day will pick it back up and run with it. Two stars.

Stephen Cross says

This is a very thoughtful and insightful journey of Joseph's journey from youth-filled racial hatred to one where he found peace and rational love in the Catholic Church.

Not exactly a biography per say, it's his telling of his conversion from hatred to love. He explores his life through various lenses of his life - his childhood, his father, his schooling, his time in prison, his discovery of Chesterton, and on. He lays out each part of his life as a puzzle, and slowly adds each piece until the picture is revealed.

This is an enjoyable journey, and well worth the read.

Stephen says

How does a neo-Nazi become a Catholic literary critic? An act of God? Joseph Pearce would surely make the claim, his life having become a miserable shambles before he heard the booming voice of Gilbert Keith Chesterton from beyond the grave (albiet through books). In his youth, Joe Pearce was an influential white supremacist, rising through the ranks of the National Front through his one-man newsletter, Bulldog. Building success by appealing to football hooligans and punk rockers, it caught the attention of not only the National Front, but of the British government, which twice threw Pearce into prison for inciting racial hatred. His first time in chains only deepened Pearce's conviction that the state was out to ruin the English race; by his second imprisonment, Pearce was already in turmoil, already doubting the path he had chosen. Turning prison into a spiritual retreat, he emerged from bars and from his own dark night of the soul to a new life.

In his new life, Joseph Pearce is a distinguished author and scholar, having held positions at institutions like Ave Marie University, Thomas More College, and Aquinas College. He has produced not only biographies of men like G.K. Chesterton and Alexander Solzhenitsyn, but works that delve into the deeper meanings of

The Lord of the Rings and Shakespeare. This hunger to know the human soul through literature is partially responsible for Pearce's salvation. Although as a teenager he was caught up in reaction against the upswell of immigration, and the enervating influence of modernist politics, he found little to build on there. His life was filled with passion as he roamed the streets looking for migrant gangs or football clubs to mix it up with, and even some purpose as he became a shaper of the nationalist thinking, but pessimism was a bitter gall to swallow. Works like Orwell's 1984 diverted his course from fascism, awaking him to the danger of an all-power state, but unsettled him with its dark vision of Winston Smith's defeat, the spirit of humanity crushed underfoot. Pearce could not live with it, but an abiding thirst for literature would offer him glimpses of a better world -- particularly Solzhenitsyn's Gulag Archipelago, a retelling of the author's years spent in the Soviet prison-camp system, which he survived, humanity intact.

Pearce spent four hours a day reading on trains as he traveled for his duties with the National Front, but literature took him places he surely never meant to go, like Rome. So against popery was Pearce that he traveled to northern Ireland to work with the Ulster Loyalists and joined the Orange Order, dedicated to ensuring Protestant supremacy over Irish Catholic culture. As much as Pearce despised the Catholic church, he had a grudging respect for John Paul II's fight against the Soviet system. It was G.K. Chesterton who coaxed him into the Tiber, however, by presenting an argument against the centralizing tendencies of both capitalism and socialism. Chesterton offered a third way in which the ownership of the means of production -- of shops, farms, tools, and the like -- is widely as distributed as possible. Pearce, having grown up in 'the shire', a quiet arcadian community far removed from much of modernity, saw in Chesterton an argument for what he longed for. Pearce's love for his country, warped by racism, was redeemed by Chesterton, refashioned into ideals of peaceful cooperation. Delighting in Chesterton's personality, Pearce read everything he could by the man, and through his study came to appreciate the Catholic faith and its transcendent moral order that shed insight on not only personal morality, but our socio-economic structure.

Race with the Devil is a powerful story of human redemption, part biography and part literary reflection. While the aspects on British culture were fascinating in themselves, particularly the political loyalties of football clubs and musical subcultures, Pearce's journey itself is the wonder. Consider how powerful ethnic nationalism can be, that potent mix of primal clannishness and modern ideology; it intoxicates both the brain and the blood. Yet Pearce resisted. Having approached the abyss, he stepped back. Despite all of the anger and fear he subjected himself to, there still remained some shades of grace, memories of that childhood steeped in ordinary decency. When racial turmoil still fills American papers, it is a comforting notion that there still remains some escape route to sanity and healing.

Race is an extraordinary read, a reminder that where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more.

Jeff Miller says

Over the years I have heard bits and pieces of author and literary critic Joseph Pearce's conversion story. I always wanted to hear more since the basic details seemed so wild. I usually find conversion stories as a genre fascinating since while there are similarities in each one, there is also a uniqueness to the individual. Some conversion stories seem much more dramatic such as St. Paul who went from persecutor to Apostle. Joseph Pearce's conversion story certainly has those striking elements especially how radical his previous convictions were.

So I was quite delighted when I saw that Saint Benedict Press was coming out with *Race With the Devil: My*

Journey from Racial Hatred to Rational Love. For those who do not know anything about his conversion story the subtitle gives some idea.

What surprised me in this book was just how involved Joseph Pearce had been involved in racist and anti-Catholic movements. He was not just on the periphery of these movements, but was an organizer of them. An editor of the newspaper for the National Front and his involvement from the age of fourteen on is hard to fathom. As a reader you want to come to understand how a young man could turn down this road of racist hate and to devote his life to it.

His father's racism certainly played a part in this and was an influence. One of the things I loved most about this book was the way people in Joseph Pearce's life were described. This was especially true in regards to his father's who he wrote about lovingly, flaws and all. His father was full of contradictions being vocally racist and anti-Catholic he could as the author describes "genuinely love his fellow man." I can totally understand this. While in the Navy I only met a couple of vocal racists. One I worked with tried to convince me that the music of Jimi Hendrix was actually written and performed by Robin Trower. He had many such crazy racist and misogynist opinions, but when it came to working with others he treated them quite decently.

His portrayal of the complexities of his father really carries on throughout the book regarding the intricacies of the people he worked with in such evil movements. You see the friendships he developed through his eyes and come to understand something more about them than just the corrupting worldview they inhabited. This is a story of redemption and the hope for the redemption of others.

The various chapters first deal with his dissent into racism and the various influences and philosophies that he thought confirmed his choices. His writing put him at the center of the National Front which he worked for full time. Soccer hooliganism also became an outlet for his racial hatred. This carried on to later becoming involved in the Troubles in Northern Ireland supporting the Protestant loyalists against the hated Catholics. His attempt to stir up even more trouble resulted in what he called "flirting with terrorism." As a reaction to "Rock against racism" he started "Rock against Communism" which was largely a skinhead phenomenon as he describes. He was very involved in promoting this effort along with writing about this music in every issue of the Bulldog. He was jailed twice under the Race Relations Act because of his writings. The first time he was jailed he left just as firm in his convictions as when he entered and he and others saw him as a martyr to the cause. By the time he went back to jail his ideas were experiencing a transformation. Retaining his racism while trying to hold in tension other things he was learning.

It was these other literary influences that were opening him up. G.K. Chesterton was one of these great influences and many others followed including Belloc and C.S. Lewis. Yet at first he was only opening himself up to what he found compatible with his viewpoint especially as regard their social vision and alternative to big government.

"Even AS Chesterton, Belloc and Lewis were working their unseen and grace-filled magic, enlightening my mind and healing my heart imperceptibly, I continued to pursue the paths of radical politics as if nothing was changing.

I think many converts can identify with this in some respect. Being opened to something higher while holding to our previous opinions. Looking back it becomes hard to see how we could hold such things in tension not seeing the contradictions.

Yet the seeds were planted and by the time he finished his second prison sentence he was not the same man

who had served the first on. His path out of racism and into the Catholic Church was now on a slow course as his changing attitude was putting him at odds with his personal relationships.

This is such a deeply satisfying biography and conversion story. If I would have seen him as a young man I would have written him off as unredeemable scum. Like the racists it is easy to group people and just write them off. Our hatred for such a philosophy translates to hatred of the person with no willing of the good towards them. In this book he describes a couple of encounters that deeply affected him in regards to people that treated him in a manor that transcended the way he acted and appeared. This is such an unlikely story of racist to biographer and literary critic and such an insightful writer. Yet the movement of grace is wonderful to behold.

Ann says

Joseph Pearce writes with stark honesty about his racist past. I found it fascinating to read about his deep involvement in extremist radical political groups whose underlying thrust was to radically push back against the influx of foreign immigration that he saw as a threat to the basic foundation of white Anglo Saxon Britain ... from the Irish in the North to the Muslim and Black elements that began to flow into Britain. His journey from radical racism to the light of Christ was a series of steps that began with several people whose compassion and kindness in the face of his own hatred deeply affected him, as well as the truths he encountered as he began to read such Christian authors as C.S. Lewis, Tolkien, and G.K. Chesterton, all who had a profound effect on him intellectually and spiritually. I could really connect with the enlightenment he began to experience when reading these authors as they have all deeply affected my own life. His eventual movement toward and eventual reception in the Roman Catholic Church was profoundly moving.

Scott George McCombe says

In recent years the Catholic book market has been somewhat flooded with conversion stories. Heart-warming stories of evangelical pastors, High-Church Anglicans, Muslims, atheists, new age adherents and a multitude of others who made the journey to 'Rome Sweet Home' have been put out to be read primarily by the Faithful as part of a renaissance in Catholic apologetics. Edifying as they are, there are only so many spiritual journeys one can read before they start to become slightly monotonous. On stumbling across 'Race with the Devil' I had to ask if there was a need for it. Won't it simply blend in with the rest? I'm glad I put these reservations to one side and bought it. I found an account that firmly held my attention and, if anything, left me wanting to know more about Joseph Pearce's journey from white-supremacist Nationalism to the Catholic Church.

I first encountered Joseph Pearce through his excellent books on Catholic literary figures and his occasional articles in the British weekly 'Catholic Herald'. He's an academic with a gift for writing passionately about his subjects, and I've learned a great deal about the Catholic influence on some of our greatest literary figures as well as their influence on Catholic culture. I was not aware that his talents were once employed for a rather different cause as the youthful editor of the National Front's newspaper, Bulldog. For those unfamiliar with the National Front it is a far-Right British Nationalist Party whose heydays in the 1970s saw it espouse white supremacy, neo-Nazism and fierce Loyalist anti-Catholicism. Pearce's writings for Bulldog saw him imprisoned twice for inciting racial hatred.

The move from hatred to Gospel love is both harrowing and moving story. Pearce's account of how as a young lad he got involved with the far-Right is in many ways typical and identifiable: young, angry and seeking a cause. His good mind and literary and non-literary skills eventually saw him become a main player in British Nationalism, juggling his time between writing hate, street-fighting with anti-fascists and heavy drinking. His dislike of Catholicism, ingrained in traditional English prejudice, was intensified by his involvement with the Orange Order, whose infamous 12th July parade in Northern Ireland he annually attended. That some of his associates were willing to murder for their cause is made obvious by one particularly uncomfortable incident, and reveals exactly the sort of crowd Pearce was mixed up with.

The journey from that place to Holy Mother Church is told as being a long and painful one. There is no Road to Damascus movement. Unexpected acts of kindness from perceived enemies, charity bestowed on him by a priest and, most significantly, an introduction to G K Chesterton at a moment when Pearce's life was spiralling uncontrollably downwards, were the lifelines thrown to him to escape a life of hatred and embrace Gospel love. There is some talk in the Church today about Chesterton being made a Saint. His intercession, in writing and perhaps in prayer, were certainly efficacious in this conversion.

This is a conversion story that demonstrates the power of the Gospel message against hatred. With young men still being drawn to extremism of various kinds, this is a conversion story that demands to be read
