

CORRECTED: There to **stand up tall** before Him whom heav'n and earth adore

("As With Gladness, Men of Old." Text: Wm. Chatterton Dix 1837-1898)

ORIGINAL: At thy great name exalted now, **all knees must bend, all hearts must bow**

CORRECTED: At thy great name exalted now, **all folks jump up, all in a row**

("Conditio alme siderum." Ninth century Latin. Trans. John Mason Neale 1818-1866)

ORIGINAL: Come adore **on bended knee** Christ the **Lord** the newborn **King**.

CORRECTED: Come adore **while standing tall**, Christ the newborn **Person-in-Charge**.

("Angels We Have Heard on High." Trans. from French: James Cheswick 1813-1882)

ORIGINAL: Remember then, O savior, I supplicate thee/ That here I **bowed** before thee **upon my**

bended knee.

CORRECTED: Remember then, O savior, I supplicate thee/ That here I **stood** before thee **straight as any tree**.

("O Jesus Christ Remember." Text: Edward Casawell 1814-1878; Note: "thee" has to go also, but that's yet another story.)

There are others, but this should suffice for a start. Of course, these hymns are probably banned anyway, as they are (1) traditional, (2) of good musical value, (3) singable by a congregation, (4) not suited to strumming guitars, (5) based on orthodox Catholic theology, and, perhaps worst of all, (6) written before 1960.

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books in REVIEW

THOMAS STORCK

"IF YOU REJECT ME ON ACCOUNT OF MY RELIGION..."

Old Thunder: A Life of Hilaire Belloc. By Joseph Pearce. *Ignatius*. 318 pages. \$24.95.

Joseph Pearce is well known as the author of *Literary Converts* and of biographies of Chesterton, Solzhenitsyn, Tolkien, and others. Now Pearce has turned his talents to another massive literary figure of the 20th century, Hilaire Belloc.

Belloc, who to some degree has been overshadowed by his friend and contemporary, G.K. Chesterton, is a thinker and writer

Thomas Storck *most recently authored* *Christendom and the West: Essays on Culture, Society and History*.

of enormous importance. Whether as an essayist, poet, historian, social critic, or novelist, what Belloc wrote is always of interest. His style alone, sparse and manly, is enough to captivate a reader. But his value for us today lies chiefly in his social criticism, in such books as *Essays of a Catholic*, *Survivals and New Arrivals*, and *An Essay on the Na-*

ture of Contemporary England. These works contain something that Catholics — American Catholics especially — need to learn: that a religion always produces a culture, a common way of life, and that, since we live perforce surrounded by a secularized Protestant culture, we ought to immerse ourselves in Catholic thinking on every subject. Only in this way will we have any chance of escaping the split personality of being Catholic in faith but Protestant or secular in culture.

Belloc's life is nearly as interesting as his writing. He was born in 1870 of a French father and English mother, and after his father's early death his mother settled permanently in England. Belloc attended Cardinal Newman's Oratory School and became good friends with a great English churchman of that period, Cardinal Manning, from whom he received his enduring passion for social justice and the poor.

In 1889, the same year that Cardinal Manning settled the great London dock strike, obtaining the best terms he could for the strikers, Belloc met his future

wife, Elodie Hogan, a 19-year-old American who was visiting London with her mother. The two of them fell in love, and the ups and downs of their romance — including often being separated by the Atlantic Ocean, the opposition of Elodie's mother, and Elodie's vacillating desire to enter the convent — is a story in itself. Belloc's impulsive trip to America in 1891, when he traveled across the North American continent to California to see Elodie, and walked part of the way back, is typical Belloc. Feeling he would not be able to win Elodie, he joined the French army and served for a year in the artillery. After his discharge he entered Oxford, where he had a brilliant career, graduating in 1895 with a first-class honors degree in history. Finally, in 1896, he married Elodie, and the two eventually had five children.

For all the depth of his thought, Belloc was also a man of action, a famous conversationalist and debater, one who took long walking tours through the Continent and owned his own sailboat. He served as a Liberal Member of Parliament from 1906 to 1910. His

integrity and fearlessness are well shown by the way he confronted anti-Catholic bigots when he first ran for office. As Pearce recounts the incident: "He chose a Catholic school as the venue for his first public meeting and decided to ignore the warnings of the local Catholic clergy that he would be wise to skirt the religious question and concentrate on other, less contentious issues. Disregarding their advice, he rose to address the packed audience as follows: 'Gentlemen, I am a Catholic. As far as possible, I go to Mass every day. This [taking his beads out of his pocket] is a rosary. As far as possible, I kneel down and tell these beads every day. If you reject me on account of my religion, I shall thank God that He has spared me the indignity of being your representative.'"

Pearce chronicles this and the rest of Belloc's long (1870-1953) life, including the early death of his wife, the varied fates of his children (one of whom named his own son Martin Luther Belloc just to annoy his father), his friendships, his many controversies, his opinions (which, whether right or wrong, were always firmly, even stubbornly held), and his incessant work as a writer, about which he often complained. Even though Belloc was compelled by economic necessity to write, he wrote very well, and although he regretted all his life that he had not obtained a Fellowship at Oxford, the Catholic world is more in his debt than if he had been simply an academic.

The period of some of Belloc's most intense literary activity, between the end of World War I and the beginning of World

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War II, was also one of the most interesting of the 20th century. The Catholic revival which had begun in the 19th century had matured, and Catholics now had the intellectual confidence to stand in opposition to the dominant philosophical and social systems of the Western world. On the one hand, there were the liberal democracies, with their accompanying capitalism, and on the other Communism, newly established in Russia and confident of eventual world revolution, as well as a wide variety of socialisms. Then there was the rising force of Fascism and like-minded movements, which seemed to have some affinity with the Catholic worldview in that they were both opposed to socialism and Communism, and to the liberalism that animated the capitalistic democracies. Belloc, like many Catholic intellectuals of his day, tried to discern where the interests of the Church and of Catholic culture lay. Belloc (and Chesterton) had an overly sanguine view of Mussolini, especially during the early years of his rule, but Belloc's view of the essential incompatibility of a Catholic social order with either socialism or liberalism was certainly correct. Belloc was always clear in his equal opposition to both socialism and capitalism, and he pilloried parliamentary democracy in his 1911 book *The Party System*, co-authored with Chesterton's brother, Cecil.

Pearce deals with many of these controversial aspects of Belloc's thought, especially his alleged anti-Semitism. But in general there is less treatment by Pearce of Belloc's ideas than of the

events of his life. Pearce hardly devotes any space to Distributism, the economic system that Belloc and Chesterton championed, and about which Pearce himself has written a book, *Small is Still Beautiful* (see my review in the Sept. 2002 NOR).

One strength of Pearce's biography is the numerous excerpts from letters, newspaper articles, reviews, pamphlets, and books by Belloc, his friends, and his enemies. These give a nice flavor to both Belloc and to the events of his time. All in all, this is a captivating book that details the panorama of a fascinating life. Read this book. You will not be sorry. ■

briefly reviewed

Crossing Over: One Woman's Exodus from Amish Life. By Ruth Garrett with Rick Farrant. *Thomas More Publishing*. 192 pages. \$18.95.

The Amish life is often romanticized by outsiders. Yet the same people often relish any signs of defection from a life that is very demanding. These contradictions perhaps account for the bestseller status of this autobiographical work.

But another factor is involved in such defections. When parents don't practice what they preach — or even come close — their children can desert the faith because they don't see it lived truthfully.

This factor — plus leaving for an easier way of life — is evi-

dent in this tale of a family torn by rigidity and an inability to forgive. Yet, while the author rejoices at her newfound freedom and exposure to a wider world, I have my doubts about her defection. That her father is mean and vengeful seems beyond question, but her view that a religion that is more permissive is better invites dismay. In her total rejection of her former life, she has embraced a new life that many would find sinful and self-indulgent.

Elizabeth C. Hanink

The Muse in the Bottle: Great Writers on the Joys of Drinking. Edited by Charles A. Coulombe. *Citadel Press Books* (800-221-2647). 224 pages. \$15.95.

A California cardiologist, Dr. Arthur Klatsky, recently told *The New York Times* that drinking "is an issue that needs to be dealt with one on one." Klatsky, a noted researcher, went on to say that while for some the risks outweigh the benefits, for others abstinence could be hazardous.

Coulombe, a noted California raconteur (and NOR contributor), has put together an engaging volume that — taken as a whole — supports Klatsky's research.

Following the axiom of medical ethics, *primum non nocere* (first, do no harm), this reviewer must advert to a sampling of harms described in Coulombe's collection. We are — sigh — again exposed to the grotesqueries of F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway, but their place in the literary canon perhaps