



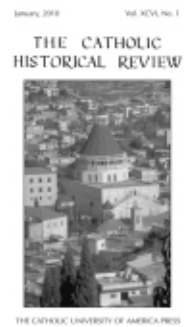
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Oldenburgs Priester unter NS-Terror, 1932-1945.
Herrschaftsalltag in Milieu und Diaspora. Festschrift für
Joachim Kuropka zum 65. Geburtstag (review)

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The Catholic Historical Review, Volume 96, Number 1, January 2010,
pp. 160-161 (Review)

Published by The Catholic University of America Press
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/cat.0.0638>



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and Ronald Knox in Conversation (San Francisco, 2008). Rooney's new literary biography supplements this recent flurry of activity.

Rooney is to Knox what Dale Ahlquist of the American Chesterton Society is to Chesterton, an avid reader and amateur enthusiast who becomes, in time, an acknowledged expert. This book serves as testimony to Rooney's diligence in research, from the brief biography of the opening chapter to the sermons and retreats with which the volume concludes. In between, Rooney presents us with a comprehensive overview of the whole Knox œuvre, from the relative levity of his satire and detective fiction to the gravitas of his work as translator and apologist, mindful nonetheless that, as a disciple of Chesterton, Knox's levity always has gravitas, and his gravitas levity. For, as Chesterton reminds us, angels can fly because they take themselves lightly, whereas the devil falls by the force of gravity, i.e., by taking himself too seriously. Like his mentor, Knox was able to fly with the lightness of an angel because he never took himself as seriously as the topics he was tackling.

If *The Wine of Certitude* has one irritating weakness, it is the disjointedness attached to excessive quotation. Throughout the length of the book, the flow of Rooney's dexterous prose is interrupted by chunks from Knox's own works. It would have been preferable for Knox's works to have been presented within the seamless garment of Rooney's narrative, rather than, at times, the narrative fading into little more than a segue between the quotations. This is, however, a mere quibble. Rooney has succeeded in doing what he evidently set out to do. He has given us a superb introduction to the life and work of Knox in a single volume. Anyone wishing to know more about this great defender and champion of the Faith need look no further than this timely tome.

Ave Maria University

JOSEPH PEARCE

Oldenburgs Priester unter NS-Terror, 1932-1945. Herrschaftsalldag in Milieu und Diaspora. Festschrift für Joachim Kuropka zum 65. Geburtstag.

Edited by Michael Hirschfeld and Maria Anna Zumholz. (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag. 2006. Pp. xx, 818. ISBN 978-3-402-02492-8.)

This mammoth volume details the persecution of Roman Catholic priests in Oldenburg during the years of National Socialist rule. Containing nearly eighty separate accounts of individual priests and clergy who ran afoul of the Nazi state, this compilation is a Festschrift for Joachim Kuropka, the historian at the University of Vechta known for his regional histories of the Oldenburg region in northwestern Germany and his scholarship on Clemens August Graf von Galen, cardinal of Münster.

This dense volume centers on Oldenburg, a long, slender sliver that technically belonged to the diocese of Münster but was cut off geographically by

the diocese of Osnabrück. The northern sections were part of the Catholic diaspora, an almost exclusively Protestant bastion known for its strong support for the Nazis. In contrast, the southern regions, which included the regional centers of Cloppenburg and Vechta, were home to a thriving Catholic milieu. With more than 90 percent of the population consisting of registered Catholics, the Catholic parishes there boasted dynamic ancillary organizations and a dynamic parish life.

The editors, Michael Hirschfeld and Maria Anna Zumholz, leave little doubt that the strength of the Catholic milieu in these southern regions contributed to the efficacy of actions that thwarted Nazi efforts to dismantle the building blocks of this Catholic subculture. They argue that the milieu in this region did not erode. The “indicators” of religious strength—the number of priests in a region, Easter attendance, and so forth—show that the milieu, in spite of significant persecution, more than held its own. Nor did clergy contribute to an attitude of uncritical obedience to the Nazi state. Instead, they were in the forefront of the resistance to Nazi ideology, seeking to counter the anti-Christian attacks launched by the Nazi ideologist Alfred Rosenberg. As such, these priests earned the special enmity of Nazi enforcers in the Gestapo, who cracked down—sometimes methodically, sometimes sporadically—on Catholic institutions and their associates.

To be sure, this focus on persecution—the arrests, the threats, the disruptions to parish life—is an indispensable part of the story of the Catholic Church under Nazi rule. For, in fact, as the section on regional Nazi perpetrators in the Gestapo, the party, and the courts makes clear, hardliners sought to eradicate nearly all traces of religious influence on German public life.

But this is a selective lens with which to view this era, one which is by definition incomplete. The focus on persecution necessarily precludes an analysis of accommodations to the Nazi state made by other clergy either by choice or out of necessity. Absent are what might be termed the gray areas in the relationship between the Church and National Socialism. To what extent were these priests representative of the clergy as a whole, and were there areas in which they granted their approval to other aspects of the Nazi agenda and state? The editors pay lip service to these questions, but their answers ultimately hearken back to works of earlier eras. The narratives they create are those produced already in the 1940s by chroniclers such as Johannes Neuhäusler: the patterns they use were laid out in the 1980s and 1990s in the voluminous works *Priester unter Hitlers Terror*, produced by the Kommission für Zeitgeschichte in Bonn. This is not to negate their findings but to suggest that this is but one part—and a necessary part—of a larger picture.