

Summary

*“Markt und Staat als Bedingungen der Civitas Humana.
Gemeinsamkeiten zwischen der Christlichen Soziallehre und Wilhelm
Röpke (1899-1966)”*

by Manfred Spieker

Wilhelm Röpke (1899-1966) was a leading advocate of the “humane economy” that helped to lay the foundation for the economic recovery of Germany and its newly acquired prosperity after 1945. His public stance against Nazi rule had led to his immediate dismissal as professor of economics in 1933. After gaining an academic appointment in Geneva, Switzerland 1937, Röpke established his reputation with the publication of two books (1) *Die Gesellschaftskrisis der Gegenwart* (1942) – published in the United States as *The Social Crisis of Our Time*, and (2) *Civitas Humana* (1944) – published as *The Moral Foundation of Civil Society*.

Brought illegally into Germany during World War II, these volumes provided hope and encouragement during dark times. Röpke, who descended from a line of Lutheran pastors, placed great stock in key concepts of Catholic social teaching and made his name as an advocate of a culturally grounded economics. From this perspective Röpke formulated the founding principles of the post-war German State: Market Economy, Federalism and West-European integration. Until the end of his life Röpke taught at the ‘Institute of International Studies’ in Geneva. His writings did not only emphasize the economic dimension of free societies but stressed likewise the abiding moral and spiritual presuppositions of the economic/social order. It is precisely this emphasis on dignity within the humane economy that underscored the affinities between Röpke and Catholic social doctrine.

In his acclaimed book *Jenseits von Angebot und Nachfrage* (1958) [*A Humane Economy: The Social Framework of the Free Market*], Röpke demonstrates that the economic order is dependent on prerequisites that it cannot create by itself. At the same time the author shows that the science of economics is a moral science. This assertion also forms a crucial element of Catholic social teaching and figures as a dominant theme in the encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (2009) by Pope Benedict XVI.