

*The Walberberg Circle***The Social Ethics of the German Dominicans**

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In order to understand the history of the 'Walberberg Circle', we need to look at the interest in social ethics espoused by some German Dominicans who, at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, were important in organising and providing an impetus for the Christian social movement. It was in the context of this movement that the 'Walberberger' were later to play an important part in the development of social Catholicism.

Of central importance here is Albert Maria Weiß op (1844–1925), who taught in Fribourg. He was a close friend of Karl Freiherr von Vogelsang and a member of the Union de Fribourg, which did the preliminary work for the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891). In his book *Liberalismus und Christentum* (Liberalism and Christianity), Weiß had strongly criticised the then dominant ideological liberalism. He had also written a two-volume work of apologetics, *Soziale Frage und Soziale Ordnung* (Social Question and Social Order). Karl, Fürst zu Löwenstein (1834–1921), was also active in the 'Union de Fribourg', and, as a member of the Centre Party and the General Commissioner of the Deutsche Katholikentage, was among the main figures in the Christian social movement. In 1908, Prince Löwenstein joined the Dominican order as 'Pater Raymundus'.

In the 1930s, and then especially after the Second World War, the Dominicans in Germany (the Dominican province of Teutonia) achieved a public significance that went far beyond the traditional Dominican preoccupations of preaching, pastoral work and theology. In the post-war regeneration of the Federal Republic, the activities instigated at or associated with the priory at Walberberg were of great socio-ethical, and also socio-political, consequence. This priory is situated in a (then strategically advantageous) small village between the cities of Bonn and Cologne, and, until the mid 1970s, housed the philosophical and theological studium.

The name of 'Walberberg' is connected mainly with a circle of five renowned Dominicans: Laurentius Siemer (1888–1956), Eberhard Welty