

Norbert Trippen:

Joseph Kardinal Höffner (1906–1987).

Bd. I: Lebensweg und Wirken als christlicher Sozialwissenschaftler bis 1962,

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Joseph Höffner grew up in a large family from Horhausen in the Westerwald. After graduating from the *Gymnasium*, he chose a career as a priest. The Diocese of Trier sent him to study in Rome, from where he returned to Germany in 1934, having earned two doctoral titles from the Pontifical Gregorian University. From 1934 to 1937, Höffner gained his first pastoral experience at a working-class parish in Saarbrücken.

Höffner's successful studies in Rome persuaded his superiors to select him for an eventual professorship at the theological seminary in Trier. From 1937 to 1939, he was able to study once more, this time in Freiburg. As a result, he earned another doctorate in theology, which won him highest academic honors and was (in contrast to his previous theological degree from Rome) recognized in Germany. Concurrently, Höffner pursued a course of study in economics under the "Ordoliberals" Walter Eucken and Constantin von Dietze, earning another degree and eventually the title of Dr. rer. pol. (*rerum politicarum*; doctor of economic and social sciences). While serving in a pastoral capacity in Kail on the Mosel from 1939–1943, Höffner produced a moral-theological habilitation on Spanish colonial ethics in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries that counts as his most important scholarly achievement.

In 1945, the Bishop of Trier named him professor of pastoral theology at the theological seminary there. Soon, however, Höffner was receiving offers of teaching chairs in Christian Sociology at western German universities. In 1951, he was able to accept a call to the University of Münster, where he served on the law and political science faculty, offering courses and supervising dissertations, in addition to the Catholic theological faculty. From 1951–1962, Höffner oversaw 28 successful doctorates.

In addition to his conscientious performance of university duties, Höffner exercised decisive influence on the establishment of social Catholicism in Germany after 1945, as well as on the young Federal Republic's social policy and welfare legislation. As "spiritual advisor" ("Geistlicher Beirat") to the League of Catholic Entrepreneurs ("Bund Katholischer Unternehmer"), founded in 1949, and as director of the "department for social questions" ("Sozialreferat") within the Central Committee of German Catholics, Höffner introduced the

concerns of Catholic social teaching, on the basis of papal social encyclicals, to a broader segment of Germany's Catholic population.

From 1953 to 1962, Joseph Höffner was a member of the academic advisory councils for three federal ministries in Bonn: Labor, Family, and Housing. In this way, he helped shape legislation for pension reform in 1957, as well as laws promoting employee property ownership and the construction of family-friendly apartments. Through his student Paul Adenauer, Höffner attracted the attention of Chancellor Konrad Adenauer (Paul's father), who included him in the insurance and pension reform efforts of 1955–1957.

Joseph Höffner would gain worldwide recognition for his *Christliche Gesellschaftslehre* (English title: *Fundamentals of Christian Sociology*), conceived for students and continuing education teachers and published in 1962, on the day of his ordination as a bishop. It was published in numerous editions and translated into the major world languages, including Japanese and Korean. It transported, and continues to transport, the ideas of Catholic social teaching to regions far beyond the European-Christian cultural sphere.