

## **The Collective Charisma of the Catholic Church: Werner Stark's Critique of Max Weber's Routinization Theory**

John L. Gresham, Jr.  
Fontbonne University

### **Introduction**

The charismatic man breaks into reality like a ray of sunshine into a dusky and depressing day. He gives meaning to many lives; he offers, receives and spreads love; everything, absolutely everything seems to be changed in the twinkling of an eye. But alas, not for long. The leader must die and disappear and the shadows at once close in. Love degenerates into law; the direct apprehension of God becomes dry-as-dust theology; the place of worship is usurped by dead ritual. In the end, the name of the prophet is merely a label which covers – misleadingly- a structure opposed to everything he felt, thought and longed for when he prayed.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, Werner Stark described Max Weber's theory on the routinization of charisma. In the transition from religious movement to religious organization, the processes of institutionalism inevitably extinguish the charisma of the religious founder. This Weberian theory of routinization is continued in H. Richard Niebuhr's account of denominationalization and Thomas O'Dea's description of institutionalization.<sup>2</sup> Rudolph's Sohm's history of early Christianity provided Weber with both the term *charisma* and the archetypical example of routinization: the transformation of the charismatically based Jesus movement into the legalistic bureaucracy of Catholicism.<sup>3</sup> Despite an attempted value-free objectivity, Stark finds Sohm's anti-Catholic perspective perpetuated in Weber's sociological theory. Against Weber and Sohm, Werner Stark argues for the persistence of charisma within the Catholic Church in the form of "collective charisma." In so doing, he constructs a sociological apologetic for Catholicism and raises some important corrections to Weberian sociology of religion.

Werner Stark (1909-1985) is a relatively unknown and under appreciated social theorist. Educated at Hamburg, Prague, Geneva and the London School of Economics,

Stark fled his Czech homeland for England following the Nazi invasion in 1939. In England he taught at Cambridge, Edinburgh and Manchester and published works in the history of economic theory, social theory and the sociology of knowledge. Raised in a secular Jewish family, Stark converted to Catholicism while living in England in 1941 and subsequently began to publish in the area of sociology of religion. He came to the United States in 1963 where after a brief stint at Purdue, he taught at Fordham until his retirement.<sup>4</sup>

Stark's contributions to the sociology of religion have not received the attention they merit. He wrote in the grand narrative, historical, comparative and typological style of Weber himself at a time when other sociologists of religion were becoming more specialized and quantitative in focus. Moreover, Stark's sociology was clearly informed and shaped by his Catholic perspective at a time when Catholic sociologists were anxious to shed denominational labels in favor of a more neutral "scientific" approach.<sup>5</sup> Since Stark's day however, there is a greater awareness of the degree to which the emerging discipline of religious studies was shaped in lasting ways by its roots in Reformation era anti-Catholic polemics.<sup>6</sup> Stark contended that Weber's theory of the routinization of charisma through institutionalization, derived from Rudolf Sohm's anti-Catholic reading of early Christian history, was another example of this Protestant bias. John Milbank confirms such a reading of Weber by emphasizing the "liberal Protestant metanarrative" which structures Weber's sociology of religion.<sup>7</sup> In light of such critiques, as well as Milbank's post-modern renewal of the project of Christian sociology, it is hoped that Stark's Catholic sociology might gain a new hearing. Stark's critique of the Weberian routinization thesis provides an entry into his alternative sociological vision.

## **Weber on Charisma, Routinization and Catholicism**

According to Weber's well-known theory, charisma refers to the personal magnetism of religious founders and other leaders. With the magic-like power of charisma, the leader gains the personal loyalty and devotion of a circle of followers. Charismatic authority is centered in the personality of the leader. The bonds of personal loyalty become the basis of a "charismatic community." Such communities however are ephemeral. The emotional bonds of the charismatic community are not sufficient to create a lasting religious congregation. For the community to last, a more stable form of authority based on tradition or rationality must inevitably replace the rather unstable emotional authority based on personal charisma. Weber described this inevitable transition from a charismatic community to a stable religious congregation as the routinization of charisma. With the departure of the charismatic founder, charisma is replaced by routine systems based on traditional or rational principles for the ongoing maintenance of the religious community.<sup>8</sup>

Weber also describes the routinization of charisma in terms of the transition from prophetic movement to priestly institution. For Weber, "prophet" and "priest" stand opposed as two ideal types of religion. The prophet is the religious founder or reformer who initiates religious change by delivering new revelation. The priest maintains the religious status quo systematizing and canonizing the existing revelation. The prophet possesses genuine charisma, a personal power and authority. The priest possesses "office charisma" a derived authority that is magically or mechanically transmitted through ritual. The prophet preaches an ethical religion of divine command. Priestly religion is ritualistic and magical. The prophet proclaims an ethical vision or worldview in which

the totality of life is oriented toward God. Priestly religion replaces this inward and unified ethical vision with a casuistic emphasis on a multitude of external acts and obligations.<sup>9</sup>

From this Weberian perspective the emergence of the Catholic Church may be seen as the archetypical case of the routinization of charisma. Stark agrees that Jesus can be described in Weberian terms as a charismatic religious revolutionary who by his own personal authority overthrows legalism, formalism and empty ritualism. Stark argues that Weber's theory of routinization implies that the growth of dogma, ritual and institution by which the Jesus movement is gradually transformed into the early Catholic Church represents the loss of the original charisma and thereby, the betrayal of Jesus' original message.<sup>10</sup> According to Stark, Weber implicitly perpetuates the explicit Catholic critique of Sohm's Kirchenrecht upon which his concepts of charisma and routinization are derived. Thus, in his alternative description of early Catholicism, Stark respond to both Weber and Sohm as well as Walter Lowrie's English adaptation of Sohm.<sup>11</sup>

Stark finds Weber's viewpoint troubling from two perspectives, as a sociologist of religion and as a believing Roman Catholic. As a sociologist, Stark questions Weber's extreme individualism. Stark finds a certain blind spot in Weber's outlook: Weber recognizes the role of individual charisma in founding and forming a religious collective but fails to recognize the role of a religious collective in fostering individual charisma. This individualistic outlook makes it difficult for Weber to understand Catholicism as well as other collective religions. Such one-sidedness, argues Stark, "cannot lead to a balanced and that is to say to a truly scientific sociology of religion."<sup>12</sup>

However, Stark clearly does not respond to Weber exclusively in terms of the dispassionate scientific scholar. For Weber's theory forces the religious believer to ask serious questions:

How routinized is our charisma? Is the church to which I belong still the abode of the life-giving spirit or has it degenerated into a cold, corpse-like body which inwardly is not what it outwardly pretends to be? Have routinization, bureaucratization, rationalization, and legalism done their destructive work? How much live meaning is there still in our rituals, how much live knowledge in our theologies and so on? <sup>13</sup>

It is both as sociologist of religion and as religious believer, that Stark criticizes Weber's routinization thesis. Though his five volume Sociology of Religion was ostensibly written as a scientific account, Stark admits in a retrospective to his scholarly career that there were personal religious motives behind the work<sup>14</sup> and reviewers frequently commented (sometimes positively and sometimes disparagingly<sup>15</sup>) on his very obvious Catholic sympathies.

### **The Tragedy of Routinization**

Stark emphasizes the tragic dimension of the Weberian concept of routinization in which the original dynamism of a religious movement disappears after the loss of its charismatic founder. However, his account is not too great an exaggeration of Weber's own tragic viewpoint. "It is the fate of charisma," Weber claims, "whenever it comes into the permanent institutions of a community to give way to powers of tradition or of rational socialization." "Pure" or "genuine" charisma, he explains, being "specifically foreign to every-day routine structures" exists "only in the process of originating"<sup>16</sup> Weber's own language could be as dramatic and tragic as Stark's paraphrases:

Every charisma is on the road ... to a slow death by suffocation under the weight of material interests: every hour of its existence brings it near to this end ... the

charismatic message inevitably becomes dogma, doctrine, theory, regulation, law or petrified tradition.<sup>17</sup>

Weber describes the irony of the “practically unavoidable ... decline or petrification” by which the charismatic prophet who preached against ritualistic religion becomes after his death the object of just such a priestly religion.<sup>18</sup> It is this transient nature of charisma and inevitable decline that Stark finds problematical in Weber’s theory:

The core-phenomenon of religion is in Weber’s view ephemeral: it dies with its carrier, even though it leaves behind an ever-cooling, ever-decaying, ever-ossifying body of adherents... the group which has formed can only survive by a kind of inertia, as a coral reef continues even after the life within it has become extinct. Churches are precisely such coral reefs – burnt-out shells of a once burning personal religiosity.<sup>19</sup>

Against Weber’s rather tragic and pessimistic outlook, Stark argues for a more positive understanding of the process of religious institutionalization based on a less individualistic concept of charisma.

### **Arguments Against An Initial Loss of Charisma**

Stark begins by questioning some fundamental presuppositions of the routinization thesis regarding the initial loss of charisma. Weber emphasizes the departure of the charismatic founder as the initial cause for the loss of charisma and the beginning of routinization. In regard to the departure of Jesus, however, Stark emphasizes the Christian belief in his continuing presence. Not only do Catholics believe that Jesus has risen from death, they also believe that he continues to make himself present in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Stark recognizes that the sociologist of religion need not share this belief, but he emphasizes that a scientific account must consider, as part of its objective data, the fact that Catholic Christians have this belief. Given this belief, ‘there is little reason to assert that the Founder’s physical removal must totally transform the

community around him.” Moreover, this belief in the continuing presence of Christ illustrates the transition from individual to collective charisma: “the charisma of Christ was not tied to his death-committed personal body, but prolonged itself and remains present in a collective body”<sup>20</sup>

In addition to the departure of the founder, Weberian theory claims that routinization is marked by a division of labor that introduces structure and ultimately bureaucratization into the charismatic community. Stark makes the commonsense observation that certain social structures do not wait to emerge until the departure of the charismatic founder. Already, at the earliest stage, while Jesus is yet with this followers, a certain structure and division of labor begins to characterize the charismatic community. Stark notes the gospel references to the seventy disciples, the twelve apostles, and the inner circle of three. Moreover, even within the inmost circle, Stark notes a division that will continue to characterize the structure of the church: “The figure of Peter points forward to preacher, priest and pope, active servants in and of Christendom, the figure of John to soul-companion, mystic and saint.”<sup>21</sup> Prophet and priest then, do not represent two opposing types that appear in succession, one displacing the other in the transition from charismatic prophetic movement to priestly institution, as in Weber’s schema. Rather, prophet and priest are two functionally complementary types that may co-exist within the original charismatic circle of disciples.

### **Arguments for the Persistence of Charisma in the Church**

Having questioned the initial loss of charisma, Stark argues for the persistence of this charisma through the subsequent development of Catholic Christianity. He summarizes his argument as follows:

[Weber and Sohm] saw only the line of administrators stretching from Peter into the future; they did not see the concomitant succession of saints, of mystics, beginning with John and never ending, indeed ever evoking new sanctity, new love, new charismata. Granted there is a legal structure but who can overlook the fact that within it there is a stream of authentic religious life, of vitality, of fire which prevents the cooling down of the community – its so-called routinization? Nor is that chain of mysticism alone valuable, The legal church and indeed the church bureaucrats themselves have a great function with regard to it: to protect it like a defensive shell and to renew it again and again by keeping alive the memory of its most resplendent protagonists, the charismatics, the canonized saints. Outer and inner church, administrative apparatus and sanctoral personality are simply the terms of a dialectical antithesis and the tension between them, often painful but never fruitless has led to ever new syntheses indeed to a comprehensive process of the reconciliation of opposites.<sup>22</sup>

Several points are made. First, Stark argues that the saints within the Catholic Church are signs of the ongoing presence of charisma. Secondly, he emphasizes the role of the religious institution (the “bureaucratic” church) in transmitting that charisma to succeeding generations. He admits the frequent tension between institution and charisma but for Stark, the fruit of that tension is not the triumphs of institution over charisma, but the enrichment of the institution through new cultural syntheses. Taken as a whole the three arguments lead toward a concept of collective charisma with which Stark seeks to advance beyond Weber.

Stark’s first argument, the persistence of charisma in the church is twofold. On the one hand, Stark develops a positive case by enumerating certain signs of continuing charisma. On the other hand, he makes a defensive case by defending the development of theology, ritual and canon law from the charges of routinization. As the primary sign of the continuing charisma within the Catholic Church, Stark points to the succession of saints who appear within church history:

The Church has not fallen victim to a process of bureaucratization because she has at all times carried within her both bureaucratic figures and charismatic ones, both priests and saints.<sup>23</sup>

These saints can indeed be considered personal bearers of charisma in Weber's individualistic sense of the charismatic personality. Yet, closer consideration notes the connections among outbreaks of charisma in such movements as the Benedictines, Franciscans, Jesuits and others. Each and every movement represents a variation and expression of the charisma of Christ, pointing toward a social collective charisma. These charismatic saints "would have been the first to admit that sanctity is collective and not personal. For the saint knows that he is a son – the son of a holy mother, the Church in which an original charisma, that of her Founder, is mysteriously present and transmitted."<sup>24</sup>

As another indicator of the continuing presence of charisma Stark also points to the art and music produced within Catholic cultures. These are significant signs of charisma, for routinization, as a process of rationalization is counter to the extra-rational and symbolical modes of artistic and musical expression. Thus, for example Stark finds in Dvorak's Stabat Mater, "a living echo of the living charisma of Christ."<sup>25</sup> Stark not only points to such signs of charisma, he meets the Weberian theory head-on by addressing the three aspects of routinization: the routinization of belief by doctrinal rationalization, the routinization of worship by ritualism and the routinization of ethics by legalism.

### **Arguments Against the Routinization of Theology, Ritual or Law**

In regard to the development of doctrine, Stark notes two processes which held the rationalization of theology in check. First, Stark notes that no matter how rationalistic

theology became in its methodology, rationalism was forced to bow before the ultimate mystery of its subject matter. Thus, for example, the christological tradition in Catholic theology represented the attempt to do justice to both the mystery of Christ's humanity and deity. Rationalizing theologies that resolved the tension in favor of humanity or deity were deemed heretical. The doctrine of the Trinity provides another example of the triumph of mystery over rationalism. Stark refers to John Henry Newman's concept of the "logic of life" as the guiding principle for theological development. The guiding logic of theological development, he argues is not "paper logic" which prizes rational consistency above all considerations but the logic of life in which reason is accommodated to the lived realities of religious faith.<sup>26</sup> Second, Stark emphasizes that the systemization of theology in rational systems is but one half of a two-fold development. There is an exploration of the rational aspects of the religious founder's teaching (which admittedly can produce dry treatises far removed from the charismatic power of the texts they interpret). However, that rational development is accompanied and balanced by a complementary exploration of the mystical depths of that same teaching. The mystical "heart" of Catholic religion for Stark is the personal encounter with Christ in the eucharist.<sup>27</sup> Thus, he emphasizes that the development of rational theology was accompanied and balanced by the development of the eucharistic ritual in which the mystical realities of faith are expressed. In Thomas Aquinas "Summa" and his hymn to the Blessed Sacrament "Panis Angelicus" Stark finds both developments reaching an apex in the same individual.<sup>28</sup>

Of course, the Weberian thesis might find this development of eucharistic ritual as another example of routinization: the replacement of spontaneous heart-felt prayer by

formal proscribed rituals. Stark dismisses this as sheer prejudice. Weber's view assumes that external rites are without internal cause or effect whereas Stark argues that rituals provide a means not only to express inner religious states but also serve to perpetuate and increase religious feeling. Contrary to Weber, Stark avers, "ritualism belongs to the essence of religiosity."<sup>29</sup> The development of rituals is a sign of the presence, not the decline of religious life:

The creation and loving perfection of a rite like the unfolding of the Mass in the early centuries is a sign of religious inspiration and upswing, not of a deadening formalization and decay.<sup>30</sup>

Stark describes the historical development of the Eucharistic ritual as an anonymous communal development in which the rite is accommodated to the religious needs of worshipers.<sup>31</sup> In a consideration of Catholic worship, Stark again emphasizes that sociologists of religion must give attention to the significance of the belief in the eucharistic presence of Christ. Based on that belief, the eucharist becomes a source of mystical life that proves resistant to routinization:

[A] community thus tied to a mystical life could not become a dead legal or bureaucratic mechanism: it had a heart in it, and to the extent that heart continued to beat, it was and remained an organism, that is to say something alive and therefore resistant to mechanization in any form and shape, even the mechanization which is called routinization, rationalization and legalization.<sup>32</sup>

Stark is not alone in questioning Weber's opposition between ritual and charisma. Michael McClymond, in a reassessment of Weber's theory of charismatic leadership, also questions the sociologist's radical opposition between charisma and ritual. McClymond gives several examples to show how charismatic religious founders themselves either initiated new ritual practices or revised and reinterpreted existing rituals to communicate their religious message.<sup>33</sup> Even when considering non-religious organizations, Beyer and

Trice emphasize the role of “rites, ceremonials and symbols” in transmitting charisma from an individual leader to an organization.<sup>34</sup>

In Sohm’s treatise on the routinization of charisma in early Christianity, it is not theology or ritual, but canon law that most decisively marks the transformation (or deformation) of the charismatic Jesus movement into early Catholicism. Stark makes a number of points in response. First, he questions the presupposition, shared by Sohm and Weber, that there is an absolute antithesis between love and law. Stark points to marriage as but one example of a legal and personal union in which law and love support rather than oppose each other. He also describes how the Benedictine regulations provided a structure that preserved and perpetuated the monastic charisma.<sup>35</sup> Second, Stark emphasizes the difference between “made law” and “grown law” (1965: 209; 1970: 145). While “made law” can represent the imposition of rational norms upon a community, “grown law” represents the legal formulation of accepted communal customs and mores that have developed over time. Canon law is an example of grown, not made, law. Third, Stark finds significance in the existence of the sacrament of penance as a “forum internum” that coexists alongside the external judicial forum provided by canon law. Within the confessional, Stark argues, love triumphs over law in the sacramental gift of pardon.<sup>36</sup> While the casuistic textbooks of the past suggests some routinization in this area, Stark claims that the canonization of the charismatic priest, Jean-Marie-Baptiste Vianney as patron saint of parish priests and model for confessors, “proved that [the Church] was not giving one inch of ground to routinization so far as the cure of souls is concerned.”<sup>37</sup>

## **Institution as Bearer of Collective Charisma**

Having argued for the persistence of charisma in the Catholic Church and defended the developments of doctrine, ritual and canon law against charges of routinization, Stark furthers his case against Weber by arguing for a more positive view of the institution as bearer of charisma. Stark understands the development of theology, ritual and canon law not in terms of Weber's rationalization process, but rather as a cultural and social process akin to the development of folkways. Theological, ritual and legal developments do not reflect the subversion of religious life by rationalization. Rather, in these developments the implicit values of religious life shared by the community are given explicit forms.<sup>38</sup> These forms --doctrines, rituals, and laws -- both reflect and perpetuate a communal religious spirit or charisma. Unlike, Weber, Sohm and others who place these outward forms in opposition to individual religiosity, Stark emphasizes the role of the community or institution in communicating charisma. Terrence Tilley has made the same point with added emphasis on the essential necessity of the institution as bearer of charisma:

It may be obvious but it is often ignored: institutions are not necessarily "deteriorations" of charismatic authority or real religion, but transformations of authority without which there is *no practically possible retrieval* of that authority and *no practically possible access* to that charismatic figure, and *no practically possible continuity* of his or her distinctive gifts and insights, once the charismatic figure and immediate memory of him or her is gone.<sup>39</sup>

O'Dea expresses the Weberian opposition between charisma and institution in his contention that once a charismatic movement is institutionalized, the institution stands opposed to any new outbreaks of charisma: "the routinization of charisma .. involves the containment of charisma."<sup>40</sup> Stark, by contrast, notes that O'Dea's term "contain" does

not necessarily require the negative connotation “which the Weberian tradition would foist on us.” “Contain”, Stark emphasizes, might be used in the positive sense of bearing and transmitting charisma rather than prohibiting it.<sup>41</sup> According to Stark, the charismatic individuals (saints) who have emerged again and again in the history of the church, have not emerged *in spite of* the institution’s attempt to *contain* charisma (in O’Dea’s sense of *inhibit*) but rather, saints continue to emerge precisely because the Church *contains* charisma (in Stark’s positive sense of *bearing and transmitting*). All of the institutional elements of the church -- doctrines, rituals, laws -- indeed even the so-called bureaucrats - - provide the structure through which the original charisma of Christ is perpetuated and communicated.

Stark describes this more positive understanding of the relationship between charisma and institution through his discussion of the relationship between “priestly and saintly charisma.” Stark would replace Weber’s contrast between the “genuine” charisma of the prophet and the “office” charisma of the priest with the concepts of “personal” and “collective” charisma. The saints, like prophets, possess personal charisma and like prophets give rise to new religious movements (illustrated for example by the various religious orders they have emerged within Catholicism). The charisma of priests, however, is no less genuine. Priests are the bearers of “collective charisma.” Charisma can characterize collectivities as well as personalities. Personal charisma describes the magnetism found in the “mystery of a personality.” Collective charisma describes that same magnetism exercised by “the mystery of a whole community, an ongoing stream of life.”<sup>42</sup> Collective charisma may also be referred to as “official” charisma for the priest bears and communicates the collective charisma of the community by virtue of his office.

This “official” role is absolutely essential to the ongoing maintenance and transmission of collective charisma. Personal charisma is by nature discontinuous: saints and prophets arise unpredictably here and there, but the office of the priest provides a continuous means to communicate the collective charisma of the religious community through time. Most significantly, Stark emphasizes, without this continuous chain of priests and the institutional religious life they maintain and perpetuate, the saints, the individual bearers of charisma, could not, and would not, emerge. In their excessive individualism, Weber and Sohm failed to recognize this essential necessity of the institution as bearer of charisma:

Without institutions there can be no individuals, and without priests there can hardly be saints. Saints ... emerge out of an ongoing stream of tradition. They may turn against that tradition, they may change it inside out, they may revolutionize it, but they yet presuppose it, as the child presupposes his parents and the institution of the family. A family is more than husband and wife: it is a union with the purpose of producing offspring. The Church is more than a number of priests: it is a number of priests with the purpose of producing saints.<sup>43</sup>

It is through the ministry of priests, that certain individuals hear the word and receive the sacraments which launch them toward sainthood. Priests in their official roles transmit the collective charisma of religious institutions that is embraced in a radical way by some individuals who become saints, bearers of personal charisma.

In contrast to the utter opposition between prophet and priest set by Weber, Stark recognizes a certain mutuality and complementarity between saint and priest. However, he is not blind to the recurrent tensions between these types as well. As the guardian and transmitter of the collective charisma, the priest’s role is conservative and often in conflict with the revolutionary tendencies of saints toward renewing or reforming the community. In Stark’s reading of Catholic history however, such conflicts become the

source for new syntheses that enrich the community. Benedictines, Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits and others represented revolutionary movements founded by charismatic leaders initially opposed by conservative elements within the church but eventually successful in renewing the institution. . Such syntheses are characteristic of the history of culture according to Stark. He followed Weber's brother, Alfred Weber, in distinguishing between the realms of "civilization" and "culture." According to Stark, Max Weber correctly described the advancement of civilization (natural science and technology) as a process of increasing rationalization but erred in attributing that same process to the history of culture (music, religion etc.). Cultural history is not characterized by a law of advancing rationality but by free and creative syntheses.<sup>44</sup>

### **Weber's Individualistic Interpretation of Charisma**

Despite his criticism of the routinization thesis, Stark could still count Weber among the greatest sociologists of religion.<sup>45</sup> How then does Stark account for this great sociologist's inability to recognize the phenomenon of collective charisma? Stark notes Weber's own admission to being "unmusical" toward religion and specifically accuses him of an unwarranted ignorance of Catholicism.<sup>46</sup> Stark also draws attention to the philosophical roots of Weber's individualistic outlook in Kant and German idealism (1970: 1-2). However, the most significant factor, in Stark's view, which leads Weber to misunderstand collective religions like Catholicism is his Protestant heritage<sup>47</sup>. Stark views Weber's own genealogy and autobiography as an illustration of The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism. Weber's ancestors were French Calvinists (Huguenots) who became prosperous craftsmen in Germany. Stark argues that this Calvinist heritage remained significant. Weber himself represented the secularized

rationalized heir of Calvinism described in his classic work on capitalism. Weber's pessimistic view of the inevitable loss of charismatic religiosity through the deleterious effects of institutionalization represented for Stark a secularized version of the Calvinistic outlook on fallen humanity. Routinization, like sin, inevitably extinguishes sparks of human freedom and goodness.<sup>48</sup> Stark also stresses the explicitly anti-Catholic polemic inherent in the work by Sohm from which Weber derived his routinization thesis.<sup>49</sup> The concept of the "fall" of the church and the sharp opposition between prophetic preaching and priestly ritual are but sociological translations of Reformation critiques of Roman Catholicism.

More significantly, however, from Stark's standpoint as a sociologist of knowledge, is his assertion that Protestantism bequeathed to Weber a view of reality shaped by a fundamentally different social experience than that of Catholic culture. Adopting the terminology of Ferdinand Tönnies, Stark describes Protestant and modern culture as characterized by the social form known as association (*gesellschaft*) whereas Catholicism is still characterized by the a community (*gemeinschaft*) type of social reality.<sup>50</sup> In association type cultures the individual is primary and societies are the products of individual choices and allegiances. In community type cultures, society is primary and individuals are participants in a trans-personal stream of social life. The concept of individual charisma is characteristic of associational culture and those shaped by such culture as Weber find it difficult to grasp the concept of collective charisma characteristic of community cultures. Thus, Weber's over-individualistic concept of charisma, Stark argues, is a product of the individualistic culture of Protestantism.<sup>51</sup>

Contrary to Stark, some interpreters find within Weber's own writings a more collective or institutional concept of charisma alongside the individualistic concept for which Weber is most noted. In his introduction to the English translation of Weber's Sociology of Religion, Talcott Parsons claims that a close second reading of the work led to his discovery of this additional concept of charisma as normative order akin to Durkheim's concept of the sacred. Parsons found this concept in Weber's discussions of lineage and office charisma.<sup>52</sup> Martin Riesebrodt argues that this dual concept in Weber may be traced to two different sources for his understanding of charisma. The individualistic concept of charismatic authority, for which Weber is most noted, is rightly traced, says Riesebrodt, to Rudolf Sohm. However, Riesebrodt claims, Weber also makes use of a broader, and less individualistic, concept of charisma derived from R. R. Marett's concept of mana or sacred power. This broader concept of charisma suggests that alongside individual charisma, there may be other types of charisma found embedded in social structures and serving to maintain, rather than overthrow, institutions and traditions. The routinization process then, would refer to a specific instantiation of one type of charisma, individual charismatic authority, and its subsequent bureaucratization. The shift from one type of authority to another does not imply the disappearance of charisma but rather a shift from one type of charisma to another.<sup>53</sup> Julio de Santa Ana finds a distinction in Weber between the "routinization" of charisma in which charisma is suppressed by bureaucratization and the "objectification" of charisma in which an "institutional charisma" is transmitted as the "ethos" or "style" of the institution.<sup>54</sup> Eisenstadt, in his introduction to a collection of Weber's writings on this topic, is another who argued for something like "institutional" charisma in Weber's thought.<sup>55</sup>

Stark's review of Eisenstadt<sup>56</sup> raises significant criticisms toward all of these attempts to find a less individualistic concept of charisma in Weber's own writings. In that review and elsewhere, Stark draws attention to the value-laden language that Weber consistently uses in contrasting individual charisma to other forms. Only individual charisma is "genuine" and "pure." Hereditary or office charisma is variously described by Weber as artificial, magical or mechanical.<sup>57</sup> There does seem to be a dual concept of charisma in Weber's writings but he applies the term unreservedly and without qualification only to the personal charisma of the prophetic type as described by Sohm. The second type, characteristic of magicians but applicable to priests as well, is a magic power similar to the *mana* described by Marett. Most significantly, both types are thoroughly individualistic. It is Weber's individualistic outlook, Stark argues, that leads him to interpret Catholic rituals as magical acts by individual priests possessing charisma (in the sense of *mana*). Weber fails to comprehend the collective mentality by which the priest acts in the person of the community as the bearer of a collective.<sup>58</sup> Stark's critique of Weber's individualistic interpretation of charisma is shared by Edward Shils' well known attempt to complement Weber by adding a concept of "institutional charisma" to Weber's theory.<sup>59</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Not all will be convinced by Stark's sociological "apologia" for the Catholic Church, especially as it is so briefly sketched in the present article. Nor, given the ambiguity of Weber's writings on this topic will all be convinced of the necessity of Stark's critique of the routinization thesis. At the very least, Stark's arguments should encourage one to question the assumption that institutionalization *inevitably* and

*necessarily* implies the loss of charisma. Further, one ought to consider the alternative sociological vision contained within Stark's critique. His concept of collective charisma provides a helpful complement and corrective to Weber's individualistic emphasis. This concept of collective charisma provides a framework for a more positive typology of priest and ritual than one finds in Weber's writings. Above all, Stark provides a contrasting vision of the relationship between institution and charisma. In many ways, Weber's view of the institution fits his metaphorical "iron cage." While specifically used to describe the constraints of modern capitalism, this metaphor, more accurately translated as "steel-hardened casing" or "shell hard as steel"<sup>60</sup> also describes Weber's view of the effects of institutionalization. For Weber, routinization describes a process of hardening which ultimately creates a lifeless steel shell that extinguishes charisma. Stark, too, speaks of the institution as a shell and even admits to a certain hardening as institutional structures take form over time. For Stark, however, the institution forms a "protective" shell that serves to preserve and transmit the living charisma within.<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Werner Stark, *The Sociology of Religion: A Study of Christendom*, 5 volumes (New York: Fordham University Press, 1966-1972), V 366-367.

<sup>2</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (New York: Meridian, 1957); Thomas F. O'Dea, *The Sociology of Religion*. (Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1966).

<sup>3</sup> Peter Haley, "Rudolph Sohm on Charisma" *Journal of Religion* 60 (1980), 185-197.

<sup>4</sup> Eileen Leonard, Hermann Strasser and Kenneth Westhues, "Introduction" in *In Search of Community: Essays in Memory of Werner Stark, 1909-1985* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1993), 1-20; Hermann Strasser and Gunther Schlegl, "Gemeinschaft or Gesellschaft? Two Competing Visions of Modernity in Werner Stark's and Max Weber's Sociology" *Thought* 64 (1989), 51-66; Stark, "A Survey of My Scholarly Work" in *The Sociological Writings of Werner Stark: Bibliography and Selected Annotations*. M. Engel, Ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1975), 2-17.

- 
- <sup>5</sup> Leonard, Strasser and Westhues, "Introduction", 7-8.
- <sup>6</sup> See especially Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990)
- <sup>7</sup> John Milbank. *Theology and Social Theory*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 92-98.
- <sup>8</sup> Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, Ed. H. Gerth and C. Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 245-252, 262-264; *On Charisma and Institution Building*, Ed. S. Eisenstadt (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 18-65; *Economy and Society*, Ed. G. Roth and C. Wittich (New York: Bedminster, 1968), I 241-254, III 1111-1157.
- <sup>9</sup> Weber, *Sociology of Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 46-79.
- <sup>10</sup> Stark, "The Routinization of Charisma: A Consideration of Catholicism" *Sociological Analysis* 26 (1965), 206-207.
- <sup>11</sup> Walter Lowrie, *The Church and Its Organization in Primitive Times: an Interpretation of Rudolph Sohm's Kirchenrecht* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1904).
- <sup>12</sup> Stark, *Sociology of Religion*, IV 6.
- <sup>13</sup> Stark, "Routinization of Charisma" 205.
- <sup>14</sup> Stark, "Survey of My Scholarly Work" 11.
- <sup>15</sup> For example, one reviewer (John Flint, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 40, 1972, 110-116) criticizes Stark's "confessional" and "polemical" style whereas another (W. B. Blakemore, *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 10, 1973, 157-159) appreciates how Stark's perspective as a believer enables him to avoid the reductionist tendencies of other sociologists.
- <sup>16</sup> Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building*, 28, 54.
- <sup>17</sup> Weber, *Economy and Society*, III 1120, 1122.
- <sup>18</sup> Weber, *Sociology of Religion*, 78.
- <sup>19</sup> Stark, *Sociology of Religion*, IV 1-2.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid. 113-115; 120.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid. 109. This sociological argument bears a striking resemblance to Hans Urs von Balthasar's theological account of the ecclesiological implications of the symbolical functions of Peter, John and Mary and others within the Christological constellation. See Balthasar, *The Office of Peter and the Structure of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 133-145, 148-149, 157-161, 308-314.
- <sup>22</sup> Stark, "A Survey of My Scholarly Work" 13-14.
- <sup>23</sup> Stark, "Routinization of Charisma, 207; cf. *Sociology of Religion*, IV 161, 197.
- <sup>24</sup> Stark, *Sociology of Religion*, IV 5.
- <sup>25</sup> Stark, "Routinization of Charisma" 211; on music and art, cf. *Sociology of Religion*, V 134-160.
- <sup>26</sup> Stark, *Sociology of Religion*, IV 132-133; V 77-78.
- <sup>27</sup> Stark *Sociology of Religion*, IV 154-155.
- <sup>28</sup> Stark, "Routinization of Charisma" 210-211.
- <sup>29</sup> Stark, *Sociology of Religion* IV 135.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid, 136.
- <sup>31</sup> Stark, *Sociology of Religion* V107-108.

---

<sup>32</sup> Stark, *Sociology of Religion* IV 153-154.

<sup>33</sup> Michael J. McClymond, "Prophet or Loss? Reassessing Max Weber's Theory of Religious Leadership" in *The Rivers of Paradise: Moses Buddha, Confucius, Jesus and Muhammad as Religious Leaders*. Ed. N. Freedman and M. McClymond (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 643-649.

<sup>34</sup> Harrison M. Trice and Janice M. Beyer, "Charisma and Its Routinization in Two Social Movement Organizations," *Research in Organizational Behavior* 8 (1986), 134. See also Janice M. Beyer and Larry Browning, "Transforming an Industry in Crisis: Charisma, Routinization and Supportive Cultural Leadership," *Leadership Quarterly* 10 (1999), 483-521. Unlike Stark, these scholars define "routinization" as the successful (rather than failed) transmission of charisma from a founder to an organization. However, they agree with Stark that such corporate transmission of charisma is possible and that ritual is one means of such transmission.

<sup>35</sup> Stark, *Sociology of Religion*, IV 86, 146, 168-170.

<sup>36</sup> Stark, "Routinization of Charisma" 208-209; *Sociology of Religion* IV 155.

<sup>37</sup> Stark, "Routinization of Charisma" 209. Vianney (1786-1859) known as the "Curé of Ars" struggled in his seminary studies and had great difficulties passing the required exams for ordination but ultimately gained renown for the spiritual direction he offered in the confessional.

<sup>38</sup> Stark, *Sociology of Religion* IV 279-280; V 76-80, 93-94, 105, 419.

<sup>39</sup> Terrence Tilley, "The Institutional Element in Religious Experience" *Modern Theology* 10 (1994), 188.

<sup>40</sup> O'Dea, 50.

<sup>41</sup> Stark, *Sociology of Religion* IV 167.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 175.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. 164; cf. 183).

<sup>44</sup> Stark, "The Rational and Social Foundations of Dogma" in *Entwicklung und Fortschritt: Soziologische und Ethnologische Aspekte des Sozialkulturellen Wandels* Ed. H. Reimann and E. Muller (Tubingen: J.C. Mohr, 1969), 303-314; *Sociology of Religion* V 386.

<sup>45</sup> Stark, "Survey of My Scholarly Work" 12.

<sup>46</sup> Stark, "The Place of Catholicism in Max Weber's Sociology of Religion" *Sociological Analysis* 29 (1968), 202; *Sociology of Religion* IV 242.

<sup>47</sup> For biographical confirmation of Weber's Protestant sympathies, see William Swatos, Jr. and Peter Kivisto, "Max Weber as Christian Sociologist" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30 (1991), 347-363.

<sup>48</sup> Stark, "Max Weber and the Heterogeneity of Purposes" *Social Research* 34 (1967), 264; *Sociology of Religion* V 367.

<sup>49</sup> Stark, *Sociology of Religion* IV 137.

<sup>50</sup> Stark, "Max Weber's Sociology of Religious Belief" *Sociological Analysis* 25 (1964),: 48-49; *Sociology of Religion* IV 5-6; V 1-6.

<sup>51</sup> Stark, "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Sociology" *Social Compass* 13 (1966), 376-377.

<sup>52</sup> Parsons in Weber, *Sociology of Religion*, xxxiv.

- 
- <sup>53</sup> Martin Riesebrodt, "Charisma in Max Weber's Sociology of Religion" *Religion* 29 (1999), 1-14.
- <sup>54</sup> Julio de Santa Ana, "Preserving Charisma in Sociological Reform: A Sociological Approach" *Ecumenical Review* 50 (1998), 388.
- <sup>55</sup> Eisenstadt in Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building*, xviii-xxxii.
- <sup>56</sup> Stark, "Review of Max Weber On Charisma and Institution Building" *Sociological Analysis* 30 (1969), 188-190.
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid. 188-189; *Sociology of Religion* IV, 159-161.
- <sup>58</sup> Stark *Sociology of Religion* IV 236-242.
- <sup>59</sup> Edward Shils, "Charisma, Order and Status" *American Sociological Review* 30 (1965), 199-213.
- <sup>60</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Trs. Stephen Kalberg, (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2001), 123, 245-246; Peter Baehr, "The Iron Cage and the Shell Hard as Steel: Parsons, Weber and the Stahlhartes Gehäuse Metaphor in the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" *History and Theory* 40 (2001), 153.
- <sup>61</sup> Stark *Sociology of Religion* IV 153-154.