

ABSTRACT

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

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Werner Stark (1909-1985) is a relatively unknown and under appreciated social theorist. His contributions to the sociology of religion have not received the attention they merit. 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. 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.