

## **CHAPTER 1 - CHARISMATIC SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: A WEBERIAN PERSPECTIVE**

*History always repeats itself and yet never  
repeats itself.*

Chesterton<sup>1</sup>

The word 'charisma' is now in everyday use. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines it as 'the ability to inspire followers with devotion and enthusiasm ... an attractive aura; great charm ... a divinely conferred power or talent.'<sup>2</sup> In writings about religious congregations, within the Catholic tradition, the word 'charism' is used frequently. Both words are derived from the ancient Greek word 'kharis' meaning 'favour,' 'grace' or 'gift from the gods.' Religious congregations are also described as charismatic social movements. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia* defines a charismatic movement as a 'movement of spiritual renewal, which ... emphasizes the present reality and work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church and the individual.' In this chapter, I consider a sociology of 'charisma' and 'charismatic social movements' as the first element in this work's theoretical framework.

### **1.1 - CHOOSING A SOCIOLOGIST**

While many social theorists believe 'contemporary social theory stands in need of a radical revision,' Marx, Durkheim and Weber are considered to be the sociologists who currently provide 'the principal frames of reference of modern sociology' (Giddens, 1981, p.vii). The work of each has helped to make religious ideas an 'important subject of study, not only as they might affect society, but as they are affected by society' (Hargrove, 1989, p.6). But Weber's contribution is of a different order to that of the other two. While Durkheim and Marx constructed rather mechanistic models to describe the nature of society, Weber made available

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Braybrooke (1991, p.1253).

<sup>2</sup> The previous edition of *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* first printed in 1982, defines charisma as a 'divinely conferred power or talent; capacity to inspire followers with devotion and enthusiasm'. Note the changed order with the relegation of 'divinely conferred power or talent' and the new inclusion of 'an attractive aura; great charm' in the 1991 edition. Meanwhile *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* currently defines charisma as 'free gift of God's grace'.

ways of exploring and explaining its specifically interpersonal nature (King, 1978, p.132). On Weber's appointment to the chair of economics and sociology at the University of Munich on March 9th. 1920, he wrote to economist Robert Liefmann, who had attacked sociology:

I do understand your battle against sociology. But let me tell you: If I now happen to be a sociologist according to my appointment papers, then I became one in order to put an end to the mischievous enterprise which still operates with collectivist notions (*Kollektivbegriffe*) (Weber quoted in Roth and Schluchter, 1979, p.120).

Sociology could only be practised, according to Weber, 'by proceeding from the action of one or more, few or many, individuals ... by employing a strictly 'individualistic' method (*ibid.*). It required taking into account the self-interest of these actors and their interest groups rather than social systems *per se* (Smith, 1979, p.107). Weber believes collectivities, such as religious congregations, 'must be treated as *solely* the resultants and modes of organization of the particular acts of individual persons' (1978, p.13). Such a Weberian approach is key to the case study methodology which I have chosen for this research.

Even more than methodology, Weber's importance for this study rests with his understanding of religion and of charismatic leadership. 'Weber always insisted that every genuine religious ethic should ... derive from purely religious roots, and not originate in economic or social or psychological considerations' (Mommsen, 1965, p.30). According to Lindholm, he was the first to introduce the term 'charisma' to sociology (1990, p.24). Haley insists it was not Weber, but the legal theorist Rudolph Sohm (1841-1917), while agreeing that Weber appropriated the notion, renamed Sohm's charismatic organisation as charismatic authority and generalised the term (1980, p.185). In any case, Weber saw charisma both as having an important religious dimension and as a key source of social change - more so than Durkheim's sacre which was oriented more to 'understanding the function of religion in the structure of a social system' (Yang, 1963, p.xliii; Hinnells, 1984, p.288; Hargrove, 1989, p.5; Samier, 1992, Int.). His theory of charismatic leadership, in which charisma implies a specific kind of relationship between the leader and his or her followers, enables a more complete understanding of religious congregations as living social movements than any other to be found in current literature. This theory is central to the oeuvre of one of the founding figures of sociology. It lends itself easily to the task in hand and

it is high time it was put to that purpose. However, it is not just a matter, we shall see, of applying a ready made framework to a particular case. I will argue that the case of religious orders - a paradigm case, surely - forces some revision of the theory of charismatic authority.

## 1.2 - WEBER ON CHARISMA

*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1976 [1904]) has been acknowledged as Weber's (1864-1920) 'most famous, debated and readable book.'<sup>3</sup> Despite the immediate interest it raised, Weber realised it failed to grapple with the broader, comparative issue: 'the distinctiveness of the Occident'. For this he sought comparisons with Oriental civilisations. In researching China and India, Weber again focused on modern capitalism. The results of this latter work, together with his analysis of ancient Judaism, enabled him to understand how sociological arrangements help form meaning (Kalberg, 1985, pp.894-895). This led to his *Economy and Society* (1978 [1921]). When his wife, Marianne, saw to the publishing of *Economy and Society* in 1921, she described it in her preface as 'Weber's posthumous and principal work (*Hauptwerk*)' (Tenbruck, 1989, p.45). Its subsequent influence results from its wealth of concepts based on Weber's wide range of comparative historical materials (Bendix, 1968, p.497). This work contributes significantly to the following discussion.

In 1904, Weber had introduced explicitly his concept of ideal type (Kasler, 1988, p.13). He saw it as a conceptual construct which

brings together certain relationships and events of historical life into a complex, which is conceived as an internally consistent system. Substantively, this construct in itself is like a *utopia* which has been arrived at by the analytical accentuation of certain elements of reality. Its relationship to the empirical data consists solely in the fact that where market-conditioned relationships of the type referred to by the abstract construct are discovered or suspected to exist in reality to some extent, we can make the *characteristic* features of this relationship pragmatically *clear* and *understandable* by reference to an *ideal-type* ... [It] is no 'hypothesis' but it offers guidance to the construction of hypotheses. It is not a *description* of reality but it aims to

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<sup>3</sup> Weber commenced this essay on the sociology of religion in 1903 as a result of his great interest in the question of the origin of modern capitalism - that revolutionising power he had observed in agricultural worker studies (Kasler, 1988, p.13).

give unambiguous means of expression to such a description (1949 [1904], p.90).

He took for granted that sociology<sup>4</sup> endeavours to develop these ideal types emphasising that the 'great majority of empirical cases represent a combination or a state of transition among several such pure types' (1991 [1921], pp.299-300).

Weber regarded the three forms of authority - traditional, rational and charismatic - as ideal types. Traditional authority was based on 'what actually, allegedly, or presumably has always existed' (1991 [1921], p.296) - the 'sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of the status of those exercising authority under them' (1947 [1922], p.328),

Rational authority was 'bound to intellectually analysable rules' (1978 [1921], p.244) and 'the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands' (1947 [1922], p.328) and

Charismatic authority was dependent on the belief by the governed 'in the extraordinary quality of the specific *person*' (1991 [1921], p.296) and the 'normative patterns or order revealed or ordained' by that person (1947 [1922], p.328). It is this third form of authority - and a host of related concepts - that is to be our primary focus.

In 1883, Weber moved to Strasbourg where he carried out National Service. He was excused from some duties because of his studies at the Strasbourg University where he attended lectures by Rudolf Sohm (1841-1917) (Kasler, 1988, p.4). At that time, Sohm was finding his own interests beginning to move from Roman and Germanic law towards canon law and the history of the church (Haley, 1980, p.187). It was Sohm who highlighted the notion of charisma for Weber. He used the term to analyse how the primitive Christian community became transformed into the 'charismatic institution' called the Roman Catholic Church (Shils, 1975, p.128). Weber later wrote:

For the Christian religious organization Rudolf Sohm, in his *Kirchenrecht*, was the first to clarify the substance of the concept even though he did not use the same terminology. Others ... have clarified certain important consequences of it. It is thus nothing new (1947 [1922], p.328).

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<sup>4</sup> Weber distinguished sociology from history which he saw as explaining the 'causal analysis and explanation of individual actions, structures, and personalities possessing cultural significance' (1978 [1921], p.19).

While recognising that Sohm had brought out, with logical consistency, the 'sociological peculiarity of this category of domination-structure' for an 'historically important special case', Weber felt Sohm's restriction of it to Christianity was 'one sided from a purely historical point of view' (1991 [1921], p.246). In any case, the concept of charisma underwent 'its most important extension and formulation in the writings of Max Weber' (Shils, 1975, p.128).

Generalizing Sohm's conception a decade later, Weber reworked many of the same motifs: the calling (*Beruf*), mission (*Aufgabe*), talent, the individual character of charisma, the prophet as exemplar of charisma, the role of charisma in forming communities, and the opposition of charisma to organization based on law (Haley, 1980, p.195).

While Sohm had applied the term 'charisma' to the early Christian church, Weber argued that 'the principles of leadership through God-given grace were generalisable'. Hence he applied the term 'charisma' to Napoleon, to Stefan George<sup>5</sup>, to Jesus Christ and to the Chinese Emperor (Albrow, 1990, p.172). Marcus supports this idea of the 'dominant charismatic character of Napoleon's hold over most of his followers'. He sees it evidenced in March, 1815, by

the 'Hundred Days' in which rational factors can hardly explain ... [Napoleon's] lightning return to authority after power had already passed to the other side. Indeed, at this juncture there came into play, for the soldiers who had served under him, the vision that the transcendent glory of revolutionary France was still incarnate in their fallen Emperor (1961, p.239).

For Haley such an extension of the notion of charisma breaks away from Sohm's image of the charismatic as a 'commanding, constraining teacher'. Sohm's examples are of holy men and 'the heroes of the Western moral tradition' - indeed he sees charisma as specific to Christianity and 'linked to professing a specific doctrine - Jesus' commands'. Haley continues:

Sohm, a devout Christian, was a man under authority - Jesus' authority. Writing only twenty years after *Kirchenrecht*, Weber is a post-Christian, a man outside the authority of Jesus' commands. Once outside that authority, a new interpretation of Jesus becomes necessary. Weber's theory of charisma appeals partly because it provides that

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<sup>5</sup> Stefan George was the cult poet of Weber's time (Albrow, 1990, p.172).

new interpretation - custom crafted for nonbelievers (1980, pp.196-197).

Weber defined charisma as a certain quality of an individual personality, by which the person 'is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities' (1978 [1921], p.241). These could be 'actual, alleged, or presumed' (1991 [1921], p.295). They were inaccessible to the ordinary person, of divine origin and exemplary, and on their basis the individual is treated as a leader (1978 [1921], p.241). Throughout history

'natural' leaders - in times of psychic, physical, economic, ethical, religious, political distress - have been ... holders of specific gifts of the body and spirit; and these gifts have been believed to be supernatural, not accessible to everybody (1991 [1921], p.245).

Charisma, therefore, is a property having the character of a gift, which is imputed to the person of the leader by the followers. The leader is personally called from within (*ibid.*, p.79). This call is seen in the most emphatic sense of the word as a mission or a spiritual duty (1978 [1921], p.244). It 'knows only inner determination and inner restraint. The holder of charisma seizes the task that is adequate for him [or her] and demands a following by virtue of his [or her] mission' (1991 [1921], p.246). The recognition by the followers of the genuineness of the charismatic leader's gift or call is decisive for the validity of charisma. Followers see it as their duty to recognise its genuineness and to act accordingly since their leader is now 'charismatically qualified' (1978 [1921], p.242 and 1991 [1921], p.247). 'Psychologically this recognition is a matter of complete personal devotion to the possessor of the quality' (1978 [1921], p.242). Weber sees such charismatic influence as manifesting its revolutionary power on the followers from within causing them to change<sup>6</sup> their attitudes<sup>7</sup> (*ibid.*, p.1117).

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<sup>6</sup> Weber uses the word *metanoia* - the Greek New Testament word for 'repentance' (1978 [1921], p.117).

<sup>7</sup> Weber views charisma as one of the creative forces of history (*ibid.*, p.1115 & p.1117) - in traditionalist periods a 'great revolutionary force' (*ibid.*, p.245). He compares its revolutionary force with 'the likewise revolutionary force of "reason"' which he sees as working from without by 'altering the situations of life and hence its problems'. Reason either changes a person's attitudes toward these situations and problems or 'intellectualizes the individual' (1978 [1921], p.245).

Charisma, on the other hand, *may* effect a subjective ... reorientation born out of suffering, conflicts, or enthusiasm. It may then result in a radical alteration of the central attitudes and directions of action with a completely new orientation of all attitudes toward the different problems of the 'world'. In prerationalistic periods, tradition and charisma between them have almost exhausted the whole of the orientation of action (*ibid.*).

#### Charisma in its strongest form

disrupts rational rule as well as tradition altogether and overturns all notions of sanctity. Instead of reverence for customs that are ancient and hence sacred, it enforces the inner subjection to the unprecedented and absolutely unique and therefore Divine (*ibid.*, p.1117).

In addition, charisma in its pure form 'disdains and repudiates economic exploitation of the gifts of grace as a source of income'. It does not always demand a renunciation of owning or acquiring property, but despises 'traditional or rational everyday economizing' and 'the attainment of a regular income by continuous economic activity devoted to this end'. More appropriate to charismatic involvement, Weber believes, is support by gifts or begging (*ibid.*, pp.244-245).

Weber defines the charismatic community (*Gemeinde*) as an 'organized group subject to charismatic authority' (*ibid.*, p.243). This community is based on an emotional form of communal relationship (*Vergemeinschaftung*) characterised by an absence of hierarchy, of clearly delineated spheres of authority and, especially, of any form of training or career structure (*ibid.*, p.243; 1991 [1921], p.246). Followers are simply called. They often live with their leader on means which have been provided by voluntary gift.

There are no established administrative organs. In their place are agents who have been provided with charismatic authority by their chief or who possess charisma of their own. There is no system of formal rules, of abstract legal principles, and hence no process of rational judicial decision oriented to them. But equally there is no legal wisdom oriented to judicial precedent. Formally concrete judgements are newly created from case to case and are originally regarded as divine judgements and revelations (1978 [1921], p.243).

However, it is only initially, and while the charismatic leader operates completely beyond normal social structures, possible for the leader's followers

to live communistically in a community of faith and enthusiasm, on gifts, booty, or sporadic acquisition. Only the members of the small group of enthusiastic disciples and followers are prepared to devote their lives purely idealistically to their call. The great majority of disciples and followers will in the long run 'make their living' out of their 'calling' in a material sense as well. Indeed, this must be the case if the movement is not to disintegrate (*ibid.*, p.249).

Weber sees charismatic authority in its pure form as having 'a character specifically foreign to everyday routine structures. The social relationships directly involved are strictly personal, based on the validity and practice of charismatic personal qualities' (*ibid.*, p.246). Unlike bureaucratic authority<sup>8</sup>, charismatic authority is 'foreign to all rules'. It is also opposed to traditional authority whether patriarchal or patrimonial<sup>9</sup> which Weber regards as everyday forms of domination. 'Traditional authority is bound to the precedents handed down from the past and to this extent is also oriented to rules'. On the other hand, Weber sees charismatic authority as repudiating the past, thereby making it 'a specifically revolutionary force' (*ibid.*, p.244). The governed submit to this authority because of their belief in the extraordinary quality of the specific *person*' (1991 [1921], p.295). Yet charismatic authority is 'naturally unstable'

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<sup>8</sup> Weber sees bureaucratic authority as the purest form of legal authority (1978 [1921], p.299). He describes it, in its pure type, as having a supreme authority where staff are appointed and function according to the following criteria:

- (1) They are personally free and subject to authority only with respect to their impersonal official obligations.
- (2) They are organized in a clearly defined hierarchy of offices.
- (3) Each office has a clearly defined sphere of competence in the legal sense.
- (4) The office is filled by a free contractual relationship. Thus in principle there is free selection.
- (5) Candidates are selected on the basis of technical qualifications ... (1947 [1922], p.333).

<sup>9</sup> Patriarchal authority grows 'out of the master's authority over his household' (1978 [1921], p.1006) whether the 'master' be the 'father, the husband' or 'the senior of the house'. It 'rests upon a belief in the sanctity of everyday routines' (1991 [1921], pp.296-297). Patrimonial authority represents a variety of patriarchal authority where 'group members' are treated as 'subjects' (*ibid.*; 1978 [1921], p.231).

(1978 [1921], p.114). It is possible for a charismatic person to lose his or her charisma. That person 'may feel "forsaken by ... God," as Jesus did on the cross'<sup>10</sup>. At this point the charismatic leader's mission 'comes to an end' and 'hope expects and searches for a new bearer'. The followers abandon their leader because 'pure charisma does not recognize any legitimacy other than one which flows from personal strength proven time and again' (*ibid.*, p.1114). When people 'cease to recognize the ruler, it is expressly stated that he [or she] becomes a private citizen; and if ... [that person] then wishes to be more, ... [then he or she] becomes a usurper deserving of punishment' (1991 [1921], p.249). In addition, charismatic authority also

recognizes no appropriation of positions of power by virtue of the possession of property, either on the part of a chief or of socially privileged groups. The only basis of legitimacy for it is personal charisma so long as it is proved; that is, as long as it receives recognition and as long as the followers and disciples prove their usefulness charismatically (1978 [1921], p.244).

Weber understands the charismatic leader or prophet as 'a purely individual bearer of charisma', who by virtue of his or her mission 'proclaims a religious doctrine or divine commandment' (*ibid.*, p.439). Such holders of charisma and their disciples, in order to justify their mission, 'must stand outside the ties of this world, outside of routine occupations, as well as outside the routine obligations of family life (1991 [1921], p.248). Interestingly, Weber quotes two religious congregations as examples.

The statutes of the Jesuit order preclude the acceptance of church offices; the members of orders are forbidden to own property or, according to the original rule of St. Francis, the order as such is forbidden to do so (*ibid.*).

He draws a distinction between the priest and the prophet:

For our purposes the personal call is the decisive element distinguishing the prophet from the priest. The latter lays claim to authority by virtue of his [or her] service in a sacred tradition, while the prophet's claim is based on personal revelation and charisma ... It is no accident that almost no prophets have emerged from the priestly class (1965 [1922], p.46).

He distinguishes between charismatic leaders who are exemplary prophets, like the Buddha, 'who, by his personal example, demonstrates to others the

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<sup>10</sup> *cf.* Ps.22:1, Mat.27:46, Mark 15:34.

way to religious salvation' and those who are ethical prophets, like Muhammad, who appear as 'an instrument for the proclamation of a god and his will' and demand 'obedience as an ethical duty'. It is to the latter category that Weber believes the Old Testament prophets belong (*ibid.*, p.55 & p.46).

A community or congregation arises as a result of what Weber calls the routinization of charisma (*ibid.*, p.60). If the practice of charismatic authority is not to remain a purely transitory phenomenon but is to take on the character of a permanent relationship with a 'community' of disciples or followers, it is necessary for its character to become radically changed. In its pure form 'charismatic authority may be said to exist only *in statu nascendi*. It cannot remain stable, but becomes either traditionalized or rationalized, or a combination of both. Once routinisation has taken place it then becomes possible 'to participate in normal family relationships or at least to enjoy a secure social position in place of the kind of discipleship which is cut off from ordinary worldly connections' (1978 [1921], p.246).

These issues become particularly prominent when a successor for the charismatic leader needs to be found.

The way in which this problem is met ... is of crucial importance for the character of the subsequent social relationships ... For through it occurs the routinization of the charismatic focus of the structure. In it the character of the leader ... and ... [the leader's] claim to legitimacy is altered ... This process involves peculiar and characteristic conceptions which are understandable only in this context and do not apply to the problem of transition to traditional or legal patterns of order and types of administrative organization (*ibid.*, p.253).

Weber offers six ways of selecting a successor:

(1) By a search for a new charismatic leader based on the qualities 'which will fit [the person] for the position of authority' (*ibid.*, p.246). Thus choosing a new Dali Lama consists in 'the search for a child with characteristics which are interpreted to mean that ... [he or she] is a reincarnation of the Buddha'. 'In this case the legitimacy of the new charismatic leader is bound to certain distinguishing characteristics' and therefore to rules from which 'a tradition arises'. Weber sees this resulting in 'a process of traditionalization in favor of which the purely personal character of leadership is reduced' (*ibid.*, p.247).

(2) Selection by revelation 'manifested in oracles, lots, divine judgments or other techniques of selection.' Here the legitimacy of the new leader depends on the 'legitimacy of the *techniques* of selection ... Saul is said to have been chosen by the old war oracle.' Weber sees this process as involving 'a form of legalisation' (*ibid.*).

(3) Selection involving designation by the original charismatic leader of his or her own successor and this new person's recognition by the followers. 'This is a very common form. Originally, the Roman magistracies were filled entirely in this way' (*ibid.*).

(4) Designation by the charismatically qualified administrative staff or the original followers of the charismatic leader.

In its typical form this process should quite definitely not be interpreted as 'election' or 'nomination' or anything of the sort. It is not a matter of free selection, but of one which is strictly bound to objective duty. It is not to be determined merely by majority vote, but is a question of arriving at the correct designation, the designation of the right person who is truly endowed with charisma. It is quite possible that the minority and not the majority should be right in such a case (*ibid.*).

Weber realises that unanimity is often required. He insists it is 'obligatory to acknowledge a mistake and persistence in error is a serious offence. Making a wrong choice is a genuine wrong requiring expiation' (*ibid.*).

The most important examples of designation of a successor by the charismatic followers of the leader are to be found in the election of bishops, and particularly of the Pope, by the original system of designation by the clergy and recognition by the lay community (*ibid.*, p.253).

(5) Selection of a successor on the basis of heredity, on the assumption that charisma is thus transmitted.

In the case of hereditary charisma, recognition is no longer paid to the charismatic qualities of the individual, but to the legitimacy of the position ... [the person] has acquired by hereditary succession. This may lead in the direction either of traditionalization or of legalization. The concept of divine right is fundamentally altered and now comes to mean authority by virtue of a personal right which is not dependent on the recognition of those subject to authority. Personal charisma may be totally absent (*ibid.*, p.248).

(6) Succession which takes place using the idea that charisma may be passed on by ritual means from one person to another or may be created in a new person.

The concept was originally magical. It involves a dissociation of charisma from a particular individual, making it an objective, ... [transferable] entity. In particular, it may become the *charisma of office*. In this case the belief in legitimacy is no longer directed to the individual, but to the acquired qualities and to the effectiveness of the ritual acts. The most important example is the transmission of priestly charisma by anointing, consecration, or the laying on of hands; and of royal authority, by anointing and coronation (*ibid.*, pp.248-249).

Apart from succession, Weber acknowledges other problems associated with the process of routinisation including the fundamental problem 'of making a transition from a charismatic administrative staff, and the corresponding principles of administration, to one which is adapted to every day conditions' (*ibid.*, p.253). He gives two reasons why routinisation is sought. First, members of the community seek their own personal security. They want to understand the detailed arrangements concerning both positions of authority and the economic situation as these relate to them (*ibid.*, p.252). Second, they need to have a sense of order in the organisation and to ensure the organisation is adapted to

everyday economic conditions. ... It is not possible for the costs of permanent, routine administration to be met by booty, contributions, gifts, and hospitality, as is typical of the pure type of military and prophetic charisma (*ibid.*).

The process of traditionalisation or of (rational) legalisation can be carried out in a variety of ways:

- (1) Charismatic norms are transformed into those defining a traditional social status. This results in all powers and advantages becoming traditionalised (*ibid.*, p.250).
- (2) Individual positions, with the resulting economic advantages, can be sought and obtained by administrative staff.

In that case, according to whether the tendency is to traditionalization or legalization, there will develop (a) benefices, (b) offices, or (c) fiefs. In the first case a prebendal organization will result; in the second, patrimonialism or bureaucracy; in the third, feudalism (*ibid.*).

These new sources of money replace the provision made from gifts or booty. In the case of benefices they may obtain 'the proceeds of begging ... payments in kind ... the proceeds of money taxes, or finally ... the proceeds of fees' (*ibid.*). Weber observes

that regularized begging is found in Buddhism and benefices in kind in the Chinese and Japanese 'rice rents'; support by money taxation has been the rule in all the rationalised conquest states. The last case is common everywhere, especially on the part of priests and judges and, in India, even the military authorities' (*ibid.*, pp.250-251).

If charisma is to become an everyday experience, its anti-economic character must be 'adapted to some form of social organization to provide for the needs of the group and hence to the economic conditions necessary for raising taxes and contributions' (*ibid.*, p.251).

When a charismatic movement begins to benefit from stipended provision, the 'laity' become differentiated from the 'clergy' whom Weber describes as 'participating members of the charismatic administrative staff which has now become routinized' (*ibid.*).

(3) While recognising that the original basis of recruitment is personal charisma

with routinization, the followers or disciples may set up norms for recruitment, in particular involving training or tests of eligibility. Charisma can only be 'awakened' and 'tested'; it cannot be 'learned' or 'taught'. ... A genuine charismatic leader is in a position to oppose this type of prerequisite for membership; his [or her] successor is not free to do so, at least if ... [that person] is chosen by the administrative staff (*ibid.*, p.249).

Hence, while in the course of routinisation, the charismatically ruled organisation becomes one of the everyday authorities, its 'original peculiarities are apt to be retained in the charismatic status ... acquired by ... office-holding' (*ibid.*, p.251). Conflict can occur during routinisation.

In the early stages personal claims on the charisma of the chief are not easily forgotten and the conflict between the charisma of the office ... with personal charisma is a typical process in many historical situations (*ibid.*, p.252).

Nor are organisations free from revolutions particularly those directed towards 'hereditary charismatic powers or the powers of office' (*ibid.*).

In summary, Weber sees charisma as

a phenomenon typical of prophetic movements or of expansive political movements in their early stages. As soon as domination is well established, and above all as soon as control over large masses of people exists, charisma gives way to the force of everyday routine (*ibid.*).

When this happens discipline, which has a rational base, 'inexorably takes over ever larger areas as the satisfaction of political and economic needs is increasingly rationalized'. This universal phenomenon restricts 'the importance of charisma and individually differentiated conduct' (*ibid.*, p.1156). At the end of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* Weber reflected.

No one knows who will live in this cage in the future, or whether at the end of this tremendous development entirely new prophets will arise, or [whether] there will be a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals, or, if neither, mechanized petrification, embellished with a sort of convulsive self-importance (1976 [1904], p.182).

### 1.3 - SOME POST-WEBERIAN COMMENTARY

Weber's greatness and uniqueness, Eisenstadt contends, lies in the way he 'combined historical and sociological analysis' (1968, p.xiii). This connects with his recognition that there has been 'no human culture without some spiritual current or supernatural order running through that culture' (Schiffer, 1973, p.35). While Lindholm claims Weber wanted to 'conquer the world for rationality, removing all mystery from existence', Goldman believes Weber saw rationalisation as threatening to 'impose itself totally on self and society, depriving them of the capacity to posit anything but their own submission' (1990, p.23; in press).

To Weber, rationality increasingly provides the limits within which social orders, institutions, and individuals may develop, providing new techniques of control and administration ... weighing on individual actors and undermining other cultural forms that generated practices of self-shaping in the past - tradition, religion, cultivation and charismatic education (*ibid.*).

Roth (1991) supports Goldman's position noting a 'slightly humourous vein' from one of Weber's letters: 'It is true children are something infamous. I am too much the rationalist to stand their irrational restlessness and yelling' (Weber quoted in Roth, 1991, p.5).

THREE FORMS OF CHARISMA Recent authors see Weber using the term 'charisma' in up to three different ways. While Spencer specifies three ways (1973, p.341), Lindholm, writing later and apparently independently, only accepts two of Spencer's ways, and sees these two as being 'quite opposed' to each other (1990, p.24).

The first form Spencer describes as Weber's classic meaning of charisma.

The [charismatic] leader has a divine gift which ... [the leader] demonstrates to his [or her] followers by miracles, signs or proofs. The obedience of the disciples is contingent upon their belief in the powers of the leader and the latter may lose ... [this] 'gift', and with it his [or her] following (*ibid.*).

Lindholm (1990, p.25) and Gerth and Wright Mills (1991, p.52) agree that this is Weber's primary view of charisma, seeing it as 'opposed to all institutional routines, those of tradition and those subject to rational management'.

In its primal form charisma does not have any fixed lines of authority; those involved make no allowance for orderly provisioning, they despise economic trading and profit, and they aim at the overthrow of all structure, the disintegration of all the chains of custom. Charisma of this type is revolutionary and creative, occurring in times of social crisis, opening the way to a new future (Lindholm, 1990, p.25).

For the charismatic follower, according to this primal form, self-sacrifice is the cardinal virtue and selfishness the greatest vice (*ibid.*).

Weber's second form of charisma, Spencer contends, refers to

a sacred or awe-filled property of groups, roles or objects. Thus Weber makes reference to the routinization of charisma and its institutionalization in offices (Amtscharisma); kinship groups (gentilsharisma) and blood lines (erbscharisma) (1973, p.341).

Lindholm sees this institutional charisma as 'relatively rational' and therefore more amenable to Weber's 'type of sociological analysis'. It gives an 'aura of sacred power to any individual who has the right to wear the bishop's robe, or sit on the king's throne, regardless of actual personal characteristics (1990, pp.24-25).

Spencer believes Weber uses charisma in its third sense when he describes charismatic party leaders. In this secular, and popular sense, charisma describes the personal qualities of a leader as a 'charismatic personality' who attracts a following on the basis of his or her personal attributes rather than as a result of a divine gift (Spencer, 1973, p.341).

The meaning of the term 'charisma' and the language surrounding its use, have been extended even further by post-Weberian sociologists. For example, discussion of both 'the charisma of the populace and the charisma of the highest authority is a common phenomenon' (Shils, 1965, p.206). Some new applications of the word 'charisma', however, have ancient echoes. Lindholm, for instance, defines charisma as above all 'a *relationship*, a mutual mingling of the inner selves' as evidenced by 'the crowd gathered around the leader (or the lover attracted to the beloved)'. Here he focuses on the particular characteristics of 'excitability, selflessness and emotional intensity' which are beyond those of ordinary consciousnesses (1990 p.7). The Septuagint version of the Old Testament<sup>11</sup> also makes reference to this physical attraction and uses '*kharis*' sometimes to signify the 'good favor of God which makes one person physically or emotionally attractive to another', a nuance that also appears in Acts 2:47 (Koenig, 1978, p.63).

CHARISMATIC INDIVIDUALS AND RELATIONSHIPS Charismatic individuals, in Weber's writings<sup>12</sup>, are people with a 'vocation'. Such people have the qualities of

aloneness, inclination to ascetic labor, devoted service to an ultimate value, self-denial and systematic self-control, a unified inner center or core, and capacity to resist their own desires and the desires and pressures of others (Goldman, in press).

Goldman sees such a calling, in Weber's conception, as a 'mode of asceticism for legitimating the self by sacrificing it in its natural form and building a new and higher self devoted to an ultimate value or cause'. Such an empowered self

cannot seek a witness or companion in others. Indeed, it is formed *against* others. All personal or popular witnesses, all outside acclaim, except as a means to the power of the

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<sup>11</sup> The Septuagint was written about 270 BC (Koenig, 1978, p.63).

<sup>12</sup> Especially his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Goldman, in press).

self, must be excluded as threatening the self and its task  
(*ibid.*).

Kasler (1988, p.84) observes how Weber found Catholicism's 'atonement, grace of the sacraments and the certainty of forgiveness' provided a release from the 'tremendous tension to which the Calvinist<sup>13</sup> was doomed by an inexorable fate, admitting of no mitigation' (Weber, 1976 [1904], p.117).

Eisenstadt notes that Weber's writings do not explicitly deal with questions such as: What do people find appealing in the charismatic person? Why do they give up 'wealth, time, energy, or existing social bonds and commitments' for the implementation of the leader's vision? When are people most willing to follow a leader's appeal? (1968, p.xxii). Shils believes it is the connection felt with some *very central* feature of the leader's being and the leader's world. The bond is constituted by its 'formative power in initiating, creating, governing, transforming, maintaining, or destroying' what is vital or 'serious', in Durkheim's sense, in a person's life (1965, pp.201-202).

Finally, in more recent political discourse, Turner believes charisma has come to mean 'little more than leadership'.

Any leader who is successfully manufactured by the party machine is now dutifully regarded as charismatic. The term has thus been stripped not only of its theological, but also its sociological content (1981, p.147).

Turner stresses Weber's distinction between pure and impure charisma. When the charismatic prophet goes against public and popular demands 'in order to impose' his or her unique charismatic message, charisma requires 'something in addition to popular support and recognition' (*ibid.*). It requires taking extraordinary risks and working in the most difficult of circumstances (Kanter, 1987, p.179). Unlike tradition and legal-rational authority, Turner concludes, charisma cannot be totally reduced to the conditions which produce it (Turner, 1981, p.147).

CHARISMA, ORDER AND INSTITUTIONAL BUILDING Schon (1983, p.326) describes Weber as 'the prophet of bureaucracy' because of his belief

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<sup>13</sup> Weber understood the God of Calvinism as One who 'demanded of his believers not single good works, but a life of good works combined into a unified system' (1976 [1904], p.117).

that charismatic leadership does not last<sup>14</sup>. Wittberg points to one source of impermanence: the delicacy of the relationship between the leader and the followers:

Charismatic leaders from Moses to Mao Tse-Tung have bemoaned the straying of their followers from their initial enthusiasm. As the disaster of China's Cultural Revolution shows ... attempts by charismatic leaders to rekindle the original devotion to their leadership often backfire. Leaders can lose their charisma and fall from grace if they disrupt the delicate balance between the active *exercise* of leadership power by the top and the active *granting* of leadership by the bottom (1991, p.15).

But is Schon's interpretation of Weber altogether correct? The routinisation of charisma is essential to its having a stable change-effect. It is also a threat to the charisma. But which of these contrary results of routinisation is likely to win out in the end? Weber's view of this is a matter of some dispute among scholars - and their discussion of it is complicated by the different views which they themselves take on the matter.

While Lindholm (1990, p.25) believes Weber spent most of his time discussing the routinisation and institutionalisation of charisma, Shils feels he only touched on it finding the genuine charismatic element lacking in institutions, particularly with members' preoccupation with succession and continuing legitimacy (1965, p.202). This, Goldman contends, led Weber to hold that

systematic social and political innovations are only possible by the action of called individuals acting on behalf of a higher cause ... [and hence collectivities] cannot be empowered but only used as the tool of charismatic domination (Goldman, in press).

This link between charisma and institution building Eisenstadt considers 'the most important challenge which Weber's work poses for modern sociology' (1968, p.ix). In considering institutional charisma, Shils believes Weber's preoccupation with the unique features of modern society hindered his perception of the deeper and more permanent features of all societies (1965, p.203). Shils addresses this lack through the notion of order insisting

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<sup>14</sup> Weber holds that charisma is inevitably routinised either on the death of the founding person or when the group gets too large to be in effective contact with his or her charisma.

the generator or author of order arouses the charismatic responsiveness. Whether it be God's law or natural law or scientific law or positive law or the society as a whole, or even a particular corporate body or institution like an army, whatever embodies, expresses or symbolizes the essence of an ordered cosmos or any significant sector thereof awakens the disposition of awe and reverence, the charismatic disposition (*ibid.*).

Shils sees major religions providing these 'ordering patterns' assisting people to first, locate significant events, like the creation of the world, second, enabling them to evaluate society and, third, from this ordered position, 'assert what it should be' (*ibid.*, p.204).

Lindholm (1990, p.192), on the other hand, describes such an ordering approach as simply 'ratifying and sacralizing the world as it is'. He sees it as being 'the mainstay of tradition and could even, perhaps, be subsumed into tradition ... Charisma in this sense is inextricably linked with the status quo'. But Eisenstadt, writing before Lindholm, had arguably anticipated and countered this argument. He develops Shil's argument maintaining that 'charismatic activities and orientations, because of their close relation to the very sources of social and cultural creativity, contain strong tendencies toward the destruction and decomposition of institutions' (1968, p.xix). Rather than seeing this decomposition or re-ordering coming from outside influences, Eisenstadt believes such desires are part of the 'basic wishes or orientations' of the people within the organisation. They want a 'good society' in which they can participate (*ibid.*, p.xli). Such an approach demands a

rather special response from those able to respond ... [It] tends to be located in specific, distinct parts or aspects of the social structure. The structural focus of this quest is to be found in the charismatic activity, group symbol or institutional focus (*ibid.*, pp.xli-xlii).

This activity, because of the disruptive nature of charisma, does not lend itself to consensus and may lead to 'dissension, conflict, and change' both because of the people's varying interests within the institution as well as a 'differential distribution of the charismatic in the symbolic and organizational aspects' of the institution. Nevertheless, when people realise that such charismatic activities are part of institutional life, social change and transformation proceed more systematically (*ibid.*, pp.xlii-xliii).

Eisenstadt uses Weber's writings<sup>15</sup> to nominate three values which enable such transformations:

- (1) relating the transcendent with everyday life
- (2) emphasising hard work and personal responsibility
- (3) experiencing unmediated relationships with the sacred and sacred tradition.

He observes that while these aspects of the Protestant Ethic 'were conducive to its great transformative capacities and the ability of the Protestant groups to influence the behavior of people and the shape of institutions' (*ibid.*, pp.xlvi-xlvii) in so doing, Protestantism, in both its Calvinist and Lutheran versions, 'shifted the locus of grace and redemption from the church to the individual'. (This, Inglis later remarks, has caused some people 'to renounce the contemplative virtues and work pointlessly on' (1985, pp.132-133).)

Many post-Weberian scholars, therefore, see institutional charisma as a reality, and even as providing the charismatic leader with another source of charisma - apart from his or her own personal charisma - by his or her participation in a 'corporate body, conceived of as being under a supreme authority'. The members of the institution respond to both the specific order of the charismatic leader as well as the 'vague and powerful nimbus of the authority of the entire institution' which 'is inherent in the massive organization of authority' (Shils, 1965, p.206). Again, over time corporate bodies 'come to possess charismatic qualities simply by virtue of the tremendous power concentrated in them', thereby making the institution no longer dependant on the charismatic founding person (*ibid.*, p.207).

Eyerman and Jamison (1991, p.16) discuss the effect which Weber and his confidant Michels have had on the study of social movements.

Michels argued that the routinization of charismatic leadership flowed from the establishment of bureaucratic structures. Both were seen as necessary aspects of the maturation of social movements in modern society, by which dynamic social forces were transformed into stagnant, top-heavy institutions, where an oligarchy of pragmatic 'petty bourgeois' leaders concerned themselves more with reproducing their own power than with changing society. This particular outcome of the institutionalization

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<sup>15</sup> *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* and later sociological studies.

of mass movements has come to be called the 'Weber-Michels model' (*ibid.*).

It is not entirely clear how much justice this does to Weber. More important, however, is the substantive question itself of the relationship of charisma to institution. The religious congregation is a particularly interesting case in this connection.

#### 1.4 - RELIGIOUS LIFE AS A TEST-CASE FOR WEBER'S FRAMEWORK

Post-Weberian literature reveals a continuing respect for, and some extension of, Weber's basic theories. Additional to these extensions are other insights which the 'ideal type' of religious life can contribute to the understanding of the more general 'ideal type' of the charismatic social movement, insights which modify and extend the Weberian account, particularly Weber's account of the routinisation of charisma. It is a matter of certain characteristics of religious life which seem not quite to fit that account. These are sociologically recognisable, even if theological in their final definition.

First, when men and women join a religious congregation they make a total commitment for life. Other charismatic social movements allow members to continue living with their families and to pursue their chosen careers, but members of religious congregations hand over all their possessions, leave their families and make their home with the religious community. They live celibate lives and follow the corporate mission of the congregation. They are likely to do these things while gripped by a strong sense of themselves as 'called' to them. Their commitment is no less total, permanent and 'obedient' for them as individuals for coming two or three hundred years after the death of the founding person! It is clearly a charismatic event - and communal religious life remains, among other things, a tissue of such events even when thoroughly settled into its institutionalisation.

Second, people joining religious congregations participate in a thoroughgoing formation programme which initially lasts several years. Through this programme incoming members gain an understanding of what constitutes the ideal type of religious life and experience it through living in community. Members of religious congregations continue to have the charisma of their congregation passed onto them by those with whom they

live. Thus those who have lived religious life for many years may readily pass on their learnings to younger members. Both formal training programmes and the experience of community living seek to ensure all members of the Congregation have the opportunity to receive the charisma of their particular Institute.

Third, one of the difficulties Weber saw with charismatic social movements was the 'rationalisation' which takes place during routinisation, but over the centuries, however, what Weber would call the 'non-rational' dimension of religious congregations has been emphasised through the on-going prayer lives of individuals and communities.

Fourth, special attention is paid to the congregation's founding person through the prayer offered to that person by congregations as a whole, as well as by individual members. In this way the founding person's charisma remains hauntingly present, as well as through the often unique spirituality which the founding person has handed on to his or her followers. This revering of the original charismatic leader in a spiritual sense occurs at a different level to the remembrance of the charismatic leader in a secular social movement. For the religious, the founding person is more of a living presence than an inspirational memory.

Fifth, if the religious congregation's structures have these kinds of inbuilt impulses to remain charismatic, it is also true that its early charismatic beginnings were already caught up in structure in as much as it had its ideal type presented to it by the universal church, through the auspices of Vatican authorities. This was to ensure the new social movement, first, benefited from the long history of religious congregations in the Catholic Church<sup>16</sup> and second, met the required standards on ideological and practical levels. Other social movements may have the opportunity to choose their degree of originality. A new religious congregation is not in that position. In Weber's terms, the religious congregation is born into a semi-institutionalised, semi-charismatic form.

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<sup>16</sup> Since the Catholic Church belongs to Weber's traditional category of authority (Avis, 1992, p.58), the emerging religious congregation ensures it preserves its own prophetic edge while maintaining the Church's ideal type for religious life. Such a practice immediately brings into 'dialogue' Weber's three forms of authority - traditional, rational and charismatic. Religious congregations have had some success in keeping the charismatic alive in such an environment.

Sixth, an important aspect of the required structure is that congregations are expected to obey a set of rules or constitutions approved by the Vatican authorities. Now, often founding people write these rules towards the end of their lives when they can capture clearly the essence of their founding charism and locate this charism within the emerging bureaucratisation that necessarily emerges as congregations, for instance, spread to other countries and make the necessary cultural adaptations. Some founding people refer to rules of other congregations for some guidance in writing their own, but because the new congregation's founding charism is normally felt to be unique, the founding person particularly wants to address the fresh initiatives to which his or her group is charismatically assigned. Mother Teresa's congregation typifies this experience. While many congregations set out initially to work with the poor, once these poor communities have overcome their poverty and become middle class, the religious congregations tended to stay with them. In charismatic reaction to this, Mother Teresa commits her sisters to always seek out the poorest of the poor.

These features of religious congregations suggest a greater potential for maintaining the charism of the charismatic social movement than that suggested by Weber. Nevertheless, some of what Weber says about dispersion, and even loss of charisma through over-bureaucratisation does apply. In the current literature on religious life considerable concern is being expressed about the declining numbers of new members joining congregations.

For many congregations the future looks increasingly dark, especially in the Western world. The flow of recruits has dwindled to a trickle, while large numbers of professed religious have left their congregations. As a result the median age of those who have remained is now in the late 50s and 60s. Fewer religious are involved in the active apostolate; for some, morale has fallen and among those who remain there is often a debilitating feeling that their principal function is to tend the shop until the moment comes to put up the shutters (McDonagh, 1991, p.648).

Are the problems of this age of a different order to those experienced in the past? Maybe religious life is very stable and can go on for centuries. On the other hand, perhaps the conditions of modern life pose an entirely new level of threat. Weber's theory of charismatic social movements may be more relevant to religious congregations today than it has ever been before. But first we need to consider the theological dimension of charism in the

context of the history of religious life in general and of the individual religious congregation.

As we have seen, Weber observed, with some regret, the rationalisation, and to a lesser extent the traditionalisation, of charismatic authority. If he had paid more specific attention to the experiences of religious congregations, he might have had greater faith in the potential longevity of charismatic authority and in the possibility of tolerably happy marriages between charisma and institutions.