Max Weber and Lowell Bennion: Towards an Understanding of Hierarchy and Authority[1]

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LOWELL L. BENNION WAS WIDELY KNOWN among Latter-day Saints for his Christlike life and humanitarianism, as well as for his teaching and authorship of numerous church books and manuals.[2] As a devoted member of the LDS church who regarded intellectual pursuits highly, he was admired by many as a person who successfully combined the qualities of faith and reason—values considered by some to be in opposition. Less known is the fact that Bennion's first published book was on pioneering German sociologist Max Weber and constitutes a remarkable contribution to Weberian scholarship. This essay explores the unique relationship

1. I am indebted to Michael Allen, Lowell L. Bennion, Mary Lythgoe Bradford, Ralph Brower, Curt Conklin, Armand Mauss, and Sterling M. McMurrin for their helpful suggestions with regards to the ideas expressed in this essay. I am also grateful to Mary Bradford for providing many of the particulars of Lowell Bennion's life. In addition, I am grateful to my husband, Hugh Stocks, for his keen ideas, editing skills, and eager willingness to assist. I do, however, take full responsibility for the content of this work. Portions of this essay are drawn from L. N. DiPadova and R. S. Brower, "A Piece of Lost History: Max Weber and Lowell L. Bennion," *American Sociologist* 23 (1992), 3:37-56, and L. N. DiPadova, "Towards a Weberian Management Theory: Lessons from Lowell L. Bennion's Neglected Masterwork," *Journal of Management History* 2 (1996), 1:59-74.

2. See Bradford, *Lowell L. Bennion: Teacher, Counselor, Humanitarian* (Salt Lake City: Dialogue Foundation, 1995).

between Mormonism and Weber's compelling ideas[3] as represented by Bennion's early rendering of Weber. By doing so, it points to the influence of Weber's thinking regarding authority on Bennion's understanding of the institutional hierarchical dynamics of the LDS church.

Bennion's Ph.D. dissertation, *Max Weber's Methodology,*[4] is the first book-length sociological work in the English language about Weber. Published in Paris in 1933, only 100 copies were printed. It received little notice even though it was the only systematic treatment in English of the broad body of Weber's important work. Bennion's direct and readable style integrated themes from disparate Weberian writings, and it constituted the best rendering and summation of Weber from Weber's own perspective.

Bennion was a deeply religious person as well as a sociologist immersed in Weber's thought. He applied his understanding of Weber to life within the LDS church. While Weber was a self-described agnostic and did not consider himself to be a religious person, his writings provided an engaging synergy with Bennion's thinking about Mormonism and his involvement with the church as a bureaucratic organization.

Bennion's work has only recently re-emerged. In 1992 a chapter[5] appeared in the *Journal of Politics, Culture and Society,* the first published attention to his work since 1933, and an article about his contribution to Weberian scholarship appeared in *The American Sociologist.*[6] An enlargement of Weberian management theory, based on Bennion's interpretation,[7] is found in the *Journal of Management History.* It focuses on Weber's views of authoritative rule, power in human relationships, and his concern for obedience—issues which certainly have meaning for the LDS church.

This essay examines Bennion's interpretation of Weber's explication of power and obedience within the context of bureaucracy and hierarchy

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3. While Weber did not make a separate study of Mormonism per se, several prominent scholars, including Roger D. Launius and Lowell L. Bennion, have applied Weber's ideas to aspects of Mormonism. Launius rendered an outstanding Weberian analysis of the charismatic leadership of Joseph Smith III. See Roger D. Launius, *Joseph Smith III: Pragmatic Prophet* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

4. Lowell L. Bennion, *Max Weber's Methodology* (Paris: Les Presses Modernes, 1933).

5. Lowell L. Bennion, "The Business Ethic of the World Religions and the Spirit of Capitalism," *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 6 (1992), 1:39-73. This article from Bennion's dissertation presents what is regarded as a unique contribution to Weber scholarship even today. He applied Weber's "Calvinism-Capitalism" thesis to the development of Mormonism. This analysis corroborated the Weberian thesis at a time when it was under attack (compare H. M. Robertson, *Aspects of the Rise of Economic Individualism: A Criticism of Max Weber and His School* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933]).

6. See DiPadova and Brower, "A Piece of Lost History."

7. See DiPadova, "Towards a Weberian Management Theory."

of authority. It also looks at the juxtaposition of Weber and Bennion in a more personal way—at how the LDS church brought Lowell Bennion to Max Weber, and how Bennion brought Weber's ideas back to the church. I begin by looking at Max Weber and noting the significance of his work. Then I turn to the seminal work by Bennion on Weber's thought, and conclude with the relevance of Weber's thinking for the LDS church today as demonstrated by the life of Lowell Bennion.

Weber and His Ideas

Max Weber is widely regarded as one of the most profound thinkers of modern times. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Weber was a commanding intellectual presence in Europe. Today his contributions continue to be cited by scholars in many fields from jurisprudence to economics, sociology to religion, political science to business, organizational studies to industrial psychology. Weber is so pervasive that most college students, enrolled in an introductory course in any of these fields, are likely to be exposed to some of his concepts. Weber was a prolific writer and scholar; his ideas ranged from describing bureaucracy, to charismatic leadership, to exploring the religious roots of modern capitalism in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Less known is the fact that Weber emphasized understanding the actions of individuals within the context of organizations and society, rather than understanding organizations or societies per se.

The hierarchy of authority is fundamental to Weber's conceptualization of bureaucracy as the most efficient organizational form. Bureaucracy and hierarchy provide a particular context for social action and interaction. The hierarchical dynamics which give rise to these concerns are important for understanding life in organizations. For decades scholars have applied Weber's ideas to organizational and bureaucratic life in the public and private sectors. One might also surmise that Weber's ideas may be applied successfully to ecclesiastical institutions in general and to the dynamics of the bureaucracy of the LDS church in particular.

The church, as a complex, somewhat decentralized organization with a definite hierarchy of authority, readily lends itself to Weberian analysis. Obviously the managerial organization of the church as a corporation located primarily in the church office building in Salt Lake City is reminiscent of large private firms. In addition, the ecclesiastical organization of the church—stakes, wards, branches, missions, etc., and their relationships to centralized church authorities—contains many facets which echo Weber's descriptions of bureaucracy, including the emphasis on authority. In fact, the Mormon priesthood itself is considered to be the authority to act in the name of God; any assumption of such authority outside

"proper channels" (i.e., the hierarchical chain-of-command) is regarded as invalid.[8] Each church position is accompanied by a particular range of responsibility. Much emphasis in the church is given to supporting and sustaining the priesthood (that is, those who hold it) and to the principle of obedience to authority (that is, "following the Brethren").

The idea that the church is based in power—priesthood power—is not new to Mormons; priesthood power is considered fundamental to the universe, as well as to the organization of the church. However, as we will see, Bennion points out that Weber asserts that all religious—and political—groups are based in power. The organizational dynamics of the LDS church, therefore, provide a rich arena for considering some of Weber's compelling ideas regarding power, authority, and obedience.

The Academic Context of Bennion's Book

Lowell Bennion pursued doctoral studies in Europe from 1930-33. Beginning with a summer session at the University of Erlangen, Germany,[9] he continued at the University of Vienna,[10] regarded at the time as the premier intellectual center of Europe, and perhaps the world. It was in Professor Erich Voegelin's sociology of religion seminar that Bennion

8. Women, of course, have no authority in the LDS church. This is not to say that LDS women do not have power in the church. Power, however, is different from authority. There are many ways in which women exercise power in the church—a topic which merits more attention than this footnote allows. I wish to acknowledge here that both Sterling McMurrin and Armand Mauss expressed concerns regarding my point that women have no authority in the LDS church. Sterling's concern was directed at women having authority in the Relief Society, and reflects perhaps his knowledge of notable women in the church and of the Relief Society before the correlation of church programs. When the Relief Society had its own buildings, for instance, published its own magazine, and raised its own funds, members of that organization experienced a measure of autonomy that is without parallel today. Sterling's concern also reflected his high regard for the abilities and competence of women. Armand Mauss pointed out that Relief Society presidents have delegated authority, which is consistent with Weber's conceptualization of authority. I agree that, in theory, delegated authority is certainly consistent with the role of the Relief Society president. In practice, however, bishops delegate tasks to Relief Society presidents, and I am not sure of the extent to which the women perceive themselves as receiving authority. Additionally, it is not uncommon even for Relief Society presidents to be supervised, taught, advised, and instructed by a variety of men in the ward/stake who presume to do so solely on the basis that they hold the priesthood and the women do not. My observation that women have no authority in the church is also based on the fact that, as many general authorities point out, the only recognized authority in the church is priesthood authority, which automatically exempts women.

9. In the "Academic Career" sketch in his dissertation, Bennion notes that he received a "certificate for successful participation in Professor Moeller's seminar in political economy."

10. Bennion also attended "lectures and discussions" at Geneva in August and September 1931 at meetings of the League of Nations.

first encountered Weber's thought.[11] Voegelin, a legal/political philosopher, was a Weberian scholar and had been a student of Alfred Weber, Max's brother.[12] In a 1992 interview Bennion recalled how Weber had immediately captured his interest. He felt that Max Weber had the most creative mind he had ever encountered. Weber's "distinction between the nature of empirical reality and values" immediately seized Bennion's attention because, he said, "It makes for clearer thinking if you separate factual propositions from value judgments. Weber did that consistently."[13]

The rise of pro-Nazi sentiment in Austria created an increasingly oppressive milieu for American students as well as for intellectuals in general. Many professors at the University of Vienna had to flee Austria for the United States and other countries before the end of the decade; Voegelin was among them. Bennion also left Austria, completing his dissertation at the University of Strasbourg under Maurice Halbwachs who, as Bennion recalls,[14] then chaired the sociology department. Bennion had contacted him in advance, making arrangements to complete the dissertation under his guidance. Bennion remembers Halbwachs as "a nice person, kind, cooperative, and gracious in every way."[15]

Bennion's relationship with Halbwachs, who had studied with Henri Bergson and Emile Durkheim, raises the question of what interconnections existed between German and French sociology. Few scholars have emphasized connections between these schools in this period; however, Bennion's dissertation cited two journal articles that Halbwachs had written about Weber and his work.[16] Halbwachs strongly encouraged his student to write the dissertation in English—Bennion would have pre-

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11. In the "Academic Career" sketch, Bennion says of his Vienna studies that he received "certificates for active participation" in Verdross's seminar in legal philosophy and Voegelin's seminar in sociology. Bennion remembers Voegelin as a brilliant young scholar. Personal conversation, 12 July 1992.

12. See Eric Voegelin, *Autobiographical Reflections*, ed. E. Sandoz (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), and Marianne Weber, *Max Weber: A Biography*, trans. and ed. Harry Zohn (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1988).

13. Personal conversation, 4 Aug. 1992.

14. Ibid.

15. An interesting aside here: Bennion remembers that Halbwachs was interested in studying how parental ages might influence the sex of children. Halbwachs theorized that if the husband was considerably older than the wife, the chances increased that male children would be conceived. He wanted Bennion to explore this possibility using records of Mormon polygamous families.

16. See Maurice Halbwachs, "Les Origines Puritaines du Capitalisme Moderne," *Revue d'Historie et Philosophie Religieuses*, Mar/Apr. 1925, and "Economistes et Historiens: Max Weber, un Homme, une Oeuvre," *Annales d'Historie Economique et Sociale* 1 (1929). Regrettably, it is beyond the scope of this essay to examine the French influence on Bennion's rendering of Weber.

ferred to write in German, as he knew the language and could have avoided the difficulties of translating some of Weber's concepts into English. Bennion believed that Halbwachs anticipated that a dissertation in English would spread Weber's ideas to a larger English-speaking audience.[17]

In December 1933, at age twenty-five, Bennion was awarded the degree of Docteur D'Universite de Strasbourg, *avec mention honorable* (with honorable mention). Although he successfully defended the dissertation, Bennion recalls that some members of his committee "had problems with Weber" and challenged him on some points—but not on his interpretation of Weber.[18] It was common practice at that time to publish University of Strasbourg dissertations; of the 100 copies of *Max Weber's Methodology* printed, only a few were distributed to select libraries in the United States.[19]

Some American sociologists soon became aware of Bennion's work. *Max Weber's Methodology* is referenced by Howard Becker and Harry E. Barnes in their (1938; 1961) *Social Thought: From Lore to Science, Vol. II*.[20] Talcott Parsons (1949, 26) referred to Bennion's and his own work as "the most comprehensive secondary accounts in English" for Weber's sociology of religion. In a 1935 letter Becker outlined for Bennion his sugges-

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17. Personal conversation, 10 July 1992. As an aside, Bennion explains that he studied in German, wrote the dissertation in English, and defended it in French.

18. Personal conversation, 6 Aug. 1992.

19. Library copies have been located in the following American institutions: University of Utah, University of Wisconsin at Madison, University of California at Berkeley, the Johns Hopkins University, University of Arizona, and Yale University. Recently a copy was found at Harvard University (I am indebted to James Evans for this find). International locations include: University of Alberta, University of Barcelona, University of Helsinki, and Lunds and Uppsala universities in Sweden. I welcome information about other copies. Library copies could not be found in Austria or Germany. For political, economic, and social reasons which reflect the turmoil of the time, a book about Max Weber—especially one written in English and published in France—would not have been procured in the 1930s in those countries. For this information I am indebted to Professor John Rohrbaugh and to the library personnel of the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis in Austria. Copies were also located in the personal libraries of Leonard Arrington and Sterling M. McMurrin; the latter copy is now in the possession of Mary Lythgoe Bradford, Bennion's biographer.

20. A Becker and Barnes's endnote (lvi) described sources for discussion of Weber's methodology. They identified Theodore Abel's *Systematic Sociology in Germany* (1929) as one of the best brief discussions to be found in English. They added that "Weber himself gave no single connected exposition; his methodological analyses are scattered here and there in writings called forth by special occasions." Alexander von Schelting was described as the outstanding secondary source for Weber's methodology, but "a trifle prolix and involved; absolutely essential for the specialist in systematic sociology, it offers serious difficulties to the uninitiated." They referred to Parsons (1937) as "also a bit difficult, but has the advantage of being in English and being relatively brief," and Bennion as "an excellent elementary presentation. Unfortunately, this is a doctoral dissertation, University of Strasbourg, and only a few copies are to be found in the United States."

tions for an essay on Weber.[21] This letter reveals Becker's regard for Weber as well as his respect for Bennion's knowledge of Weber. Bennion never wrote the essay Becker requested. Even though there is evidence that more sociologists were aware of the Bennion work,[22] it was the book's fate to be lost to American sociology for nearly sixty years.

Due to the vast scholarly attention given to Weber's writings during this century, much of what Bennion included in his interpretation may not be regarded today as uniquely contributing to our understanding of Weber's thought. However, when his dissertation was published in 1933, Bennion's interpretation was not only original, but momentous. Indeed this synthesis of Weber's thinking was a remarkable accomplishment for a young American scholar.

The Significance of *Max Weber's Methodology*

Max Weber's Methodology was written only thirteen years after Weber's death and was influenced by scholars who were contemporaries of Weber. Although he was introduced to Weber's work by Voegelin at the University of Vienna, Bennion wrote the dissertation under Halbwachs—a disciple of Durkheim—at the University of Strasbourg in France.

In the early 1930s Weber was known to American scholars only through the limited translations of economist Frank Knight and sociologist Talcott Parsons.[23] Bennion's work was based on his own translation of the German originals, except for Parsons's translation of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Bennion's text provided an English-language audience with a dynamic understanding of Weber's thought. He analyzed Weber's historical sociology of religion, economics, and politics. He demonstrated a perceptive understanding of Weber's political economy. He gained command of material written in a foreign language as

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21. This and other Bennion correspondence courtesy of Mary Lythgoe Bradford.

22. In a 1937 letter Bennion invited Kimball Young, then at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, to review *Max Weber's Methodology*; in that correspondence Bennion mentioned that Alexander von Schelting and Howard Becker had corresponded with him about it. (Professor Young was a grandson of the Mormon leader Brigham Young and is also known for his 1954 sociological treatment of Mormon polygamy entitled, *Isn't One Wife Enough?)* Louis Wirth, in another letter written in February 1938, when he was associate editor of *The American Journal of Sociology,* indicated that the editors had become aware of the dissertation and wished to review it for the journal. He asked Bennion for a copy, or for information regarding where a copy could be obtained. No review of *Max Weber's Methodology* ever appeared in the *AJS*, or in any other major English language academic journal, and it cannot be confirmed that Wirth ever received a copy of the work.

23. Frank Knight (1927) had translated the collected student notes from Weber's final lectures, *General Economic History,* and Talcott Parsons (1930) had translated *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, both from Allen and Unwin, London.

well as in a "formidable and forbidding" style,[24] aggregated ideas from diverse theoretical and substantive themes, and derived from these the essence of Weber's approach to sociology.[25]

To fully appreciate Bennion's seminal work, one must be aware of a significant conflict in interpretation that surfaced decades after the publication of his dissertation. Weber's thinking, of course, has rightfully enjoyed considerable scholarly attention during this century, sparking differing interpretations of some of his ideas. Only one of these conflicts in the field of sociology is mentioned here. The issue concerns the extent to which Weber viewed power as important in his analyses and interpretations.

Talcott Parsons is widely credited with importing Weber to the United States, and with making him a major figure in American social thought. For decades after Parsons introduced Weber's work in 1937, the Parsonian view of Weber dominated American sociology. Parsons, a structural-functionalist, tended to interpret Weber's ideas in a rather benign sense, focusing on coordination over conflict and on stability over dynamic change.[26] Parsons argued for the similarities in Weber, Durkheim, and others, and considered this convergence to constitute a major revolution in social theory. His view of Weber was openly challenged by sociologists Jere Cohen, Lawrence E. Hazelrigg, and Whitney Pope in a significant work, published in the *American Sociological Review* in 1975.[27] They believed that Parsons's understanding of Weber in American sociology was distorted by Parsons's misinterpretation of the German originals, and they argued for an interpretation of Weber reflecting the centrality of power.

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24. For an informative discussion of the difficulties in Weber's writing style, see H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, ed. and trans., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958; originally published in 1946), v-vii.

25. Bennion's dissertation draws extensively on the following Weber originals: the social science methodology essays from 1903 to 1913, collected as *Gesammelte Aufsaetze zur Wissenschaftslehre;* Parsons's (1930) translation, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism;* the 1915-19 religious-sociological essays on Confucianism and Taoism, Hinduism and Buddhism, and ancient Judaism, collected as *Gesammelte Aufsaetze zur Religionssoziologie;* and the voluminous essays on sociology and sociological methodology, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft,* originally written between 1909-20. Bennion draws only minimally from the collected political writings, *Gesammelte Politische Schriften,* and no references are made to either the early economic essays, *Gesammelte Aufsaetze zur Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte,* or student-collected notes from Weber's final economic history lectures, published as *Wirtschaftsgeschichte.* Absence of this latter source is interesting, since Frank Knight's (1927) English translation, *General Economic History,* was then available.

26. See Talcott Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1949; originally published in 1937).

27. See Jere Cohen, Lawrence E. Hazelrigg, and Whitney Pope, "De-Parsonalizing Weber: A Critique of Parsons' Interpretation of Weber's Sociology," *American Sociological Review* 40 (1975), 2:229-41.

In the meantime other scholars saw more elements of conflict and domination in Weber's ideas than had Parsons. Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills's translations and writings,[28] beginning in the 1940s, reflect this alternative view, as does the seminal work by Reinhold Bendix,[29] published in 1960. Lowell Bennion's account anticipated the insights of Parsons's critics. Contemporary sociologists, recently becoming aware of Bennion's work for the first time, observe that Bennion had, indeed, interpreted Weber correctly.[30] Had Bennion's interpretations received wider currency when they were first published, perhaps Parsons's ideas would not have dominated sociology and related fields so thoroughly.

Bennion's Interpretation of Weber[31]

Bennion's work focused on three areas of Weber's writings: historical methodology, sociology of religion, and sociological methodology. Bennion set the stage for Weber's depth and range of ideas by noting the preliminary distinctions among German sociology ("highly philosophical"), American sociology ("more interested in social problems and institutions"), and French sociology ("combines philosophical orientation with positive research") (5). He portrayed Weber as actively engaged in the "problems and movements of his time" and agreed with "Ernst Troeltsch, who probably knew him best, [that] Max Weber was at heart a statesman" (7). This suggests that Weber's rigorous attention to the problem of objectivity and value neutrality for the social scientist had deep personal roots. For clarity in understanding the vast array of Weber's writings, Bennion divided them into the following five groups:

1. Weber's earliest writings dealing chiefly with economic history and economic problems.
2. His articles on historical methodology which he commenced in 1903, most notably his essays published as *Gesammelte Aufsaetze zur Wissenschaftslehre.*
3. His religious-sociological writings, published in three volumes entitled *Gesammelte Aufsaetze zur Religionssoziologie.* Bennion notes here that these works represent Weber's "ambitious but unfinished attempt to treat the business ethic of all important religious movements" (9).
4. His sociology proper and application of his methodology in historical social reality.

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28. See Gerth and Mills.

29. See Reinhold Bendix, *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1960).

30. Personal conversations with sociologist Richard H. Hall at the State University of New York at Albany, and with Weberian scholars Robert Jackall of Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts, and Arthur Vidich at The New School for Social Research in New York City.

31. Unattributed page references are to *Max Weber's Methodology.*

5. This group contains two volumes: *Gesammelte Politische Schriften*, a collection of lectures and essays on political questions, and *Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, comprised of his last lectures in Munich reconstructed by notes of his students (10).

While the entire dissertation is rich in scope and ideas, I focus our attention here on the problem of obedience, authoritative rule, and power in relationships. I begin with the section of *Max Weber's Methodology* which deals with Weber's sociology of religion.

In his discussion Bennion examines Weber's now well-known thesis connecting Protestant asceticism and modern capitalism. He shows how Weber compared Calvinism, Pietism, Methodism, and the Baptist Sects for their varied acceptance of a worldly calling and practical rational conduct. Here we see that Weber's concern is to understand individuals, not groups or institutions. The individual is clearly the unit of analysis for Weber, and his focus on individual action and meaning, as his unit of analysis, is unambiguous.

> Weber's sociology aims to understand the meaningful social conduct of individuals. ... It is the core of his sociological work and the point of departure for all of his research ... the acts of individuals and groups of individuals, and the explanations of these acts, are Weber's major interest, not geographical conditions nor the factors of production (58).

Weber's concepts of types of authority appear in the discussion of his sociology of religion. Here the emphasis on power relations in human conduct is plainly articulated. Weber even categorized political states according to type of "authoritative rule." Note the convincing focus on individual conduct and obedience as the defining characteristic of types of government and political states:

> To understand social and economic organizations one must comprehend human conduct because the former are but sequential organizations (*Ablaeufe*) of the latter. For example, Weber classifies states, not according to their form of government, monarchical, democratic, plutocratic, etc., but according to the type of conduct which makes a given state with a definite type of government possible. In Weber's political writings he maintains that the state is founded on power, on the rule of man over man. To understand the state one must comprehend the basis upon which this rule and power are founded. Weber gives three possible types: (1) the state founded on tradition, such as the patrimonial state; (2) the state founded on "charisma" exemplified by the priests and prophets; (3) the state founded on legality, i.e. the democratic state. In the last analysis such power, i.e. the power which demands obedience, is based on human conduct and disposition which in turn may be influenced by any number of forces from economic, religious, or magical sources (58-59).

Bennion explains that religions can best be understood

> in their full development as a type of authoritative group (*herrschaftsverband*). They represent authoritative associations which enjoy a monopoly of authority supported by the ability to give or withhold salvation (*heilsguter*). All religious and political groups are based in the last analysis on authority or power. They may best be understood by ascertaining the legitimate foundation of this power, or the means by which the authority is maintained (87).

The types of power Weber recognized are the now familiar: (a) charismatic authority ("the external or internal rule of man over man made possible by the faith of the ruled in this supernatural power of the leader"); (b) traditional authority ("the traditionalistic rule of man over man is based on the faith in that which has always been"); and (c) rational-legal authority ("based on impersonal rules and norms. Its typical representative is the bureaucratic rule made possible by the victory of the formal juridic rationalism of the Occident") (88).

Later in the book Bennion reaffirms that the individual is the unit or level of analysis. "It is amply clear that the individual and his social conduct are the crux of Weber's interpretative sociology" (157). Two fundamental themes of Weber's sociology are indisputable: the process of rationalization "as a guide in interpreting social relations ... (regardless) whether one studies his sociology of religion, sociology of economic activity or political relations" (158); and an "emphasis on authoritative rule (*herrschaft*)" (159). Regarding this second fundamental characteristic of Weber's sociology, Bennion notes that:

> Social relations are maintained by the rule of man over man regardless of the basis upon which this relationship originates or is perpetuated. In Weber's sociology of religion, just as much as in his sociology of the state or city, he seeks to uncover the nature and basis of this authoritative rule. Thus his religious writings deal primarily not with doctrines and institutions but with the struggle for power between prophet and priest, between them and secular authorities or between them and laymen. His sociology is an attempt to establish a theory of authoritative rule (159).

It is certain that Weber sees rational-legal authoritative rule as central to all organizations, including those in the private sector, public sector, ecclesiastical institutions, and not-for-profit organizations:

> For Weber, the development of modern forms of human associations, whether they be in the form of a church, state or economic enterprise, has been identical with the continuous increase of bureaucratic administration. The Roman Catholic Church, the government of the United States of America, and modern capitalistic enterprises illustrate Weber's point. The bureau-

> cratic system is the nucleus of the modern state and modern capitalism, although the two have different origins. Every administration or rule of the masses is sure to be bureaucratic. Even a socialistic state would have to be bureaucratic to maintain order and a standard of living (161).

One of Weber's essential characteristics of the rational, or legal, type of authoritative rule is that the relationship of individuals to authority is formal and impersonal. This is not the case with traditional and charismatic types of authoritative rule.

> Some of the essential characteristics of this legal type are the following: (1) new laws or norms may be issued from time to time and demand obedience from all those within the sphere of jurisdiction; (2) the ruler is also bound by the norms which he executes; (3) the ruled are not subjects of the ruler but are his colleagues, fellow-members or fellow-citizens in a society, church or state and they do not obey him but obey the laws or norms; (4) in the execution of law the administrator is restricted in his application of compulsion by a constitution, rules, etc.; (5) the execution of norms under legal rule calls for a rational ordered manner of administration, a *bureaucracy* (160-61).

In contrast with rational-legal authority, the traditional type of authoritative rule has "legitimacy ... based on belief in the sanctity of orders and powers of rulers by virtue of their having always existed" (161). Relations between ruler and ruled "are personal ones based on piety towards the ruler ... [the ruled] give their allegiance not to impersonal norms but to the ruler himself" (162). According to Weber, there are several types of traditional authoritative rule, including gerontocracies, patriarchies, patrimonies and sultanates, and feudalism (162).

The final type of authoritative rule discussed is charismatic, described as "the *ausseralltaegliche* quality of a person which demands obedience" (163). This quality is innate, cannot be acquired, and may be real or imaginary; "it is only essential that the ruled believe in it and order their conduct accordingly" (163). The relationship between ruler and ruled is personal, and charismatic rule is revolutionary by nature. "The more charismatic the rule, the more antagonistic it is to economic activity" (164). Types of charismatic authority include "inheritable charisma," believed to be in the blood (as in the clan or in lineage), and charisma attached to the office held by an individual. One problem associated with charismatic rule is succession of leadership; the other problem, which Bennion states in a footnote, was Hitler's problem at the time (1933): "Men who win great following by sheer dint of their leadership (a type of charisma) find it necessary, once they have power, to satisfy the material interests of their followers. Their success in political spheres depends largely on their ability to do this" (164).

This section of Bennion's discussion concludes by reinforcing the

fundamental quality of power in Weber's analyses, noting that "Weber's types of authoritative rule illustrate ... his approach to social relations" (164). Bennion also maintained that these particular types of authoritative rule are not meant by Weber to be all-inclusive.

Bennion builds a convincing case for the interpretation that the age-old question "of the rule of man over man," of authoritative rule, is fundamental to Weber's thinking. Why people obey is the central problem found in Weber's writings on religion and politics, as well as bureaucracy. Clearly Weber's ideas of bureaucracy, hierarchy, and power have implications for any authoritarian ecclesiastical institution, and thus for the LDS church.

Issues for Any Authoritarian Institution and for the LDS Church

Although the scope of Bennion's work on Weber did not address bureaucracy directly, the centrality of power in human relationships was clearly established. Drawing from Bennion's rendering of Weber as well as Weber's ideas relating to organizations, we see that three major related ideas are important for authoritarian institutions: first, the structural context of hierarchy of authority in bureaucratic structure; second, the centrality of power in human relationships; and, third, the question of authoritative rule, or "Why do people obey?"

It is evident that Weber identifies power as fundamental to human conduct, and the question of the "rule of man over man" is pivotal to Weber's analyses. In addition, Weber's conceptualization of power is the basis of bureaucratic organization and hierarchy of authority. Important concerns are raised regarding the relationship of individuals to organizations: types of power inherent in organizations, how power is expressed and how it is resisted, safeguards instituted against the illegal and unacceptable wielding of power, and the consequences of the perception of power. These are just some of the compelling questions for the LDS church—indeed, for all organizations—that can be informed by early Weberian insights.

Weber's ideas thus form the basis for understanding hierarchical relationship dynamics in organizations. A few of these power dynamics are considered here: first, hierarchy "subordinates" some people and "superiorates" or elevates others; second, hierarchy prompts approval-seeking behaviors; and, third, hierarchy can foster unquestioned obedience.

The first hierarchical dynamic is the fact that, from the perspective of the individual, hierarchical structures "subordinate" some people and "superiorate" others in terms of social position as well as social status, or perceived social worth. As one ascends the organizational hierarchy,

one's social status increases. Secular organizations reinforce this perception by granting vast differences in institutional rewards between those at lower levels and those at higher levels. One need only look at office space and furniture, parking spaces, as well as salary levels to see these differences.

Within the LDS church these differences are apparent and even magnified because of priesthood power being the authority to act in God's name. Those higher in the hierarchy have greater authority and power than those lower in the hierarchy. The implication that the Brethren are closer to God than anyone else on the earth is not uncommon. General authorities who visit local congregations are spoken of with reverence and awe.[32]

The second hierarchical relationship dynamic is approval-seeking. The "superioration," or elevation, of individuals according to organizational strata may prompt approval-seeking behavior on the part of subordinates. This view is certainly current with modern managers, who observe that there is no such thing as "non-evaluative interpersonal interaction" with someone above them in the hierarchy. Even trips to the water fountain, when one encounters the boss, carry the weight of judgment.

One of the many consequences of this dynamic of hierarchical relationships is that "subordinates" may have incentive to engage in behaviors which they think will meet the approval of those at higher levels. Direct orders are not necessary—only the impression that an action will fulfill the desire of those at higher levels.

While everyday instances of this sort of behavior abound, perhaps one of the most dramatic well-known examples is taken from history: the murder of Archbishop Thomas à Becket in 1170 by four subordinates of King Henry II. The king's knights apparently were inspired to take action by a comment from the king in which he indicated his wish to be rid of this upstart priest.[33] No direct command was given—nor was one needed. And that is the point.

This dynamic is readily seen in corporations and other secular organizations and is particularly fostered in the LDS church. Approval is very important in church callings. Members do not fill out job applications and apply for positions; no skill requirements are explicit; there is no pro-

32. I note that this dynamic has an even more pervasive impact on women, who are excluded from having authority by their gender. Gender issues and patriarchal hierarchy is a rich and sometimes painful area of consideration; while important, these issues are beyond the scope of this essay.

33. This historical event is portrayed in T. S. Eliot's 1935 play, *Murder in the Cathedral.*

fessional development for career tracks within the church.[34] Instead, the recipient of a calling has to have met the approval of the priesthood leaders who issue the callings. This situation is ripe for the development of approval-seeking behaviors for those who seek to ascend the hierarchy.

Perhaps recent painful events in the church may be considered from this perspective. The disciplinary sanctioning of LDS scholars and writers, while portrayed as local actions, may be the result of approval-seeking behaviors on the parts of local priesthood leaders. It is possible, for instance, that while the First Presidency may not wish for such severe sanctions on some of these members, the local leaders believe that by leveling the sanctions, they are merely following the wishes of the First Presidency. Once accomplished, it is very difficult for the First Presidency to dismiss the actions of local leaders.

Further, some of the actions of the predominantly LDS Utah state legislature may be considered in light of approval-seeking. During the 1996 session, legislative leaders held a "secret meeting"[35] regarding gay clubs in high schools. According to news reports, legislative leaders distributed anti-homosexual materials to legislators and attempted to swear them to secrecy regarding the meeting. While there is no evidence that the general authorities of the church sought to influence members of the legislature in this regard,[36] it is entirely plausible that the legislators' vehement stands against homosexuality reflected the previously-expressed views of church leaders.

The third hierarchical relationship dynamic is unquestioned obedience to orders from those in higher positions. Weber's question of "Why do people obey?" is immensely important for people in organizations. Corporations and public agencies alike abound with examples of people obeying orders with which they do not agree. To some extent this is appropriate; indeed, it is a part of the manager's job to obey what the boss deems necessary. However, at times real moral dilemmas are encountered.[37]

Scholars consider this issue in various contexts, usually prompted by

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34. Even so, examination of the backgrounds of many of the general authorities reveals what may be considered implicit career tracks.

35. This meeting violated Utah's Open and Public Meetings Act. The ACLU brought the case to court, and a judgment against the Utah State Senate was issued by Third District judge J. Dennis Frederick on 19 February 1997.

36. This according to Senator Scott Howell (D), Utah State Senate Minority Leader, who maintains that the general authorities do not directly influence legislators in any way. Howell, a legislator of fine reputation, has discussed with the Brethren their concerns regarding the predominance of the Republican party in Utah, according to published reports.

37. For a seminal presentation of moral dilemmas of managers in organizations, from a Weberian/sociological perspective, see Robert Jackall, *Moral Mazes: The World of Corporate Managers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

compelling events. For example, the world has been horrified by the Holocaust and by the attempts of the Third Reich to implement the Final Solution to "the Jewish problem." One defense offered by Third Reich officers on trial for war crimes was that they were merely obeying orders. Particularly striking in this regard is the much-publicized trial of Adolph Eichmann, indicted and tried in 1961 in Jerusalem for a variety of crimes towards six million Jews and others. Before his trial Eichmann was subjected to several psychiatric examinations and found to be entirely normal, with no psychological indications of pathology; he openly professed that he held nothing against Jews. Eichmann pleaded, "Not guilty, in the sense of the indictment," claiming that Hitler's will was law in the Third Reich and he was thus engaged in lawful behavior. His defense further argued that he was only obeying the orders of his superiors.[38] Hannah Arendt's observation was that indeed Eichmann could have been shipping vegetables throughout Europe instead of Jews to their deaths. She also posed the frightening possibility that any vegetable shipper could have become an Eichmann. Eichmann, of course, was found guilty of the majority of crimes and was sentenced to death.

In the early 1960s the experiments of Dr. Stanley Milgram at Yale University were designed to explore further the very question raised by the behavior of officers of the Third Reich: Why do people obey? These experiments are well known, his results chilling: 68 percent of subjects continued to obey orders, believing they were administering perhaps lethal electrical shocks to another human being.[39] The Eichmann defense and the Milgram experiments echo Weber's central concern for the nature of obedience in human action, an issue which is arguably central to management and leadership in any organization.

The issue of obedience to authority is of particular importance to Latter-day Saints as the Brethren stress obedience so fully. Discussions of what members should do if asked by "someone in authority" to do something possibly morally wrong are not uncommon. I recall my time as a graduate student in Lowell Bennion's Sociology of Religion class at the University of Utah when he asked LDS students the question: If the prophet told you to do something you knew was morally wrong, would you do it? As a recent convert to the church from the Southern Baptist denomination, I was astounded and dismayed to hear the resounding arguments from students affirming their willingness to obey in these circumstances, arguing that they would not be responsible for any wrongdoing.

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38. For several compelling accounts of the Eichmann trial, see Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: The Viking Press, 1963); and Peter Papadatos, *The Eichmann Trial* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964).

39. See Stanley Milgram, "Behavioral Study of Obedience," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 67:371-78.

It is important to recognize that Weber's conceptualizations were not provoked by horrific wartime activities nor by ambitious scientific experiments—instead, Weber's disquietude was aroused by an understanding of social life and human interaction. Weber's insights into bureaucracy and hierarchy of authority effectively bring the strong concerns for obedience into virtually every organization—and into every ward and branch of the LDS church. His thinking informs our consideration of fundamental conflicts between an individual's moral sense and orders, real or perceived, from those at higher levels.[40]

Basically, Weber's writings help us to see that organizations, bureaucracies, hierarchies, and so forth provide situations and positions in which individuals find themselves, often with severe constraints. Weber, in fact, expressed deep concerns about managers in hierarchical positions. Recognizing the compelling nature of organizational situations for individuals, he wrote that the manager in a hierarchical position "cannot squirm out of the apparatus in which he is harnessed ... he is chained to his activity by his entire material and ideal existence ... he is only a single cog in an ever-moving mechanism."[41] Weber "deplored" this type of person as a "petty creature, lacking in heroism, human spontaneity, and inventiveness."[42] It is clear from Weber that each situation involves power dynamics. In this context managers and subordinates work and relate to one another.

Weber recognized that organizations and hierarchies are not moral or immoral in and of themselves—they just are. Individuals occupying positions therein are in very restraining situations, and when people respond to the expectations imposed by the hierarchy, they are, in fact, behaving rather predictably. While not justifying individual behavior in organizations which can be described as immoral—or what Mormons would term as "unrighteous dominion"—it is clear that Weber understood such behavior. And so did Lowell Bennion.

Armed with this penetrating understanding of situations for individuals in organizations, Lowell Bennion could defy orders "from above" while continuing to love and support the church. Bennion, like Weber, was capable of understanding the situations of individuals who were not able to stand up to an institution for their beliefs. He understood well that people whose moral sense fails them in organizations are often in considerable pain as a result. The fact is Bennion—like Weber—understood the situations of individuals in organizations often better than did the individuals themselves.

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40. For a classic depiction of the inevitable conflict between bureaucratic organization and adult moral development, see Chris Argyris, *Personality and Organization* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957).

41. See Gerth and Mills, 228.

42. Ibid., 50.

Weber's Thinking in Bennion's Life

Unknown to young Bennion when he was writing his dissertation, the time would come when he would have his own struggles with the dynamics of the LDS church and draw strength and understanding from Weber's insights. It was the church that took him to Germany and allowed him to be introduced to Weber; it was work in the church that drew him away from a promising academic career advancing Weber among American sociologists; and it was while he was asked to stop working for the church as director of the University of Utah Institute of Religion that he met his greatest challenge in understanding the church.[43]

Clearly, Bennion's religious background played a central role in his relationship with Weber's ideas. The fact that Bennion applied Weber to Mormonism in his dissertation is but one example. More interesting, however, is the paradoxical role of Bennion's religious commitment, which took him to Germany, enabling him to learn German and to become introduced to Weber's theories. It was this same commitment that encouraged his career track to the church education system—away from advancing Weber through university teaching and research.

Born in 1908 to a prominent Utah family, Bennion was always a devout Mormon. His studies in Europe commenced after he served a mission in Germany for the church. In keeping with the requirements of the mission, he mastered the German language. He also read, in the original German, writers such as Kant, Goethe, and Schiller, as well as the classic works in world religions. By the time his mission was completed, he was fluent in German and immersed in the intellectual richness of German thought.

After his mission, Lowell's wife, Merle, joined him in Europe where he commenced his Ph.D. work. When they returned to the U.S. in 1934, Bennion wanted to teach at a university, but jobs were scarce during those Depression years. When he was asked to assist in developing his church's education system, he agreed, intending to remain in this position only a few years. He directed institutes of religion adjacent to university campuses, responding to the intellectual and spiritual needs of college students.

Bennion had wanted to pursue his interest in sociology and Weber. As he indicated in a 1937 letter to sociologist Kimball Young: "Utah sociologists, as far as I know them, are too engrossed in other fields to give Max Weber more than passing notice." At that time American sociologists had a limited understanding of Weber's work. Despite having the attention of eminent American sociologists like Becker, Young, Wirth, and

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43. For a thorough discussion of this time in Bennion's life, see Bradford, *Lowell L. Bennion*.

Parsons, Bennion—with characteristic humility—later reflected that he did not consider himself to be properly schooled in contemporary American sociology; he had returned from Europe with a command of German and French sociology—but not American sociology.[44]

While working in the church educational system, Bennion designed and taught courses that helped students wrestle with issues regarding tensions posed by institutionalized religion and hierarchical dynamics, as well as with other intellectual and spiritual concerns. He knew how bureaucracies and hierarchies work. He wrote extensively,[45] helping Mormons cherish the beauty of their religion as they experienced the constraints of church bureaucracy. Many of his books were used as lesson manuals in the church. He became known as a champion of compassion, tolerance, and service, consistently defending the individual against authoritarianism. He was a liberal who differed with some church leaders on important issues, notably the denying priesthood to males of African descent.

Finally, in the early 1960s these differences led to his resignation from church employment. This was a very painful time for Bennion, his family, and his students. In dealing with his personal and intellectual tensions with the church, Bennion, by his own admission, found wisdom in Weber's perspective—especially Weber's separation of value judgments from factual propositions. "I realized that often what the Church presents as factual propositions are actually value judgments. This distinction has helped me a great deal."[46] After his resignation, he continued to serve the church in many lay leadership positions, including bishop. His faith in the Mormon gospel never wavered, nor did his devotion to the church. His life and teachings demonstrated the ability to love the church beyond any struggles he had with it.

Bennion went on to pursue another career. He joined the administration of the University of Utah as Associate Dean of Students and was given a faculty appointment in sociology. For a decade he taught the sociology of religion, sociology of knowledge, and a seminar on Max Weber.

Weber's writings had addressed issues inherent in tensions between individual autonomy and organizational control. Concepts of authority, bureaucracy, hierarchy, and leadership pivot on this tension. For decades in church education, Bennion had devoted his life to helping students deal with these organizational issues as they relate to the church. He did the same at the University of Utah. In the key concepts which undergird much of Bennion's thinking on these issues, one recognizes echoes of Weberian thinking and understanding.

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44. Personal conversation, 5 Aug. 1992.

45. Bennion wrote fifteen books from 1933-90, twenty manuals for LDS church classes from 1934-72, and countless articles and speeches.

46. Personal conversation, 5 Aug. 1992.

The first concept is that bureaucratic organization is a necessary part of modern culture. Bennion recognized with Weber that Western culture and civilization is distinctive in its rationality ("reckonability") and elimination of magic and superstition from the world. Several indications of this are: modern industrial capitalism ("cold, calculating, reckoning way in which people go about making a profit"),[47] experimental science ("verifiability, idea of cause-effect"), legal-rational government ("in contrast to traditional and charismatic government, legal-rational government is based on laws accepted by the people, impersonal to a great extent, contractual in nature"), and bureaucracy ("a form of administration in government, business, education, and science"). Bureaucracy, then, was an inevitable development in modern culture, and the bureaucratic elements in religion were a part of modern industrial civilization.

Second, Bennion was aware that without an organization, religion in any form could not exist. A religion may begin with a charismatic[48] leader, but is only able to survive through institutionalization.[49] The charismatic leader inspires people to follow, which is difficult to maintain over time. "In religion, it exists only at moments of origination in its full-blown quality."[50] Furthermore, leaders die. "Once the charismatic leader is gone, institutionalization sets in."[51] Again, from sociology of religion class notes: "Religion begins as a very personal experience, filled with religious and ethical insights. Then the leaders begin to share these with other people, develop a discipleship, and a ritual, etc. The experience becomes institutionalized."[52] As Bennion would point out in class, even those who reject institutionalized religion and embrace the scriptures are indebted to religious organizations—without them, the scriptures would not exist, and, in fact, Holy Writ is an expression and product of institutionalized religion.

Third, Bennion, like Weber, wrestled with the issue of "authoritative rule." Bennion distinguished between personal authority and impersonal authority. Impersonal authority is possible in a legal-rational system and in bureaucracy. In his 1988 work, *Do Justly and Love Mercy,* Bennion's

47. These and other unattributed quotes in this paragraph are taken from my course notes of Lowell Bennion's Sociology 190 course, Sociology of Religion, 31 Oct. 1968, University of Utah.

48. Charismatic leadership is a Weberian concept, presented in class as one of three types of leadership or authoritative rule.

49. The idea of the survival of religion possible only through institutionalization was also articulated by sociologist Thomas O'Dea. O'Dea also pointed out that while religion needs institutionalization in order to survive, religion also suffers from the dilemmas necessarily fostered by institutionalization.

50. Class notes of 8 Oct. 1968.

51. Class notes of 15 Oct. 1968.

52. Class notes of 8 Oct. 1968.

ideas echo his rendition of Weber. Bennion pointed out that some form of government is necessary over all groups of people—otherwise there is anarchy, which is destructive—and that "Government takes on many forms, all of which can be reduced to personal or impersonal rule" (69). He discusses why personal rule is undesirable—one reason is that few people can be trusted with power. Bennion proceeds to advocate impersonal rule "or government by law, for it avoids the pitfalls of personal rule" (71-72). Bennion continues here to discuss authority in the church, which can be "exercised in a personal or impersonal spirit" (72). The organization of the church, however, is precisely what makes impersonal rule possible. While there are imperfections associated with impersonal rule, Bennion preferred this to the alternative. Thus Bennion understood that authority in organizations was inevitable, even desirable.

Finally, Bennion helped students understand that there is a distinction between the church and the gospel. The gospel is ultimate truth which is grasped only in part by individuals. The church is a human organization which expresses and perpetuates the known aspects of the gospel. It is the means to the end, not the end in and of itself. "Men do not exist for the sake of the Church. The Church is an instrument, a means of bringing to pass the welfare and salvation of men."[53] Bennion's clarity here is apparent in his 1955 Sunday school manual, *Introduction to the Gospel*:

> The Church teaches theology, but is itself not to be confused with theology. Likewise, the Church promotes the religious life, but is itself not religion. We study theology and practice religion in and through the Church, but it is helpful if we distinguish the Church from both of these ... The Church is a social institution. Social institutions, such as the family, the government, a fraternity or lodge, a business corporation or a school, have three very essential characteristics: People, Purpose, and Organization. ... Churches vary in the type and extent of their organizational structure, but they must have some (205-206).

The bureaucracy of the church is subjected to the same dynamics which characterize any organization and which should not be confused with the beauty of religion.

These four points do not exhaust the ways in which Bennion drew on Weber. They are, however, central to understanding Bennion's view of the role of organization in religion. Combined with Bennion's philosophical and epistemological awareness of the limitations inherent in different ways of knowing,[54] these ideas inspired by Weber provided rich re-

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53. Lowell Bennion, *Introduction to the Gospel* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1955), 208.

54. See especially his 1959 work, *Religion and the Pursuit of Truth*, published in Salt Lake City by Deseret Book Company.

sources for Bennion in his own personal and intellectual struggle to accept the good in religious institutions despite all their foibles.

After about a decade, Bennion left the university to pursue another career: the alleviation of human suffering. He assumed the position of executive director of the Salt Lake Area Community Services Council. In an address before the Utah Sociological Society in 1982, at the age of seventy-four, he summarized his activities as head of that nonprofit social agency:

> We now operate a food bank, do chore services for the elderly and handicapped, make function-fashionable clothing for the handicapped, train quadriplegics in independent living, recruit thousands of volunteers, maintain an information and referral center, and enable senior citizens to obtain dentures and eyeglasses at greatly reduced cost.[55]

His efforts inspired the development of the Lowell L. Bennion Community Service Center at the University of Utah, which organizes several thousand students to engage in service activities throughout the world. He received dozens of honors bestowed by national organizations as well as by the Utah legislature. In his advanced years he continued to carry food to those in need, personally ministering to the elderly, the lonely, and the afflicted.

Bennion's career as a sociologist began in the social context of Mormonism and the Mormon church. His sociology was not merely an abstract body of knowledge; it was a methodology for making sense of the real "troubles" of one's life, coming to terms with one's values, and understanding one's role vis-à-vis the church and other "objective" situations of group conduct. It was a way to help Mormons appreciate and relate to their church as an ecclesiastical bureaucracy, while embracing dearly-held religious truths.

Conclusion

Lowell Bennion's 1933 interpretation of Weber, supported by later Weberian scholars, places power in human relationships as critical to Weber's thought. While Weber's concepts of bureaucracy and hierarchy of authority are well known, his views regarding power relations among individuals in hierarchical bureaucracies have not been widely acknowledged. Adding the element of Weber's power conceptualizations to his components of bureaucracy brings dynamism and richness to considerations of bureaucracy.

In 1933 Bennion presented Weber in a clear and comprehensive fash-

55. Lowell Bennion, "My Odyssey with Sociology," in *The Best of Lowell L. Bennion: Selected Writings: 1928-1988*, ed. Eugene England (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1988), 50.

ion. A wider familiarity with Bennion could have made it possible for American scholars to understand Weber's concerns regarding power and obedience in organizations. We can be reasonably sure, as well, that Bennion would have been a prominent and defining figure in the field of sociology.[56]

As we have seen, Bennion tested Weber's ideas emotionally as well as intellectually. Four decades after the publication of his dissertation, Weberian scholars affirmed the correctness of Bennion's interpretation, giving us a glimpse of the prominence in the field of sociology that was sacrificed by Bennion's devotion to the LDS church. Even more important, Bennion's ability to gracefully meet painful conflict with the church—and remain devoted to it—also demonstrated the usefulness of Weber's thinking for those who experience difficulty with organizations.

With his seminal concepts of authority, bureaucracy, hierarchy, and leadership, Weber had elucidated compelling issues inherent in tensions between individual autonomy and organizational control. These issues addressed one of Bennion's central concerns: How does a person reconcile obedience to authority with individual integrity? How does an individual take responsibility for one's actions while being committed to an authoritarian organization, the leaders of which lay claim to receiving revelation and expect to be obeyed? In past years he was pressed specifically on some questions, such as: How can you stay in the church while it denies the priesthood to blacks? Or how can you still give allegiance to the church after it has treated you so shabbily? In a revealing metaphor Bennion would respond that membership in the church is like a marriage: one may have disagreements with one's spouse but one does not obtain a divorce. In much the same way, Latter-day Saints may have disagreements with the church, but they do not necessarily leave it.[57] Notice here the expectation that members will have disagreements with the church. While this metaphor may break down in important ways, when coupled with his penetrating understanding of the role of organizations in religion, it served him well.

Bennion drew from Weber a profound comprehension of the inherent characteristics of organizations, complete with their amoral aspects and diminution of individuals. Armed with this understanding, Bennion's

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56. While this assertion is purely speculative, some scholars—namely Arthur Vidich, Robert Jackall, Richard Hall, the late Thomas O'Dea (see Bradford, *Lowell L. Bennion*, 227), as well as Sterling McMurrin—have expressed this view.

57. In the late 1960s, during my days as his graduate student and teaching assistant, Bennion and I had many candid conversations. I had recently converted to the LDS church and was anxious to learn all I could from this wise and gentle man. In that spirit, at times I would press him on these issues, and he reminded me of that metaphor on more than one occasion.

life and thought provides a model for "remaining married" to the church. For Latter-day Saints who have abiding faith in the gospel and who struggle with the tensions and organizational/individual issues here discussed, this model may include understanding the following: (1) the role of bureaucratic organizations in modern civilization; (2) the need for religion to have an organization in order to survive; (3) the inevitability of issues of authority which characterize any human group; and (4) the differences between the church as an organization—filled with imperfect people—and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This important knowledge may not be sufficient for many of us who struggle. There is yet another component to the model which may be drawn from Bennion's life: the gospel itself. It seems that his very nature inherently rejected any pretense of perfection and embraced all occasions for compassion, acceptance, and forgiveness. Perhaps the necessary piece of the model, then, is his insistence on living Christlike attributes regardless of what other individuals may do or even what the church may do. All of these elements converged in his life and nurtured the ability to be generous and patient with a necessarily imperfect church, while remaining devoted and faithful to the principles of the Savior and to the organization which perpetuates his teachings.