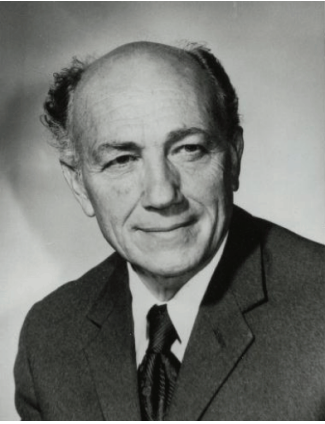


LOWELL L. BENNION



Lowell Bennion is recognized as one of the finest practical philosophers Utah has produced in the twentieth century. He was born on 26 July 1908 and raised in Salt Lake City. He received his B.A. degree from the University of Utah in 1928 and a Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Strasbourg in 1933. He is the author of dozens of books and hundreds of essays and lectures that have helped give rational consistency to Mormon thought, have focused it in social morality and service, and have opened it to ecumenical dialogue with other faiths as well as the state and national communities. He has been a courageous, outspoken, and effective foe of religious prejudice and of racism, sexism, and materialism. He has also demonstrated his teachings and inspired thousands of others to follow them through devoted and effective practical humanitarian efforts in his own community and beyond.

Instead of continuing a scholarly career in the sociology of religion, Bennion accepted a call in 1934 as the first Director of the LDS Institute of Religion, adjacent to the University of Utah. He devoted himself to teaching, to writing about practical religion, and to serving the aged, needy, and troubled in the Intermountain West community. In 1935 he founded the Lambda Delta Sigma fraternity to help college students integrate learning with service. Thereafter, for thirty years, nearly every Saturday he would accompany a Lambda Delta Sigma chapter or two as they cleaned a yard, painted a house, or delivered food donated by others or from his own garden to those in need.

In 1962 he established the Teton Valley Boys Ranch, near Driggs, Idaho, to provide urban youth with opportunities for outdoor work and recreation. He continued this unique service, until 1984, when his health would no longer permit his involvement. Former students are now continuing the ranch in his name.

From 1962 until 1972 Bennion served as Associate Dean of Students and Professor of Sociology at the University of Utah; then, at age 64, he accepted a draft to serve as director of the Community Services Council in Salt Lake Valley. He continued this for eighteen years, past his eightieth birthday, leading the council into direct service, which now includes such things as a providing a food bank for thousands of needy households and the coordination of hundreds of volunteers doing chore services for the elderly and handicapped.



When Bennion received the Good Samaritan Award in 1985 from Utahns Against Hunger, Charles Johnson, executive director of United Way, said, "He's a combination of an Old Testament prophet, who wants to give you his vision of what should be, and New Testament good Samaritan, who doesn't stand back and talk, but steps in to do the good work himself." Bennion also has received many other honors, including an honorary doctorate at the University of Utah (1982) and establishment there in 1986 of the Lowell L. Bennion Center for Community Service, election to Utah's Beehive Hall of Fame (1987), the Richard D. Bass award for Distinguished Service by a Utahn in the Humanities (1988), and the Caring Award (1989), given in Washington, D.C., to ten Americans who had most exemplified practical human service. Together with his wife Merle he received the Presidential Citation from Brigham Young University at the August Commencement 1991.



See: Eugene England, editor, *The Best of Lowell Bennion: Selected Writings 1928-1988* (1988), which includes a full bibliography. Bennion's major books are *Max Weber's Methodology* (1933), an early study which was rediscovered, praised, and partially reprinted by sociologists in 1992; *The Religion of the Latter-day Saints* (1939), used as an LDS institute manual for twenty years; *Teachings of the New Testament* (1953); *An Introduction to the Gospel* (1955), used as an LDS Sunday School manual for fifteen years and translated into many foreign languages; *Religion and the Pursuit of Truth* (1959); *The Things That Matter Most* (1978); and *Do Justly and Love Mercy* (1988).