



The Argument for God From Organization Studies

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Every so often, truth carves a wrinkle in popular culture. Not long ago, such a wrinkle appeared as the 9th U.S. Circuit Court upheld a civil suit to bar the pledge of allegiance in public schools because it contains the phrase "one nation under God." Ironically, the suit's objection was not to the idea of pledging allegiance to a human institution but to the idea that the institution exists under God. According to the complaint, the pledge of allegiance injures those who choose to not believe in God.

This flap reminds us that today's postmodernism declares even the surest facts to be cultural franchises. Every group has its treasury of truth. And when one group figures that there is no God, fairness requires that God be a cultural figment rather than a fact to be decided. Today, God has become a cultured preemption, something that cannot be reckoned except as it appears in this or that culture.

It is a measure of today's timid cultural relativism that hardly anyone anymore speaks of God in public. To be sure, political candidates for president are careful to affect a religious posture; but they do so deliber-

ately and *without* conviction. A truly God-fearing candidate would have to shade his or her belief from media scrutiny, no doubt under cover of high-sounding talk of separation of church and state. God is supposed to have no actual place in politics. More timid than the politicians are the many intellectuals who call university departments of humanities and social sciences home. Many of these hothouse flowers draw a bold line to distinguish their ideas about humanity from ideas about God. God, they suppose, is either a personal conviction of no social moment or, worse, a device used by powerful institutions to manipulate the masses (e.g., Wilson, 2002). In the postmodern era, there are only politics.

In this essay, I hope to bring God to mind and in so doing turn the table on that contemporary relativism that puts statements for and against God on the same moral and factual footing. I hope to recall an old idea that we should never have lost—namely, that God exists and He matters. To do this, I look for God in a place that might impress even politicians and university professors—the business corporation. Where

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many may see meanness and corruption—think of the scandalized Enron, Arthur Andersen, Tyco, Adelphia, ImClone, Vivendi, Xerox, and their ilk—I see evidence of one true God. Indeed, I find that the more closely we look into organizations and business management, the more nearly and surely we see His presence. Organizations point clearly to God as the (too-often) neglected first term in organization studies.

Let me add before embarking on this essay that I am not directly concerned with spirituality or formal religion. It is not that I think these are unimportant or uninformative; quite the contrary, I take the gathering interest in spirituality in the workplace to indicate deep yearning, often for God (see, e.g., Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Delbecq, 2000; Vaill, 2000) but sometimes simply for meaning, any meaning (e.g., Ashforth & Vaidyanath, 2002). In the same way, I take valuable clues from occasions of religiosity in the workplace, such as when a Christian snared in a thicket of bureaucracy asks, “What would Jesus do?” or when a Buddhist pressed by a difficult business decision seeks a quiet center of nothingness from which to act. Such occasions, which have been part of human life from time immemorial, underscore the basic dualism between projections of human consciousness on experience (as people draw on religious ideas to define experience) and reflections of human experience in consciousness (as experience forms itself into religious ideas).¹ Thus, although professing no immediate concern for religion in this essay, I must concede that certain ideas of Christianity—the religion to which I subscribe—almost certainly project and reflect key points in what follows. I will try to note these ideas when I see them, and I hope they do not compromise my general arguments.

Furthermore, let me emphasize that I am not in this essay concerned only with the idea of God and its functions in organizations. To focus narrowly on how the idea of God functions in social life as Weber (1958) did nearly a century ago and Wilson (2002) and Ashforth and Vaidyanath (2002) do today, can be to sidestep the sharper question of whether there is a God, and that is the question I am after. Weber, for example, saw religiosity as part of a broader understanding of social and economic behavior. In particular, he explained the development of market capitalism as a result of Calvinist Protestantism. As a person’s success in a worldly calling was taken to be a sign of election by God, economic striving and capital accumulation were taken to be moral virtues. Such links between religion and economy, although inter-

esting in their own right, are beside the point I wish to make. Whereas Weber argued that particular Calvinist ideas about God contributed to particular economic and social developments in the West, I argue that God is more fundamental. God, I argue, is more than a useful or expedient idea. He is an irreplaceable and irreducible part of human organization and management. We know that God is more than an idea by the part He actually plays in our lives.

In what follows, I make three arguments for God from organization studies. I begin with the *argument from management* to find God implied in almost all of our advice to practicing managers. I consider next the *argument from organization* to find God implied by social order and particularly by universal human hierarchy. And, last, I consider the *argument from social life* to find God implied in the basic moments of love, play, and individuation that underlie organization and management. The movement of the essay is thus from concrete to abstract and from particular to general. The movement is also, I hope to show, that of a single idea of God through increasing depths of understanding. I end with a few ideas about how God might, and I believe must, figure in an organization studies of the future.

THE ARGUMENT FROM MANAGEMENT

In its most crucial respect, modern business management parallels American democracy. Both depend on a God who, despite all divisive forces of genetic variation and natural selection, creates all people equal and enjoins them to live together in liberty and with justice. Never mind that no business or government ever fully lives up to these ideals. Human weakness and treachery prove God’s law as exceptions prove every rule.

How well we know and lament that nearly every management principle taught in business school is darkened by human imperfection. We teach negotiation by counseling managers to work with their adversaries (whom we often call “partners”) to find mutually interested and mutually beneficial outcomes. We urge them to that form of bargaining that Fisher and Ury (1992) called “principled negotiation.” Yet we know that managers lapse into positional bargaining that puts their interests ahead of others’ interests. We teach motivation by warning managers to think twice about trying to control worker performance by invidious distinctions of pay. We suggest instead that they

nurture worker performance internally by making work interesting and by cultivating group values of mutual concern and teamwork. Yet we know managers “play God” anyway, often by rewarding their favorites in ways that backfire in rancor about inequity or in follies of rewarding A while hoping for B (Kerr, 1975). We teach work design by counseling humane concern for satisfying and ennobling work that can be shared with others. Yet we know the efficiency logic of scientific management augurs work that degrades and isolates workers as a price of progress. We teach leadership by reminding managers to welcome criticism and encourage constructive conflict to meet what Heifetz and Laurie (1997) called the “adaptive challenges” of work. Yet we know managers shun criticism and sometimes shoot the messenger who delivers bad news. And we teach social relations, advising managers to “network smart” (Baker, 1994) by seeking mutual understanding and mutual benefit in relations with superiors, peers, and subordinates. Yet we know managers toss this approach aside to play “hardball” in a selfish culture of the deal.

Thus, danger lurks just on the other side of our management ideals. The reality of managing a business is always darker and more forbidding than we’d like to believe. We want an egalitarian world of considerate people. We live in a dog-eat-dog world of selfish narcissists. We want to live in peace. We live in a nasty and brutish war of all against all. All of this raises the question: Why teach management principles that we know the unscrupulous will abuse? Why don’t we get down and dirty and teach our charges how to be “gamesmen” and “play the system” for all its worth? We know the score, so why don’t we just come out and admit that Machiavelli was basically right about people and power and getting one’s way?

I can think of only one answer, and it is *not* that we are naïve, and it is *not* that we are foolish. It is the one answer forced on us by a fact we know even without being aware of it. This is that we teach in the presence of God. We teach management the way we do because above and beyond imperfect human motivations and systems, there *is* a higher law: the law of God. Under God, it is good and reasonable to love others as one’s self. Under God, it is good and reasonable to negotiate in mutual concern, to pay people fairly and nurture performance through interesting work and team play, to design work so workers may grow together, to lead with an open mind that serves the needs of the community, and to meet superiors, peers, and subordinates in networks of love and respect. We teach man-

agement the way we do because life *is* just and all actions have compensations. The unscrupulous who deny the equality of all people before God pay for their sins here and now and evermore. And although our moral compass can sometimes fail in practice, its bearings mark certain truths about our human nature and reflect the best part of our experiences in the world. Without God to give our moral compass its magnetic north, management theory is nonsense and we who teach it are charlatans or worse.

Thus, our most basic ideas of management predicate God. They take as given that before His eyes, all people are equal, all people share in a fundamental dignity, and all people are loved. In God, we have an image of a loving Father and His many equally loved children. As we are about to see, this image of the father is a primary element of the theory of organizations.

THE ARGUMENT FROM ORGANIZATION

Perhaps the most central, important, and indubitable fact of human organization is hierarchy. To hear anthropologists tell it, the authority hierarchy is part of every human culture, tribe, society, organization, and group known to history. Human sociality, we are told, is powerfully oriented to and organized by the hierarchy of authority.

A more controversial but no less indubitable fact of social organization is that hierarchy is masculine. Hierarchy, as feminists emphasize, is nearly always patriarchy. It is literally or figuratively a structure of father and sons. This paternal inflection is neither accident nor conspiracy. The deepest roots of hierarchy lie in a biologically funded contest of males oriented to the possibilities of winning access to sexually choosy females. This contest for what was originally sexual dominance takes the form of a game bound by rules and policed by the highest-ranking member of the group. Hierarchy is thus a psychological structure of striving males who relate to one another, either literally or figuratively, as sons to a powerful father. This remains true even when hierarchy includes females, as it so often and rightfully does today, who are inevitably drawn into and forced to conform to its masculine logic.

This biology and psychology of hierarchy underline a sociology oriented to and organized by “fathers” or by the “father figures” we call leaders. Hierarchy is indeed patriarchy. This is not to deny

actual or metaphorical mothers with whom we feel a different and in many ways more powerful bond of love, but it is only to note that on the foundation of mother love, we seek an actual or metaphorical father to love and obey. Furthermore, in the light of our love for a father, we love our fellow human beings as we love ourselves. Under a father, as under a mother, we come together in groups as brothers and sisters. "The brotherhood of man," wrote Oscar Wilde (1995), "is not a mere poet's dream, it is a most depressing and humiliating reality" (p. 13). As we are about to see, this twin formula of love for father and love for brother and sister confirms the fact of God in our lives. At base, we are brothers and sisters because we are His sons and daughters. And if it were not for this preliminary fact of the brotherhood and sisterhood of humankind, there could be no human organizations.

Among the few social scientists to recognize the foundations of hierarchy and organization in what was originally male psychology was Sigmund Freud (1959/1923), the notorious atheist and acknowledged "father" of modern psychology. To consternation and even outrage, Freud invoked the image of father and sons in his theory of group psychology. The human societies of prehistory, he supposed, were literally organized as sons around a father in a form he called the "primal horde." Underpinning this group and every human group since are two psychological elements: first, a strong tie of love (*libido*) on the part of the sons for the father; and second, as a transformation of the natural rivalry that arises among siblings in love with their father, a weaker tie of love (*libido*) of sons for one another. With this twofold psychology, argued Freud, came differentiation of the individual ego between a ruling "ego-ideal" formed through identification with the father and a *general ego* formed through identification with brothers who share love for the father. Freud supposed that although far removed from the primal horde of prehistory, human societies today such as the Prussian Army and the Catholic Church recapitulate its psychodynamic form. Each of us today harbors a primary identification with a ruling entity (a father or father figure) and a secondary identification with equals under this entity. This psychology is writ large and horrifyingly in charismatic organizations in which a leader is explicitly father to the group: Hitler was father to Nazi Germany, Chairman Mao to the communist Chinese, John F. Kennedy to democratic Americans, and the Reverend Jim Jones to the People's Temple (see, e.g., Lindholm, 1990). This psychology is writ only slightly smaller in cultlike

business corporations: Herb Kelleher was and is father to Southwest Airlines as Mary Kay was to Mary Kay Cosmetics; as Harry Quaddrachi was to Quadgraphics, Inc.; and as Jack Welch was to the General Electric Co. (Khurana, 2002). And, finally, this psychology is implicit if not obvious in the mundane hierarchies of life—of family, church, government bureau, corporation, professional association, ball team, or women's club. Every instance of authority and obedience repeats a species theme of a metaphorical son bowing before a metaphorical father.²

That we are, metaphorically, sons and daughters gathered around a father makes human hierarchies different from animal hierarchies and takes them out of any possible story of biological evolution. When coupled with the unique and perhaps "miraculous" fact of human individuality and freedom, this patriarchal form becomes an argument for God. As individuals of free will, we can choose who we obey as father or leader. Moreover, we can exercise this choice contingently to limit a father's or leader's power within a "zone of indifference" (Barnard, 1938). But this power of choice confronts us with a logical and existential impossibility. In the measure that we assert our individual right and power to choose, we deny the right and power of a father or leader to command. Logically, we cannot have both at the same time. And in the measure that we lead and care for ourselves, we deny the leading and caring we long for from our father or leader. Existentially, we are either our father's son or daughter, or we are our own person. The ambiguity and conflict of this impossibility makes us anxious.³

Inevitably, our anxious human condition brings us to the truth. Namely, there must be a father beyond logical reason and beyond human existence that can rescue our human hierarchies from our human anxiety. Standing behind our human fathers or father figures must be the one true and final father—that is, God. Unlike all human fathers, God is the unchosen father, the one we must obey unconditionally, without limit, and without discretion of indifference. Only this unchosen father can reign supreme over our individual hearts. Only this unchosen father can command us totally and completely even while insisting on our individual freedom to choose and follow Him.

To see this argument in a different way, we know from experience with flawed and fallible human fathers that there is one and only one condition under which it is possible to live happily and securely with others. This is when there is one true and almighty God to which everyone (including our leaders) sub-

mits wholly and without reservation. The moral foundations of society must and do center on the one almighty Father. Only in the light of God can human fathers and father figures be seen in proper proportion as provisional and expedient authorities. Only in the light of God can human fathers and father figures check themselves against the perilous temptations of vanity and ego that might lead them to overreach their authority and overtax our obedience. And only in the light of God can people obey other people and at the same time retain their personal dignity. Before God, we are equal. And before God, our individual dignity is guaranteed. Thus God's place in human life is proved by the incoherence and failure of that life without Him. We know what trouble nations, business organizations, street gangs, and religious cults get into when they lose sight of the one true God by mistaking their human leaders for Him. Human organizations keep their balance only when their leaders humble themselves before God. This is the secret to the epoch-making success of American democracy (proclaimed in its Declaration of Independence and codified in its pledge of allegiance) as well as to the sure doom of godless dictatorships, fascist states, and communist regimes. These last must fail because they deny the dignity of the individual, a dignity made possible and guaranteed by the fact of God.

In this way, we come also to understand what is surely one of the great mysteries of human organization: namely, that unlike the social organizations of every other animal species, human organization exists even and especially among individuals of free will. Whereas animal societies exist as *organisms* in which every being has a prescribed part in the larger body (think of the ant colony, beehive, or wolf pack), human societies exist also as *organizations* in which persons can take places freely and willingly within a system of abstract roles. Such formal organization amidst individual freedom—which is a genuine “miracle” of evolution yet to be explained by naturalistic social science—could exist only if there is a God. A human society can subsist as a formal organization only when persons trust that they are included and safe within an abiding brotherhood and sisterhood of humankind. And a human society can honor and support personal dignity and personal freedom only as such dignity and freedom are guaranteed by the sure and equal love of an absolute and unchosen Father, who is God. This is why a free and humane society such as we imagine for the ideal of American democracy must be one society under God. The existence of such a society

and moreover of humane organizations in it are proof of that indispensable God.

Thus, we see that human organization presupposes an unchosen father of fathers, a father who is God. Among the world's great religions, Christianity makes this point explicit as a fact beyond metaphor. Christ is literally the Son of God and the Son of Man. Thus, Christianity conveys the truth of our human nature clearly. In the human person of Christ and in his relationship to God the Father, we have the concrete and living example of all humankind. According to Christian thinking, we are all like Christ, all sons of God the Father. On this theme, Pope John Paul II (1998) summarized Christian experience:

The whole of the Christian life is like a great pilgrimage to the house of the Father, whose unconditional love for every human creature, and in particular for the “prodigal son,” we discover anew each day. This pilgrimage takes place in the heart of every person, extends to the believing community and then reaches to the whole of humanity. (p. 41)

THE ARGUMENT FROM SOCIAL LIFE

We have finally to consider the wildness beyond structures of organization and principles of management. This is the wildness we call “social life.” It is the roiling and tumultuous flux that we put (or that puts us) to make organizations and that we manage (or it manages us) to be productive and satisfying. To encounter the wild thing that is social life is, once again, to encounter God.

Social life takes shape in certain dynamics or “moments” that we might suppose to be universals of human existence. A moment is a principle of form, which is to say that it is an instance of structure in unity and unity in structure (Langer, 1962). Chief among the moments of social life are *love*, *play*, and *individuation*. Love is the moment of *division in unity* (lovers are divided parts of a single whole) and *unity in division* (love is a triumph of unity over division), play is the moment of *fantasy in reality* (players are engaged in a figurative world of imagination—the game or play) and *reality in fantasy* (the outcome is serious to players while they are playing), and individuation is the moment of *individual in society* (the person as a life unto him or herself) and *society in the individual* (the person as a representative of the group or society). Although mostly unrecognized, such moments of social life can enter awareness as feelings when our

experience of them surpasses a threshold of intensity. For example, a moment of love may appear in a mother's ambivalence between wanting to possess her child as her own flesh and blood and wanting to give her child a chance to grow into an independent person. A moment of play may appear in the high spirits of two teams of boys at odds in an earnest match of soccer. A moment of individuation may flash in the righteous indignation of a whistle-blower who so loves her company that she rises up against it on behalf of its moral integrity. Each of these moments of social life, which underlies all organization and management, points to God.

Love

It is a cliché but true to say that God is love. It is less of a cliché but also true to say that love is God. In God and in love, there is the order of form itself: division in unity and unity in division. To love is to know that one is part of a living whole. Here, Berger (1969) gave voice to a love that finds its tie to God:

A child wakes up in the night, perhaps from a bad dream, and finds himself surrounded by darkness, alone, beset by nameless threats. At such a moment the contours of trusted reality are blurred or invisible, and in the terror of incipient chaos the child cries out for his mother. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that, at this moment, the mother is being invoked as a high priestess of protective order. It is she (and, in many cases, she alone) who has the power to banish the chaos and to restore the benign shape of the world. And, of course, any good mother will do just that. She will take the child and cradle him in the timeless gesture of the Magna Mater who became our Madonna. She will turn on a lamp, perhaps, which will encircle the scene with a warm glow of reassuring light. She will speak or sing to the child, and the content of this communication will invariably be the same—"Don't be afraid—everything is in order, everything is all right." If all goes well, the child will be reassured, his trust in reality recovered, and in this trust he will return to sleep. (pp. 67-68)

About this ordinary moment, Berger (1969) raised an extraordinary question that brings us to God: "Is the mother lying to the child?" How could her reassuring that "everything is all right" possibly be true in a world that suffers, in a world in which the child's mother will die, in a world in which the child himself will suffer and die? The answer, Berger affirmed, is that even though she has reason to lie, the mother is not lying. She herself believes *as a matter of her own*

human experience that despite pain of suffering, grief of death, and fears of night, everything *is* in order and everything *is* all right. And by this gesture of unconscious maternity, the mother epitomizes a gesture familiar to all human history. It is the gesture of all leaders of peoples, nations, causes, families, churches, and business organizations who calm fears with the conviction that everything is indeed all right. Calling this the "argument from ordering," Berger argued that humankind's propensity to find order signals a transcendent, *supernatural* order—an order of love that points to God:

In this frame of reference the natural world within which we are born, love, and die is not the only world, but only the foreground of another world in which love is not annihilated in death, and in which, therefore, the trust in the power of love to banish chaos is justified. Thus man's ordering propensity implies a transcendent order, and each ordering gesture is a signal of this transcendence. (p. 71)

For everything to be all right in a world that includes sin and suffering and death, there must be an order beyond mortal human life, a transcendent order of love that is God. The human love by which we live in this world—by which we create and maintain the order of our lives together (its myriad divisions within unity and sure unity across divisions)—presupposes the love of God that makes our human love work and that reconciles us with the world. Our continuing existence in the face of everything that is against us is our sure experience that we are made for this world. And the fact that we are made for this world is our sure experience of God.

Play

Shakespeare said, "The play's the thing." Perhaps this is because in the transports of play, we come to a transcendental order that is plainly here and now. In the moment of play, we see clearly beyond the edges of a real world that is surely ours into a fantastic supernatural world we long to be ours. Crossing those edges in play, we leave behind old-world demands, credit card bills, failed relations, troubled children, political squabbles, and looming war to welcome new-world amusements, frivolities, jokes, fantastic personas, figurative relations, and unserious purposes. We trade a mortifying world of time pressure, obligation to others, and selfishness for an enlivening world of timelessness, freedom, and self-transcen-

dence. Whether you call it “flow,” “peak experience,” “intrinsic motivation,” or “religious transport,” play is surely our most familiar testament to a realm beyond the narrowly rational realm we call the real.

There are two reasons to think the moment of play divine and to find in it an argument for God. First, play itself is heavenly. We are most free, most spontaneous, most joyful, most alive, and most human when we play. To play is to know love, even and especially for those who are supposed to be our opponents. And to play is to feel—for its moment at least—that we will live forever. Indeed, much of the headiness of play comes in its timelessness, in its glimpse of eternity. This is exactly the promise of heaven—life and love and joy everlasting. Second, and even more striking, we rush into play as we would rush into the arms of a loving father. This is true not only in the sense that we are again children in play. There is no denying the childishness of play or the enjoyment we take in that childishness. And to whom are we again children, if not to God the Father? But this is more tellingly true in the sense that we abandon ourselves to play in complete confidence of our safety and good. How extraordinary that an otherwise fearful human being who maps a terrifying world in grids of time and space and who strains to make it predictable by modeling its causes and reasons, should be ready to abandon this well-specified reality for the higgledy-piggledy fantasy of play. The very idea that the real world has edges beyond which goes the fantastic should be terrifying, much like the ancient idea that the flat earth had edges beyond which lived hideous sea monsters. Yet we leap into play eagerly and easily, grateful for the life and grace and peace that it promises and so often delivers. This leap makes sense only in a universe with a God who holds dear the childish innocence of us all. To leave the real world behind is a leap of faith made unproblematic and commonplace because it is made with God. There could be no play in a godless world.

Individuation

The moment of social life that is most distinctively human—in other words, that most clearly distinguishes our social life from that of animals—is that which juxtaposes involvement in the group or species with individual freedom. This is the moment of individuation, the moment of individual in society and society in the individual. In virtue of this moment, and as alluded to earlier, human social life takes the form

of organization whereas animal social life takes the form of organism.

Our individual freedom in society—our human ability to exercise free will within the confines of a social life—is very much a godlike power. As Mead (1934) showed, this ability is predicated on an extraordinary power to recognize the self as an actor in an abstractly ordered social world (a world that Mead compared to a game of baseball). Ours is no autonomous individual life but an intrinsically social life that incorporates others. We take on individual life—that is, we become individuated—as we take into ourselves the social life around us. Thus, it is literally true to say that we are, each of us, the world. We act with the world in mind. We act with others knowing our respective places in a larger scheme of things. This surpassing aspect of humanity shows itself in our highest being: in answers to the call of duty, in the courage to do right by the group in the face of personal danger and long odds of adversity (Worline, 2003).

Unprecedented in nature and unexplained by reason, individuation suggests the hand of God in its making. For one thing, as just mentioned, individuation is a godlike power of perspective and mind, of seeing oneself in terms of the whole of creation. For another thing, if not for individuation, there could be no knowledge of God. Only a creature able to think beyond itself and to see itself in relation to the cosmos could have the idea of God. Indeed, only such a creature would see the necessity of God and the prospect of finding Him in organization studies. And, finally, combining these two points, individuation is the human condition we’d expect if God created humankind in His image. As far as we know, we are the only creatures possessed of a godlike free will, and for so being we are the only creatures able to choose and love God as He chooses and loves us. Thus, we know God in the moment of individuation because He appears in us. We can say He exists because we can say, “I exist.” This is the unshakeable ground of our human individual dignity, and this is the foundation for our sure sense that God loves each and every one of us.

Finally, taken together the three moments of social life—of love, play, and individuation—imply a singular creation and a singular creator. This implication arrives in two steps. The first step is to recall that the moments of social life are instances of form in which form is simultaneity of structure and whole. Love is simultaneous division and unity, play is simultaneous fantasy and reality, and individuation is simultaneous

individual and society. In all three, there is a structure of elements (of lovers, players, and individuals) on the one hand *and* an integral whole (of love, play, and society) on the other hand. The second step is to see that forms of life, wherever they are found, are signs of God. St. Thomas Aquinas argued that the unity of life is proof of God, He being the logical source of all life and all unity. From the unity of the divinely created cosmos comes all further unities, which are elaborations of it and of Him. The Scottish writer George MacDonald (Lewis, 1946) echoed this idea: "The only perfect idea of life is a unity, self-existent and creative. That is God, the only One. But to this idea, in its kind, must every life, to be complete as life, correspond" (p. 147). The living form that is social life in organizations and in management is thus an instance and emblem of God.

The God in the unity of social life is powerfully symbolized in the Christian idea of the Holy Trinity. The Holy Trinity is a pure form—a simultaneity of structure and whole—that relates Father, Son, and Holy Spirit within the wholeness of God. This living form is a powerful image of human social life that represents all three of its primary moments. There is *love* in the simultaneous division of Father and Son and unity of God. There is *play* in the simultaneous transcendence of the Holy Spirit and the reality of Christ the Son of Man. And there is *individuation* in the appearance of the individual Christ and the society of the Holy Trinity. For the Christian, this parallel is more than coincidence. It is evidence for the Christian conviction that God created humankind in His image. For the Christian, the scriptural revelation of the triune God is a true description of humanity.

CONCLUSION

It is perhaps too much to hope that this essay clinches the truth of God from organization studies. As a purely logical proposition, we probably cannot close the deal with God without that faith that welcomes truths that come by revelation in addition to those that come by rational empirical inquiry. I imagine the arguments offered here fall somewhere between revelation and rational empirical inquiry. Nevertheless, I believe that we have a wealth of experience—of natural law, paternal feeling, love, play, and individuation—that makes it reasonable to suppose God is intimately involved in social life, organization, and management. I believe, moreover, that the

more open we become to this experience, the more likely we are to abandon a strictly catholic separation of faith and reason in self-understanding.

It is, however, not too much to hope that this essay takes seriously the question of God in organization studies. There is a great deal at stake in just asking the question, "What would it mean if God truly does exist?"

For organization studies, it might mean that there are lessons to learn from theology—the study of God. Is it possible that the laws of human nature, such as those that appear in daily experiences of management, organization, and social life, are basically the laws of God? What if God is not a transcendent reality beyond our own but is instead the one true reality behind our own? At a minimum, we are invited to consider theology's lessons for human nature and social life. To recall our earlier example, there is the lesson that human organization unfolds in an all-encompassing patriarchy in which every person is an equal child of God and every person is an individual of inalienable dignity. Behold the difference this lesson makes. Workers and managers in organizations view each other one way in a world of exclusively human authority and another way altogether in a world of supervening divine authority. In the one, the manager is simply the boss. In the other, the manager is a brother or sister who happens to be boss. Conversely, in the one, the worker is simply a subordinate. In the other, the worker is a brother or sister who happens to be subordinate. These are differences of more than appearance; they are differences of underlying theoretical truth. In the presence of God, *all human relations*—including the emblematic social hierarchy as well as fundamental trust and reciprocity—take a new bearing. They are not merely human constructions but are enactments and workings-out of divine love. Thus, it would seem that taking God into account means rewriting organization theory to take His word and His laws into account.

Of course, such suggestions of God's theoretical significance can reasonably be refused. One could argue that God is one thing and science is another. We should, however, be clear about what such a refusal involves. First, it impugns inferences about God drawn from experiences of organization and management. And, second, it doubts truths reached by inductive means other than scientifically validated empirical inquiry. It declares that what we have taken as evidence and argument for God could not be such. What could be the justification for such a categorical

refusal? To refuse God because He cannot be measured by the objective standards of rational science is rank scientism. If we are lovers of truth, we must be open to truth however it is conveyed. In this essay, I have tried to show that God is no airy speculation but is powerfully implied by the very experiences of organizations that are the main concern of organization studies.

For management practice, there is the difference it makes to hold a place for God. God's laws are not simply laws of nature; they are also laws of conduct. They come with scruples about how we should act with others. Unlike the laws of rational science, which distinguish what is from what ought to be, God's laws marry what is and what ought to be. To take God seriously is therefore to chart a path of humane practice that is true to our human being and that leads us to God. Among other things, it is to see that it is more than kindness to treat all persons with dignity as the equals God sees them to be. It is to act in truth with respect for all. This is the lesson of American democracy for management: Human organization functions best, indeed functions only, when people are united as one under God. And it is to see that managing is not only for here and now—for this quarter, this year, or even this decade—but for eternity. The manager is responsible not only for the current health and welfare of his or her charges but even more for their eternal salvation. Management ethics becomes the imperative to keep the latter in mind and deed. Management must be soulful if organizations are to be vital and humanly fulfilling.

Today, there is renewed interest in spirituality in organizations as well as in what is coming to be called "positive organizational scholarship" (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003). I believe these and other such developments reach toward a God whose name we have so far been reluctant to say. We want so much to know what life is in organizations. And we want so much to know what the good is in organizations. As we turn our hearts and minds to the wonder of life and goodness in organizations, we face the God who inscribed these on our nature. This God is no religious hypostasis but a concrete claim validated by the mundane facts of life in organizations. God created us to know Him, and know Him we must if we are to know ourselves.

This essay was written to remember God's place in organization studies and management. Although this is where this essay ends, it cannot be where study of organizations and management ends. There is pros-

pect of an organization studies that takes God to be both the first term of theoretical understanding and the first principle of management practice. If this essay is at all correct, such an organization studies might take our understanding deeper into human nature and might take our management farther toward justice and humane living. However, there can only be such an organization studies if we cut through today's fog of postmodernism to see that God is no conceit of culture but a universal truth on which to build a universal organization studies.

NOTES

1. Berger (1969) compared the forms of religious imagination with those of mathematics, finding in both the same claim to truth: "The mathematics that man projects out of his own consciousness," he wrote, "somehow corresponds to a mathematical reality that is external to him, and which indeed his consciousness appears to reflect" (p. 58). This is possible for mathematics and religion alike, he continued, "because man himself is part of the same over-all reality, so that there is a fundamental affinity between the structures of his consciousness and the structures of the empirical world. Projection and reflection are movements within the same encompassing reality" (pp. 58-59).

2. It is an interesting footnote to Freud's (1959/1923) controversial theory of group psychology that Milgram's (1974) later theory of obedience attracted much less controversy despite being an almost perfect replica of Freud's theory. Whereas Milgram spoke of *cybernetic control loops*, Freud spoke of *unconscious psychodynamics*. Whereas Milgram defined obedience as an agentic shift of behavior control to a higher-order control mechanism, Freud spoke of group psychology as real or metaphorical sons who put the voice of a real or metaphorical father in the place of their conscience. It was not theory but plain speaking that got Freud in trouble. Milgram's studies of obedience, however, were notorious for another reason: In his fatherly role as the all-powerful experimenter, Milgram played god to his subjects, directing them to minor atrocities in his name.

3. This is perhaps why we so often hold our human fathers or leaders to inhuman standards. To quell our anxieties, they must be gods in our eyes, all knowing and powerful, capable of doing no wrong, and fully commanding. This is also perhaps why we glorify our human fathers or leaders in rituals and riches and power and in a blinding aura of charisma, and why we will do just about anything to keep from knowing too much about their frailties (Frazer, 1922/1951).

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