



Clever as Serpents: Business Ethics and Office Politics (Zacchaeus Studies: Theology)

By Jim Grote, John R. McGreeney



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Centuries ago Thomas Aquinas remarked that there can be no joy in life if there is no joy in one's work. Drawing upon the seminal insights of Rene Girard, *Clever as Serpents* confronts this timeless issue of finding peace in one's work and offers practical guidance on how people, acting together, can cultivate virtuous business.

Clever as Serpents provides ethical insight in business life, the job market, and office politics, revealing that business culture, while often corrupt, can be transformed through the practice of asceticism. It suggests that instead of renouncing worldly comforts and retreating to a monastery, business asceticism embraces and masters the discomforts of business life through disciplined and unique approach to the rigors of the competitive marketplace.

Clever as Serpents is divided into two parts - theory and strategy. Chapters one through five deal with a unique approach to management theory and the behavior of financial markets. It first examines the myths that hide the reality of the marketplace. Chapter two examines the myth of freedom; chapter three, the myth of competition. With these myths exposed, chapters four and five examine the secret of the marketplace through the theories of "borrowed desire" and the management complex. Chapters six through ten deal with practical techniques for dealing with the jungle of office politics. Chapter six relates the theory of "borrowed desire" to the dynamics of office gossip. Chapters seven through nine offer practical tips on surviving office politics, becoming successful, and redeeming the marketplace through ethical action.

For the many people who experience the workplace as frustrating or unfair, struggle with office politics - as well as the question of whether their workday lives have any religious significance or spiritual depth - this work provides concrete suggestions for practicing an ethics of survival, of success, and of service.

Jim Grote works in stewardship and development for a Roman Catholic

archdiocese. He has taught business ethics and philosophy at several colleges and universities. Co-author of Theology and Technology, he has written articles for the Catholic Worker, Church, Cistercian Studies Quarterly, Cross Currents, and Spirituality Today.

John McGeeney, an attorney for a financial services company, has worked in securities law for a Fortune 500 company, and for a large social service organization in New York City.

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Editorial Review

Review

Clever as Serpents offers a unique approach to the field of business ethics from both a theoretical and a practical angle. The authors' creative rendering of the theories of Rene Girard provides a perspective on the business world not attempted before. Despite the uniqueness of the argument, the book is easy to read and unusually accessible to a wide variety of people. It is appropriate for business ethics classes as well as adult education or management seminars.

Rev. John Haughey, SJ

Clever as Serpents is an original, thought-provoking contribution to the field of management and investment theory. More than that, it speaks directly to issues I struggle with in my daily work. I discovered many useful suggestions which I hope will take root in the investment industry of the future.

Susan Hickenlooper, Senior Portfolio Manager, Bartlett and Co. (an independent subsidiary of Legg Mason, Inc.)

Clever as Serpents is full of shrewd and seemingly cynical but ultimately ethical insight about business life, the job market, and office politics. The book is also a lot of fun to read. I am proud to know that, in the writing of it, my research on "mimetic desire" and "mimetic rivalry" has been of some help to Jim Grote and John McGreeney. It is obvious, however, that the personal experience of the authors, their gift for observation, their deft handling of constructive paradoxes and their talent for sound systematization has played the principal role in the creation of this remarkable essay.

Rene Girard, Professor Emeritus, Stanford University

Clever as Serpents presents a Christian, yet worldly, approach to the challenge of ethical conduct in organizations. The authors skillfully advocate that negotiation and survival require both a child-like or pure desire to do "good," and a shrewd awareness of the people who make up the organization. The discussion is a readable, stimulating and refreshingly different approach to the subject of business ethics and management theory. Many practical suggestions are offered for anyone seeking a faith based approach to survival in the secular world of corporate America.

Ken Mudd, Senior Corporate Attorney, Louisville Gas & Electric

I have read several self-help management books. These did not tap into my personal experiences. The information in Clever as Serpents has truly helped me think about my role in business and how I am affected by what goes on everyday. I am going to remember that success is getting what I want and not chasing what others want.

Teresa Sims, Business Ethics Student

Clever as Serpents is a guide not only to ethical practices but for me a guide to sanity in a fast paced, highly competitive environment. The entire book has been an eye opener for me, in taking a look at business ethics

from a spiritual standpoint. Grote and McGreeney bring the golden rule into the professional realm.
Pat Wilson, Business Ethics Student

Authors Jim Grote and John McGreeney examine life in the contemporary marketplace reflecting a wide breadth of experience as they deftly couple the sophisticated insights of philosopher Rene Girard with pertinent observations from Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Shakespeare, Max Weber, Peter Drucker, Robert Greenleaf, John Paul II, and popular literary characters such as Gordon Gekko, Dilbert, Tom Sawyer, and Calvin & Hobbs to explain what is really going on in the world of business.

James L. Nolan, Executive Director, Woodstock Business Conference

Small Christian communities, I invite you to take note of this important new book and consider its use when you are choosing your next resource material.

Barb Darling, Editor, Buena Vista Ink and Resource Page

Users Review

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Wilhelmina Kane:

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Mark Guerrero:

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