



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

*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 McGreeney, 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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