

Dear Friends,

In one way or another, and under several auspices, I have been at this work for more than 35 years. If I met the person I was in 1975 today, I would still recognize him, but he would hardly recognize me. Which is another way of saying that I have learned a great deal since I stumbled into my vocation. It may seem immodest to call it a vocation, but there is no other word for it. I have long ago become useless for anything other than bearing witness, however clumsily, to Christ and to the indispensability of the Christian faith to our civilization. I pray daily that I might be better at it, and that the work on which Randy and I collaborate will be useful to others.

This time every year, we write to ask our friends for their continued help. If it is possible for you to help us again this year, we would be sincerely grateful. I can assure you again that Randy Coleman-Riese and I work tirelessly to carry out the mission of the Cornerstone Forum, and to do so in a way that merits your continued support. Below is a brief report on the current work.

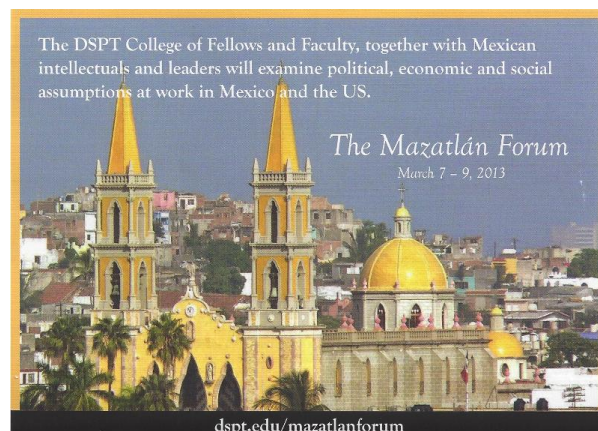
THE WRITING PROJECT

The book on which I am working is progressing far slower than I would like, in large part because of the research and reading that is going into the project. I work surrounded by stacks of books - and countless Kindle books that thankfully don't need stacking - which throw light on the various themes I am trying to synthesize. It is, alas, a slow process, one that is both enriched and further slowed by other Cornerstone Forum related responsibilities. A word about them is in order.

COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

The Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology

My responsibilities as a member of the College of Fellows of the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology takes me regularly to Berkeley, California for both formal meetings of the Fellows and sundry DSPT events. Just this last week, I lectured at DSPT, revising a theme on which I have written in the past: "Raising the Ante: Recovering an Alpha and Omega Christology." We hope to send either a printed or videotaped version to our donors in the weeks ahead.



In March of next year, it will be an honor to join several DSPT Fellows and members of the faculty for a colloquium with a number of distinguished Mexican intellectuals and public officials on the topic of "Cultural and Political Perspectives on the Person in the United States and Mexico." It will be the inaugural symposium of the Mazatlán Forum.

Here's the précis of my presentation:

In a world in which the forces of the state and the market tend to eclipse the once vibrant institutions of civil society - which have historically provided the most proximate and palpable sense of community and fellowship - the deracinated individual easily floats free of these essential sources of existential contentment. Whereas the associations of civil society are voluntary, thrive, and are venerated in proportion to their capacity to satisfy the longing for meaning and collaborative participation, the institutions of the market and the state are enforced by external imperatives that are largely indifferent to the existential need to belong. The elective affinities of civil society are the *sine qua non* of cultural health, and unless they are respected and protected from absorption by the impersonal institutions, such as the centralized state and the global market, attempts will continue to be made to satisfy the longing to belong that are psychologically inefficacious and socially destructive.

The Colloquium on Violence and Religion

As a founding member of the Colloquium dedicated to exploring the implications of René Girard's work, I attend when possible the annual COV&R gatherings. In July of this year, the conference was held in Tokyo, and I gave a paper entitled, "The Dialectic of Hope and Change at the Demographic Tipping Point," a copy of which we mailed to our donors earlier this year.

The Fellowship of Catholic Scholars

When possible, I also attend the annual meetings of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars. This year's conference took place in September in Washington, DC, and was an especially important one, addressing the highly relevant question of religious liberty and the recent attacks on it. Immediately after the conference, I devoted an email newsletter to a report on what the various speakers had to say. We included a printed copy of the report with the monthly CD we sent to our donors in October. I look forward to a more active participation in the FCS going forward.

Facebook and the Social Media

One of the things we have learned over the years is the value of the "message in a bottle" approach to cultural evangelization. Beginning with cassette tapes, then CDs, then website and weblog distribution of digital audio and video files, and especially now with the social media multipliers like Facebook and Twitter, experience has shown how fruitful it is to send materials out into the marketplace of ideas where they can be passed along from friend to friend. Everyday I monitor the Cornerstone Forum Facebook page, and post to it a dozen or so times a week, while Randy regularly posts to our weblog and keeps our webpage current. Because of the replicating effect of sharing Facebook posts and re-tweeting Twitter feeds, our Facebook, Twitter, and Weblog posts reach between one and ten thousand people a day. This is a small number in the social networking world, but the great majority of those we reach are actively engaged in work collateral to our own. This part of our work, though it involves very little cost, does take time and effort, but we feel confident that it is time valuably spent.

Planting Seeds

Given the constraints of time and resources, Randy and I are always looking for other ways of replicating our efforts, whether it is sharing archived material, as Randy does, on our website and weblog, or offering whatever help we can to those who have found our work useful for their own. At the moment, there are two educational programs that are using the Emmaus Road Initiative series of lectures I gave a few years ago. Trusted friends of mine, one at Liberty Harbor Academy, a private high school in Manchester, New Hampshire, and the other an instructor at

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Denver Seminary, a Colorado evangelical institution, are adapting the ERI materials to their particular needs. We were most happy to provide them with printed and recorded materials at no cost, and to make ourselves available to assist in any way we can.

This Thanksgiving, as in so many earlier ones, we therefore pause to remember you for your generosity. We pray for our donors daily by name, reminded as we do of a debt of gratitude that we cannot hope to repay.

On behalf of my friend and Cornerstone Forum colleague, Randy Coleman-Riese, I want to thank you most sincerely for your many kindnesses.

With gratitude and affection,



Gil Bailie