

Leading Strategically Within a Mainline Congregation

Many of the historic European mainline Reformed denominations have become deeply affected by revisionist liberalism in theology and practice. How is it possible to stay faithful to the Scriptures and to the biblical, apostolic faith while remaining in local church leadership within one of these denominations? Is there hope for change? This workshop will explore strategies that are positive alternatives to abandoning the denomination on the one hand, or capitulating to the influence of liberalism on the other hand. This will be with particular reference to the situation in the Church of England, but the principles will be relevant in parallel circumstances elsewhere in Europe.

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I. Introduction

- A. The Church of England ordination service:
 - “Will you be ready, with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God’s word...?”
 - “I will, the Lord being my helper.”

- B. J. C. Ryle:
 - “We want more boldness among the friends of truth. There is far too much tendency to sit still, and wait for committees, and number our adherents. We want more men who are not afraid to stand alone. It is truth, not numbers, which shall always in the end prevail. We have the truth, and we need not be ashamed to say so. The judgment day will prove who is right, and to that day we boldly appeal.”

II. Bible Background

- A. **Josiah’s reform** (2 Kings 22.1-13)
 - 1. Josiah’s reform is a case study in godly leadership
 - 2. Josiah’s reform needs to be understood in the context of the divine assessment framework in 1 and 2 Kings [see below]
 - 3. Josiah’s reform began with himself and moved out to the Temple and the nation.

- B. **The Letter to Thyatira** (Revelation 2.18-29)
 - 1. The anatomy of a church
 - a. The unfaithful Jezebel
 - b. The unfaithful Jezebelites

- c. The faithful who tolerate
 - d. The faithful who resist
2. Jesus' diagnosis of a sick church
 - a. Promotion and practice of idolatry and immorality, and refusal to repent
 - b. Participation in idolatry and immorality
 - c. Dangerous tolerance
 - d. Healthy steadfastness
 3. Jesus' prescription for a sick church:
 - a. For Jezebel – removal
 - b. For the Jezebelites – either repentance or removal
 - c. For the faithful who tolerate – reformation
 - d. For the faithful who resist – reassurance and reinforcement

III. Slow Death and Deep Change – A Secular Analysis

Robert Quinn, 'Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within'

- A. Slow death in an organization
- B. Three approaches:
 1. Peace with pay
 2. Active exit
 3. Deep change
- C. Requirements for agents of deep change:
 1. Build the bridge as you walk on it
 2. If you are not risking your job, you are not doing your job
 3. "They care enough to risk dying for the organization, which would kill them for caring"

IV. The Decline of a Denomination

- A. Theological decline
- B. Organisational decline
- C. Numerical decline
- D. Spiritual decline

V. 'Impaired Communion' – A Response to Liberalisation

- A. Spiritual and temporal oversight
- B. Finance
- C. Buildings
- D. Staffing
- E. Church planting
- F. Training
- G. Ordination
- H. Succession

VI. Towards a Strategy for the Re-Evangelisation of a Nation

- A. Revitalisation of existing churches
- B. Church planting mission agencies
- C. Engaging the culture of church and nation
- D. Inside and outside the central structures
- E. Keeping the bridges open

VII. Conclusion

- A. Hired hands or good shepherds?
John 10.11-13; Acts 20.28-32; 1 Peter 5.1-4

THE DIVINE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK in 1 and 2 Kings

1. THE BASIC BINARY JUDGEMENT: whose side are we and others on?

A. Doing what is right in the eyes of the Lord

David is the benchmark (1 Samuel 13.14; 1 Ki 15.5)

B. Doing what is evil in the eyes of the Lord

Jeroboam is the benchmark (1 Ki 12.28-31)

2. THE SCALE FROM DOING WHAT IS RIGHT TO DOING WHAT IS EVIL: where are we and others on the scale? Jesus calls us to be A1!

A. Doing what is right

1. Initiator of radical reform

Hezekiah (2 Ki 18.3-6), Josiah (2 Ki 22.2, 23.25)

2. Initiator of partial reform

Asa (1 Ki 15.11-14)

3. Follower of reform

Jehoshaphat (1 Ki 22.43), Jehoash (2 Ki 12.2-3)

B. Doing what is evil

4. Follower in idolatry and immorality

Jehu (2 Ki 10.28-31), Hoshea (2 Ki 17.2), Amon (2 Ki 21.20-22)

5. Initiator of idolatry and immorality

Rehoboam (1 Ki 14.22-24)

6. Initiator of extreme idolatry and immorality

Ahab (1 Ki 16.30-33), Manasseh (2 Ki 21.2-6, 16)

3. THE POSSIBILITY OF MOVING UP AND DOWN THE SCALE

The disturbing example of Solomon (1 Ki 3.2-3, 1 Ki 11.4-6)