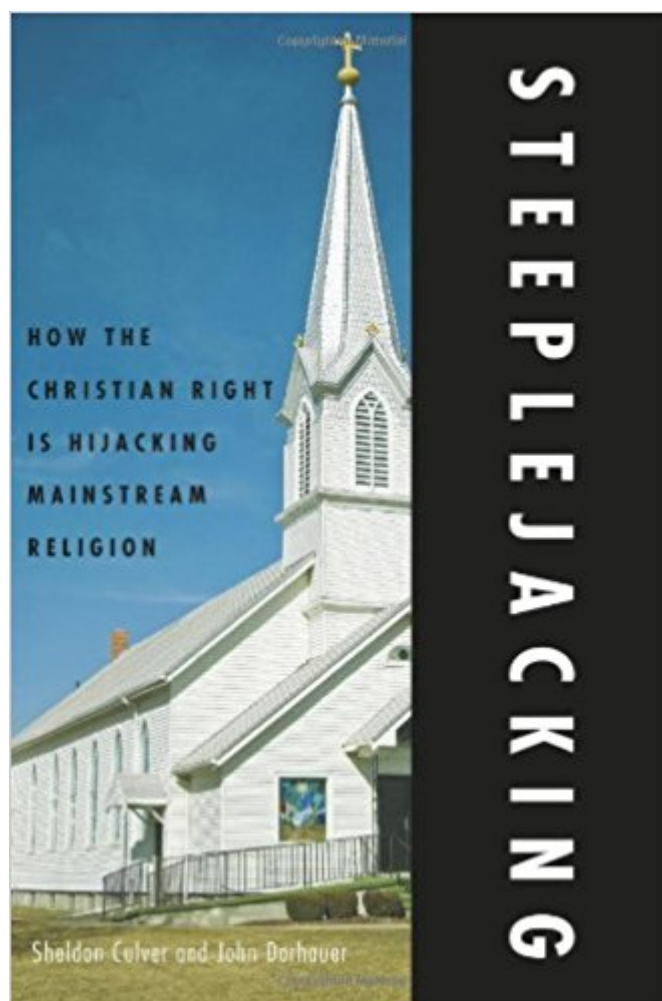


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Steeplejacking: How The Christian Right Is Hijacking Mainstream Religion



Synopsis

A how-to manual for progressive Christians who want to reclaim the church from intolerant, extremist factions. An important book.

Julia Scheeres, author of *Jesus Land: A Memoir* An unprecedented look inside the battle for religion in America, *Steeplejacking: How the Christian Right is Hijacking Mainstream Religion* exposes how a strident theocratic minority is attacking—or “steepolejacking”—mainstream churches in order to eliminate progressive voices and take control of America’s historic mainline denominations. An insider account by two ministers on the front lines of mainstream religion’s longtime shadow war against the religious right, *Steeplejacking* reveals how conservative renewal groups, backed by a right-wing organization called the Institute on Religion and Democracy, use social wedge issues like homosexuality to infiltrate mainline churches and stir up dissent among members of the congregation, with the goal of taking over the leadership of the church, and ultimately, the denomination. The book unmaskes the covert methods that renewal groups and the IRD use to spread their propaganda, as well as showing how the pastor and other church leaders can act as either provocateurs or protectors in the face of an attack. Churches that have been “steepolejacked” are also examined to illustrate why some are able to withstand an attack, while others succumb. Featuring a foreword by Michelle Goldberg, author of the bestselling *Kingdom Coming*, and an introduction by Frederick Clarkson, *Steeplejacking* shows how mainstream religion can fight back against the insidious tactics of the Christian right. An ordained minister for over thirty years, Sheldon Culver serves on the conference staff of the Missouri Mid-South Conference of the United Church of Christ. Rev. Dr. John Dorhauer is a member of the conference staff for the Missouri Mid-South Conference of the United Church of Christ and a weekly contributor to *talk2action*.

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Customer Reviews

In Steeplejacking Culver and Dorhauser discuss the development of the Institute on Religion and Democracy from the early 1980s when it accused pastors of supporting communism, through the 90s when it accused them of supporting "radical feminism" and abortion, to the present day when its wedge issue is homosexuality (so why haven't they been targeting Ted Haggard?) They describe "steeplejacking" as the takeover of churches by small groups who divide the membership, often alienating everyone but a core group. As UCC clergy they focus on congregations in their own denomination. Since UCC congregations own their own property, they are both vulnerable to steeplejacking, and they are rich prizes. In denominations like the United Methodist Church, where property belongs to the denomination itself, steeplejacking is a less viable strategy. Instead, there is a movement to split the United Methodist Church itself. This is all deeply disturbing. I would probably be a little skeptical of their assertions if this was the first time I was hearing this, but it isn't. There appears to be an organised campaign against the mainline Protestant churches, and one that originates not within the churches, but from outside. But then...what do you expect of the "religious" right?

Steeplejacking, is not only hot off the press, it is a very timely book for many main line Christian denominations. In short the fundamentalist think they are the only Christians and all should believe/accept their interpretations of the Bible. Note: It was exactly what was happening in my local church over a period of few years. At least 75% of the members are bewildered and bruised by the vote taken in July. They failed to understand the significance to the total church.

This is a much-needed expose of the Institute on Religion and Democracy, a benevolent-sounding name for a most un-benevolent organization. The IRD is a radical right-wing "political movement masquerading as a spiritual one." It is funded by the same individuals and organizations, such as the Sarah Scaife Foundation, that fund other right-wing political organizations. Their goal is to take over the mainline Christian churches, one congregation at a time, and turn them into fundamentalist "Christian" churches, thus destroying the mainline denominations; and their stealth tactics have succeeded in gaining control of many congregations, and voting them out of their denominations.

Denominations presently under attack include Episcopal, Methodist, Presbyterian, and United Church of Christ, and maybe others. Could YOUR congregation be next? And if they run out of Protestant congregations to take over, and all liberal Protestant voices are bullied and intimidated into silence, then what? The more liberal Catholic congregations? Jewish congregations? Islamic? Baha'i? Hindu? Buddhist? STEEPLEJACKING includes some practical suggestions for recognizing and countering IRD's hostile takeover tactics. This book is a must-read, as are Frederick Clarkson's *Eternal Hostility: The Struggle Between Theocracy and Democracy* Michelle Goldberg's *Kingdom Coming: The Rise of Christian Nationalism*, not only for every mainstream Protestant pastor or lay person, but likewise for Catholics and non-Christians as well. Your congregation could be next. watziznayme@gmail.com

As a pastor of a mainline church I can only wish this book had been available more than 10 years ago. Culver and Dorhauer have written a timely and important book to help explain the political assault on the mainline Christian church today. I recommend this book to anyone who desires to stay faithful to the message of the Christian Gospel and to the mainline church.

This book is a wake up call to everyone who is active God's Mission Field with a community of faith, and is laboring under the impression that their co-workers are all "just nice people". The reality is that often God's potential in each one of us is limited by folks who are only concerned with manipulative, political attempts to glorify themselves. Our churches are under attack in many ways by those whose interests are governed by arrogance, hatred and fear; and they use "wedge issues" like homosexuality as weapons in their arsenal. Dorhauer and Culver craft a remarkable work here that details how we as servant workers in the mission field can recognize these attacks as they are being constructed, and dismantle the barrage of ignorance that is their source of power. This book is a "must read" for every local church pastor, as well as any lay person for whom the ideal of Christian community and mission is one to which they aspire.

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