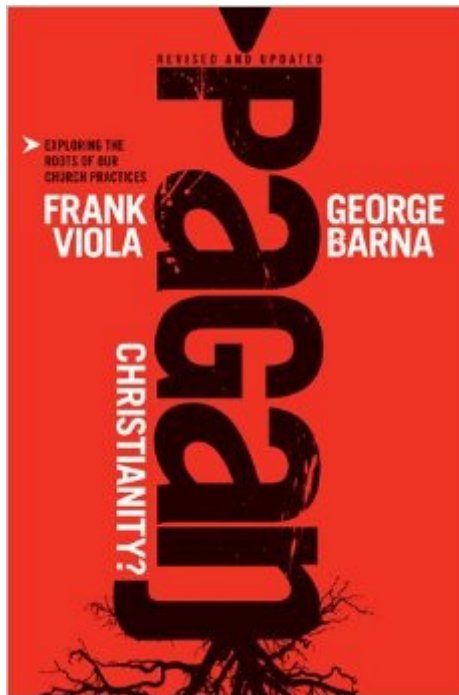


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# Pagan Christianity?: Exploring The Roots Of Our Church Practices



## Synopsis

Have you ever wondered why we Christians do what we do for church every Sunday morning? Why do we address up for church? Why does the pastor preach a sermon each week? Why do we have pews, steeples, and choirs? This ground-breaking book, now in affordable softcover, makes an unsettling proposal: most of what Christians do in present-day churches is rooted, not in the New Testament, but in pagan culture and rituals developed long after the death of the apostles.

Coauthors Frank Viola and George Barna support their thesis with compelling historical evidence and extensive footnotes that document the origins of modern Christian church practices. In the process, the authors uncover the problems that emerge when the church functions more like a business organization than the living organism it was created to be. As you reconsider Christ's revolutionary plan for his church to be the head of a fully functioning body in which all believers play an active role you'll be challenged to decide whether you can ever do church the same way again.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Is today's Church into a revolution that will someday be understood as greater than the 16th Century Protestant Reformation? Pagan Christianity by Frank Viola and George Barna will certainly add fuel to the fire of those affirming so. Most evangelicals would consider such a suggestion as absurd, or at best, exaggerated. Yet, undeniably, there is a grass roots revolution taking place on a global scale in Christendom about what it means to be the Church of Jesus Christ. Basically the authors are making three points: 1) A great deal of what we do in church today does not come from

the New Testament.<sup>2</sup>) Much of what is practiced originated out of Greco-Roman customs and traditions (paganism, not Judaism), and/or human-made inventions.<sup>3</sup>) Many of these practices actually hinder the church from being what God designed her to be. The over-arching question the authors seem to be asking is: Do the practices of modern institutional churches reflect a God-ordained/inspired development, or are they a departure from it? Of course, one must read the book to understand why Viola and Barna indeed question "church" as most of us know it. Beware, though. This book comes with a WARNING: If you are unwilling to have your Christianity seriously examined, do not read beyond this page... Spare yourself the trouble of having your Christian life turned upside down. (pg.7) A glance at the content chapters will suffice as to the reason for the warning! 1-Have We Really Been Doing It By The Book? 2-The Church Building: Inheriting the Edifice Complex.

This is a controversial book with tons of valid points, and ultimately, at least for me, an unsatisfying conclusion. Here, in a nutshell, is the argument of the book: 1. The origin of many of our church practices (examples: church buildings, orders of worship, sermons, pastors, tithing, clergy salaries) is non-biblical and inconsistent with the practice of the early church. 2. Just because something does not appear in the Bible does not mean it is wrong. However, our non-biblical church practices often hinder the development of our faith and keep us from encountering the living God. 3. "The church in its contemporary, institutional form has neither a biblical nor a historical right to function as it does." (p. xx) 4. The church must return to its biblical roots. At a personal level, we must ask questions of church as we know it and pray seriously about what our response should be. This book threatens a lot that pastors and churches hold dear. But it should be evaluated on the evidence, not on how much it will cost us if they're right. Most of the book traces the origins of common church practices today. They succeed in showing what should be fairly obvious: many of our practices do not appear in the Bible, which in itself does not make them wrong. Barna and Viola argue, however, that many of these practices are harmful. It's when you get to their solution that, in my view, the wheels fall off. Viola and Barna argue: ""the church in its contemporary, institutional form has neither a biblical nor a historical right to function as it does." (p. xx) It could be that Viola and Barna are correct, but I don't think they've proved their case.

"Pagan Christianity? Exploring the Roots of Our Church Practices," may very well be the most important book written on the Christian church in the last two millennia. Frank Viola and George Barna team up to give their readers a critical examination of the last 1700 years of church history.

Does the institutional church have any biblical and historical right to exist? "Are the practices of the institutional church (the clergy/laity system, salaried pastors, sacred buildings, the order of worship, etc.) God-approved developments to the church that the New Testament envisions? Or are they an unhealthy departure from it?" The first edition of this book entitled, "Pagan Christianity: The Origins of Our Modern Church Practices" by Frank Viola... is the third book written in a set of five books on church restoration and organic church life. Viola and George Barna, Christian pollster and author of the book "Revolution," have co-authored the newly revised and updated "Pagan Christianity?: Exploring the Roots of Our Church Practices." Barna brings to the book a fresh look and a polished language that improves on the delivery of Viola's original work. Barna, who has caused no small stink upon his recent confessions regarding the church, makes his decision to leave the institutional church complete with the publication of this book. If it wasn't clear in his book "Revolution"... it is certainly clear now. I enjoyed the new format of this book. At the end of each chapter, the authors give the reader a "Delving Deeper" section which lists common questions with answers in return. I felt that this helped to clarify what the authors were truly saying in order that fact might be separated from fiction.

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