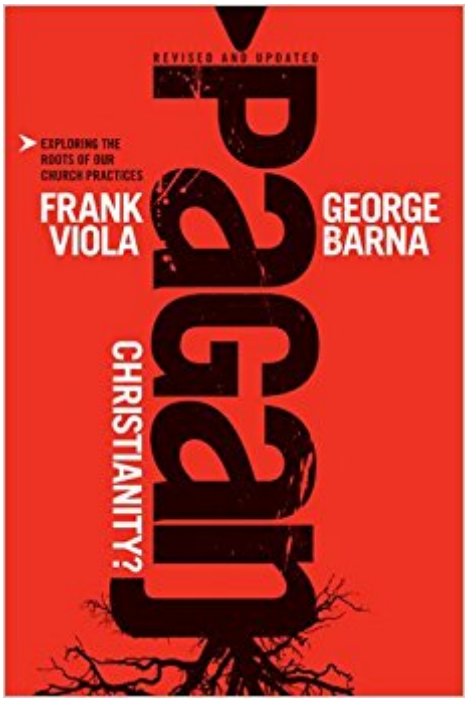
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Pagan Christianity?: Exploring The Roots Of Our Church Practices



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Synopsis

Have you ever wondered why we Christians do what we do for church every Sunday morning? Why do we Ã¢â ¬Å“dress upÃ¢â ¬Â• 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 churchÃ¢â ¬â ¢to be the head of a fully functioning body in which all believers play an active roleÃ¢â ¬â ¢you'll be challenged to decide whether you can ever do church the same way again.

Book Information

Paperback: 336 pages

Publisher: Tyndale Momentum; Rev Upd edition (February 1, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1414364555

ISBN-13: 978-1414364551

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.9 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 897 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #34,096 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #9 inÃ Â Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Churches & Church Leadership > Ecclesiology #21 inÃ Â Books > Religion & Spirituality > Worship & Devotion > Ritual #71 inÃ Â Books > Religion & Spirituality > Religious Studies > History

Customer Reviews

"Most contemporary Christians are massively ignorant as to how the church got to where it is today and of how much current church practice is due simply to accumulated tradition, with little or no roots in Scripture. This book provides a useful service in peeling back the layers of tradition, showing the origins of much that we today call "church." Christians who want to be biblically faithful, regardless of their particular tradition or church form, can learn and benefit from the book." Howard

Snyder, Professor of History and Theology of Mission, Asbury Theological Seminary, author of "The Problem of Wineskins" and "The Community of the King." "PAGAN CHRISTIANITY is a landmark, a true milestone in the overall task of bringing in a new style of responsible, interactive Christianity to replace the old, severely paganized ecclesiastical forms. Frank has done us a great favor, drawing together revealing tidbits from hundreds of sources to create a continuous picture of the formation of today's institutional church. There's nothing like it in print. It is now THE book on church history from the point of view of the underground, open church." James Rutz, author of "Megashift" and "The Open Church." "PAGAN CHRISTIANITY contains a wide variety of interesting and helpful historical information of which most Christians - or non-Christians - will be completely unaware. The book identifies - in part or in whole - the pagan roots of many of our current church practices, as well as indicates some borrowed from earlier Jewish or, occasionally, more recent Customs." Robert Banks, New Testament scholar, author of "Paul's Idea of Community" and "The Church Comes Home." "This feisty book attacks the incipient paganism that has been absorbed into historic Christianity over the years. It exposes the syncretistic weak spots in what we assume to be basic in our way of doing church. Thoroughly iconoclastic, it is also at the same time a good apologetic for the house church movement which has strong restorationist impulses. My guess is that it will anger some readers and thrill others. I am one of the latter. Whatever, it won't be too easy to dismiss as it is really well researched and substantiated. I think it is definitely worth the read even if I do think it is a tad purist in tone. Just don't drop it-it is likely to explode." Alan Hirsch, author of "The Forgotten Ways" and "The Shaping of Things to Come." "Driving out demons is easy - compared with changing habits and traditions of man that develop into idols, to give us what only God should give us: identity, security, destiny. As in a child, the original God-given conscience is clean and clear. Many new born Christians feel the same and have an automatic feel for what is right. But in the case of organized Evangelicalism in the West, they are swiftly taken into a religious system that basically believes everything that Mom and Pap says -- and happily embrace "church practices" that are not in the Bible. Many just "know" at some point something is terribly wrong with Church-as-they-know-it. PAGAN CHRISTIANITY not only substantiates these ill feelings in millions of Christians with hard facts, but it provides us with a road map for the journey ahead. Once we know where we went wrong, repentance and finding the right way forward comes much easier." Wolfgang Simpson, author of "Houses That Change the World." "Anyone interested in the worship of the New Testament church and how that was altered through the centuries will find Frank Viola's PAGAN CHRISTIANITY very useful. The authors' position is clear and quite well documented." Graydon F. Snyder, Professor of New Testament, Chicago Theological Seminary, author of "Ante

Pacem: Church Life Before Constantine." "As a Christian Artist/Musician I've had a chance to experience many different kinds of churches all over the world, from huge cathedral services to bizarre charismatics and strange Third World stuff to stiff denominationals-- and good and bad "house churches". For nearly 35 years in North America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Australia I've been involved with almost every conceivable kind of Christian expression. I've even served on staff as Worship Pastor at a large church here in the U.S. The result? I've already learned from study and experience what Frank Viola and George Barna have proven by historical documentation in PAGAN CHRISTIANITY: The traditional model of how we "do church" is very wrong -- and it's strangling Christ's Body. No matter where you are in your Christian journey, you need to read this book. It's truth whose time has come. Those who have never experienced His tangible presence as a regular occurrence when they meet will find it hard to believe that there is something more than what they know: It's very hard to walk away from what you've invested your life in when you don't know anything else. And the very grace of God Himself can be confusing: He'll fill whatever cup we lift to Him, no matter how small." Don Francisco, Christian musician/songwriter. "It's a great read and my copy has already been STOLEN by my neighbor who is probably just as fascinated in its contents as I was. PAGAN CHRISTIANITY by house church guru Frank Viola and researcher/author George Barna who have teamed up to give us the most thorough treatment yet of the pagan origins of many of our most cherished Sunday church traditions. Actually, Jim Rutz nailed a few of these in his book "Open Church," but Viola and Barna have gone far beyond Rutz, or anyone I know, in exposing more elements of Protestant church traditions to the scrutiny of historical research. Like dressing up for church. Pulpits and 3 point sermons. Clerical dog collars. Church steeples and seminary training. PAGAN CHRISTIANITY lets George Barna unpack his argument why the new Revolutionaries mentioned in his previous book are not rebelling against God by setting up organic house communities. And it gives Frank Viola the chance to put forward his best thinking yet in a series that has already assisted thousands of people in dealing biblically and historically with accusations of "lack of covering" or "neglecting church" or more recently, of adopting "pagan" practices in starting emerging churches. Ha! Watch as Franky and Georgy turn the tables! Controversial? Yes . . . DUH! . . and the backlash has already started. Andrew Jones, tallskinnykiwi "Why do we 'do church' the way we do? Most folks seem to assume that our Christian religious trappings can be traced all the way back to the first century. But they can't. The things we hold dear-sacred buildings to meet in, pulpits, sacramental tables, clergy, liturgies, etc.-were unknown among Paul's assemblies. PAGAN CHRISTIANITY looks at our major church traditions and documents when and how they appeared in the ages long after the apostles. Haven't you ever

wondered why people dress up in their best clothes for the Sunday morning service? PAGAN CHRISTIANITY unfolds the answer to this and numerous other questions looming in the back of many folks' minds. Reading PAGAN CHRISTIANITY will open your eyes to the fact that the ecclesiastical emperor really has no clothes on." Jon Zens, editor of "Searching Together." "In recent years, an increasing number of us pastors have recognized a major blind spot in the living out of our commitment to a Biblical lifestyle. That blind spot is ecclesiology (the doctrine of the church). As a former Presbyterian pastor, I believe PAGAN CHRISTIANITY will play a vital role in shaping the growing conversation on this subject now and in the future. Well researched and well written, this book is accessible to both church leaders and those formerly known as the laity." John White, former Evangelical Presbyterian pastor; Community Facilitator for LUKE TEN: A Community of Practice for Church Planters. "PAGAN CHRISTIANITY documents specific areas where contemporary church life violates Biblical principles. It is painful to read because it requires taking a journey beyond the comfort zone of our present paradigms. Whether you agree with all the conclusions the author draws or not, you will have no argument with his documentation. It is a scholarly work with an explosive conclusion. Particularly for those of us in the modern cell church movement, this is a valuable tool to force rethinking the meaning of the word "ecclesia." The Holy Spirit is not pleased with churchianity as we practice it, nor is the watching unchurched world." Ralph W. Neighbour, Jr., author of "Where Do We Go From Here?" and founder of the Cell Church Movement. "Frank Viola and George Barna have teamed up to create an intelligent, readable, and yet challenging work about the historical roots of the many unbiblical modern church practices that hinder Christian growth in quality and church growth in quantity. Anyone who reads Pagan Christianity with an open mind and heart will never see the church the same way again. May those with newly-gained spiritual eyes not stop there, but go on to do something about it." Rad Zdero, Ph.D., Author of "The Global House Church Movement" and Editor of "Nexus: The World House Church Movement Reader." "Frank has done a masterful job both researching and then weaving together the threads that have made modern church practices what they are - pagan substitutes for authentic church life. One nice thing about PAGAN CHRISTIANITY is that it provides the history behind a perception that many of us Christians share: The way the modern Western church does things has little to do with the organic life we see in the New Testament. The difference is so great sometimes that one wonders how one could possibly have transmuted into the other." Hal Miller, author of "Christian Community: Biblical or Optional?" "This is an important book which demonstrates that many of the practical aspects of contemporary church life, ministry and structure have little or no biblical basis and are, in fact, inspired by a wide variety of non Christian patterns

and ideas most of which are inimical to Christian life and growth. Many readers will find this book challenging in the extreme but all who are concerned with the future of the church should read it." Dave Norrington, Lecturer of religious studies at Blackpool and the Fylde College, author of "To Preach or Not to Preach." --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Sorting out truth from tradition Many Christians take for granted that their church's practices are rooted in Scripture. Yet those practices look very different from those of the first-century church. The New Testament is not silent on how the early church freely expressed the reality of Christ's indwelling in ways that rocked the first-century world. Times have changed. Pagan Christianity leads us on a fascinating tour through church history, revealing this startling and unsettling truth: Many cherished church traditions embraced today originated not out of the New Testament, but out of pagan practices. One of the most troubling outcomes has been the effect on average believers: turning them from living expressions of Christ's glory and power to passive observers. If you want to see that trend reversed, turn to Pagan Christianity . . . a book that examines and challenges every aspect of our contemporary church experience. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Loved Loved Loved this book. Not necessarily because I believed everything he said, BUT it did make me think a LOT. Definitely want to read another one of his. After reading Pagan Christianity, I also watched two videos in a similar vein: 1) Sun Burned Parts 1 & 2 by 119 Ministries - on youtube; (2) Truth or Tradition by Jim Staley with Passion for Truth Ministries, also on youtube. After reading this book, I read "But Lord: A Scriptural Look At Popular Christian Beliefs" by Jerry Graham. I also bought and already read six books by Ken Johnson. Check out Ken Johnson's Post-Flood History book and Book of Jasher.

For many in the Body of Christ, the Early Church provides a model. And yet, we've not been able to peel back the layers of Church history to see it shine. In particular, do we realize that our current practices of hiring a pastor, staff, building buildings - not to mention worship song list, the sermon and the altar call find no place in early church practice? Shocking isn't it? In Finding Organic Church, Frank Viola shows us another way that is compelling in its simplicity. You won't be sorry you purchased and read this book. But be ready to have some basic assumptions challenged. I am a former pastor who served one church for 30 years in New England.

Pros:I really liked the historical data concerning how the overall church has gotten to its current

position.I didn’t know a lot of that information and that is prompting me to do further research.Cons:The only thing I didn’t necessary appreciate is the way the author ended each chapter and ultimately the book.After telling us where we lost our way he starts bashing the current church in basically saying it has no validity at all since we are doing everything wrong. This leads you to think we should go back to setting up home churches.... but then at the end of the book he basically says we won’t do that correctly either and motivates us to buy the next book in the series.I know the church has its issues but it is made up of people doing the best we can do in serving our Lord. We may not know everything we are doing incorrectly. That’s where the book is very informative in providing some direction. I appreciate the authors passion for doing the same... I’m just not sure if the latter parts of each chapter that simply contain his frustrations are needed.

This book not only brought freedom but also brought me to a clearer understanding of what is important In the Christian life. I left a lot of guilt and fear at the feet of Jesus. Thanks frank and George one of the best reads ever !!!

Don’t read Pagan Christianity if you don’t want your nice safe Christian world rocked. Once you start going down this road you cannot honestly look at things through the comfortable old lenses of the traditional American "church" any longer. You cannot "unread" it. I think Viola and Barna do a fine job of shaking up long standing assumptions and beliefs we’ve accepted forever, never questioning. They peel away the layers one chapter at a time. My question is where to go from here? Well, of course, after deconstructing the church we need to rebuild something new hence the next book Reimagining Church: Pursuing the Dream of Organic Christianity. I will check back in with a small review of that book once I finish it. From me this will not be a high minded theological critique. It’s simply my own spiritual journey and this book has been a valuable asset in resetting my truth compass. (Read on my Kindle.)

This book is great read for anyone who is looking to explore the roots of modern day Christianity. It provides a well written, substantiated, and colorful analysis covering all the customs, rituals, and ideaology derived primarily from Greco Roman practices. A great reminder for all of us when on our own spiritual quest for truth to ask "why do I believe the way I do, and where did it all come from?" Much of what we have been told from platforms and pulpits across the world comes with a specific agenda, and this book really confirmed and highlighted what my own spirit had been trying to tell me for a long time.

We are doing this study at our church. We are getting much out of the discussions.

...may be what saves Christianity from the politically-correct, watering-down, new-age message the world is getting these days. Books like this contain the ideas that are required for a Christian spiritual re-awakening. Christian spirituality arose prior to the birth of Christ and what came after His coming has served to lessen the impact of Jesus' message. Present day worship practices do little to impart a true spiritual change among congregations who gather in mass on Sunday mornings to be lectured and go about their spiritless lives throughout the remainder of the week. This book can help to re-focus the individual Christian by explaining how early churches really worked and how Christianity has co-opted many pagan rituals -- not necessarily a bad thing.

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