Subject: Pagan Christianity, the book
Posted by william on Thu, 23 Jun 2011 18:52:10 GMT
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Why put it here? Why not! The whole book deals with things most have taken for granted in the functioning of the Church; those things that need to be totally reexamined if we are to claim that we are 'following the Bible'!

The book points out the inconsistencies of those who say "the Bible is our only guide in the practice of our faith" when many of those practices can be traced back, not to the Bible, but to paganism.

The examples the authors used to get across these inconsistencies are sometimes a bit contrived and hokey, but overall they make their point.

The first chapter --Have we really been doing it by the Book? sets the stage for their premise:
Quote:
"As startling as it may sound, almost everything that is done in our contemporary churches has no basis in the Bible. As pastors preach from their pulpits about being "biblical" and following the "pure Word of God," their words betray them. The truth is that precious little that is observed today in contemporary Christianity maps to anything found in the New Testament church."

Frank Viola;George Barna. Pagan Christianity?: Exploring the Roots of Our Church Practices (Kindle Locations 255-257). Kindle Edition.

The second chapter --The Church Building: Inheriting the Edifice Complex, deals with the unscriptural notion that the building equates to 'the Church'. Most of us already know this but it is nice to see the underlying reasons for this mind-set. The authors give a lot of background information showing exactly how this church/building mentality came to dominate Christianity.

They point out that both the Jews and the pagan religions had three elements: A temple, a priesthood, and sacrifices. The Church of Jesus Christ had no temple, no clergy, and our Sacrifice was a 'once for all' sacrifice. This fact distinguished the early Church from any other contemporary religion. It was a radical departure, founded upon the Rock --Jesus Christ.

I'll try to post more later as time allows but feel free to jump in with any comments or thoughts.

Blessings,
William

Subject: Re: Pagan Christianity, the book
Posted by james on Thu, 23 Jun 2011 20:14:18 GMT
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Aw-rite, I'll jump in ... Suprised? <grin>

I read a good bit from this book a few years ago, I think a former member might have brought it up...(you know! the one who liked to cause upheaval in the unbelieving religious system....one person at a time) While I don't blindly believe what men write, there were things there that rang as true based on what The Bible shows, as well as the reaction by the established institutional religious system. Of course it didn't take much arm twisting to get me to agree to a lot of their views.(I haven't had too high of an opinion of status quo religion in a good long while.)

There's a youngish man named Mark Driscoll, who started a church in Seattle, Washington (Mars Hill Church)about 10 years ago, that has grown into a mega-church of over 10,000+. He seems to be a hero type of many of the younger, modern day, christians; (not a Rob Bell, but not quite Charles Spurgeon either) and he has came out strongly against the book, Pagan Christianity.(wonder why?)

Driscoll says, "Pagan Christianity poses such a serious threat to the health and well being of the church..." He has gone so far as to openly point out the fallacies (in his opinion) in Mr. Viola's understanding of 'church', 'the bible', and 'church history'.

Anyway, who would expect those who profit/prophet the most from 'the system' to embrace anything that would upset their apple cart. But haven't we learning from observing human nature that most folks don't like change(including myself, generally) especially in their religious traditions.

Subject: Re: Pagan Christianity, the book
Posted by GWB on Thu, 23 Jun 2011 21:21:54 GMT
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When I was first saved, I started out in a small house meeting before moving to FA. We all learned so much, even though we were small. We also learned His voice, true worship with believers, operating in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, etc.

I have always believed in my heart that this is the way it will end; with small house meetings. However, we will not have the freedom we enjoyed in the beginning. I think house meetings will be persecuted and the "church" (buildings, pagan celebrations, beliefs, etc.) will survive while being "brothers" with the world....Universalism.

I think the watered down, sleeping, lukewarm, unbelieving church will be a part of the one world

religion. A good example of the pagan church of today is the rise of wacko Chrislam. Disgusting TBN, who won't take a stand on anything so that they will remain the "rich but poor in Spirit" church.

Again, it is time to be excited and keep our lamps filled. Revelation is coming to pass before our very eyes.

I have been very busy claiming and believing for former classmates and friends after discovering that they are deceived by the "New Age."

I must say, it is hard, sometimes, being the sore thumb that sticks out and does not agree with so many. I have been X'ed off of FaceBook by quite a few! Even some we used to fellowship with years ago.

Just some of my thoughts. I am getting this book!

Subject: Re: Pagan Christianity, the book
Posted by william on Fri, 24 Jun 2011 00:06:43 GMT
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Quote:Driscoll says, "Pagan Christianity poses such a serious threat to the health and well being of the church..." He has gone so far as to openly point out the fallacies (in his opinion) in Mr. Viola's understanding of 'church', 'the bible', and 'church history'.

That's interesting about Driscoll, I've heard a few of his messages, and he seems pretty solid on a lot of stuff. If he means that the book is a threat to the contemporary Church --I'd say he was solid on that too!

There are some areas of disagreement found in Viola's view of the Church, for instance he believes in the plurality of elders in the church with no particular one vested with the 'final say'. He would say that the Holy Spirit has the ultimate 'final say' so there is no need for one person to be vested with that kind of authority.

But I suspect that his (Driscoll's) disagreement would go beyond the issue of plurality verses one-man-rule of the Church.

As far as Viola's view of the Bible, I'm not sure I could find where he would find disagreement... wait a minute, I just remembered his view concerning women in ministry --that's probably it! <grin>

On Church history I guess it would depend on how one interprets the facts. (Surely there would not be a disagreement on the FACTS about what has occurred?)

More to come!

Blessings,
William

Subject: Re: Pagan Christianity, the book
Posted by james on Fri, 24 Jun 2011 01:13:18 GMT
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I didn't mean to hijack the thread and make it about Mark Driscoll, but if you'll read his 'popular' bestselling books, Radical Reformission and Confession's of a Reformission Rev. it might change your view of his 'solid-ness'. But he, like Rob Bell, has built his following using the world's methodology of secular music, light shows, hip/worldly lingo, and the philosophy that if you copy the pattern of the world...they will come.

I am fairly certain that he meant that the book, 'Pagan Christianity' was a threat to the health and well being of his church and those like it.

William wrote:

"On church history I guess it would depend on how one interpets the facts. (Surely there would not be a disagreement on the FACTS about what has occured?)"

Good one! After all, professing Christians never have disagreed on interpetation of 'FACTS'...Shoot William, folks that have been members here on OO and of FA, can't agree on what happened just 25-30 years ago. Some express that HEF was in error, some remember it as the best times of their lives, others claim to bear emotional scars for life due to the oppressive nature of the ministry there, some are grounded and stable, others went off the reservation(so to speak) after Brother Freeman's passing. Agreement? Unity? Overcomers?

Subject: Re: Pagan Christianity, the book
Posted by william on Sat, 25 Jun 2011 20:51:17 GMT
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james wrote on Thu, 23 June 2011 20:13I didn't mean to hijack the thread and make it about Mark Driscoll, but if you'll read his 'popular' bestselling books, Radical Reformission and Confession's of a Reformission Rev. it might change your view of his 'solid-ness'. But he, like Rob Bell, has built

his following using the world's methodology of secular music, light shows, hip/worldly lingo, and the philosophy that if you copy the pattern of the world...they will come.

It isn't a hijack, it is a relevant point.

From listening to Driscoll I'd pretty much say that he was diametrically opposed to Rob Bell's philosophy. He actually stands against the 'throwing-out-orthodoxy-to-attract-followers' mentality.

For sure, I have not read the books you mentioned but the 'solid-ness' of Driscoll's theology, rivals anyone that I've heard currently preaching the Gospel.

Where Viola might say that preaching/teaching is only a part of the functioning of the Church, Driscoll would say that it was the very centerpiece of the Church. (I would agree with Driscoll on that point.)

Blessings,
William

Subject: Re: Pagan Christianity, the book
Posted by william on Sun, 26 Jun 2011 10:50:59 GMT
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Chapter 3: The Order of Worship
Viola spends a good amount of time showing the remarkable conformity to a certain pattern of worship that prevails in the religious services of today.

You've got the greeting, the prayer/scripture reading, the song service, the announcements, the offering, the sermon, and the benediction. It is contended that there is an almost universal pattern here that is based solely upon tradition.

I'm not too concerned that these elements are present in most religious services but the rigidity of the process is a bit troubling. It is argued that what we see in the new testament is more fluid and cannot be compared to the ironclad progression that has characterized the last five centuries of religious tradition.

The centerpiece of the ritual is the sermon. While there might be slight differences in the progression of the service it is the sermon that is always the focal point of protestant Christianity.

A lot of time is spent showing the dialectical/rhetorical pattern of preaching which was championed by Greek philosophers.

More later,

Blessings,
William

Subject: Re: Pagan Christianity, the book
Posted by grandom on Thu, 30 Jun 2011 10:59:19 GMT
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Jesus Christ is not in the church !!!!!

Subject: Re: Pagan Christianity, the book
Posted by james on Thu, 30 Jun 2011 14:37:33 GMT
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grandom wrote on Thu, 30 June 2011 05:59Jesus Christ is not in the church !!!!!

Is this the summation of the opinions of the authors of the book, Pagan Christianity, and your way of making it short and sweet...kinda your way of doing a condensed 'book report'?

OR, is this your own conviction that you've reached based on what you read in the book? OR, has The Holy Spirit opened your eyes to see this through the reading of the book?

I'm just asking, due to your adamant prior position that those of us who didn't attend 'church' were in disobedience and should be 'going to church'.

I do know several of us have been of the conviction that if Jesus isn't in the church, then why would I go just for the sake of saying that I'd 'gone to church'? I've said this before, and I'll say it again, to date, in every 'church' I've attended in the last 22 years I've came out worse than I went in. And I didn't see evidence of Jesus' presence in any of them...some of the people, yes, but not overall in the assembly.

Subject: Re: Pagan Christianity, the book
Posted by grandom on Thu, 30 Jun 2011 14:56:05 GMT
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Thank you for responding James.

Before I answer, define Church as you know it.

Subject: Re: Pagan Christianity, the book
Posted by james on Thu, 30 Jun 2011 15:28:23 GMT
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To keep it short,(I think you know that I can give the popular defination that the denominational system uses...building, or I can give the answer HEF taught us about it being the ekklesia, a living organism comprised of true disciples/followers of Christ)I was using the word 'church' in the above post to describe a more structured, institutionalized, traditional assembly of people believing themselves to be christians, lead by the clergy...

Obviously, I see the 'church' as the Body of Christ, His Bride...born again believers who live a life of worship, praise, and obedience 24/7, not just going through the motions for an hour each Sunday.

Subject: Re: Pagan Christianity, the book
Posted by grandom on Thu, 30 Jun 2011 16:23:05 GMT
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Admittedly that is an ambiguous statement and it depends entirely on what ones definition of what the church is.
So even with the correct definition we still make the mistake of saying, were going to church today.

Yes I have been quite adamant in the past about going to "church".
As pointed out in the book I have proof texted passages in the Bible to get my position across ,as has ever member of this forum rightly or wrongly.
I readily admit my mistakes. Always have and have aplogized when I have been wrong.
So yes my position has changed after reading the book.

Jesus loves the church, He is in the church but the church is as you correctly stated the ecclesia.

However we have the word church so ingrained in our heads to mean a building or denomination . But in summation if we don't study what the new testament church really was and how it operated we wont understand that really there are really very few if any true new testament church's in existence today as defined in the book.

So again I apologize for my interpretation of what scripture says.

Subject: Re: Pagan Christianity, the book
Posted by james on Thu, 30 Jun 2011 16:55:29 GMT
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Apology accepted...being quick to repent is good.

That being said, I still would like to find a gathering together of saints of God to go to, but maybe in these last days everyone may not be able to assemble with fellow believers as described in the book of Acts. I don't know near as much as I'd like to believe that I do, but I do believe what ever I lack in understanding, He will reveal to me as I seek first His Kingdom and walk before Him with a humble, teachable spirit.

Subject: Re: Pagan Christianity, the book
Posted by grandom on Thu, 30 Jun 2011 17:03:50 GMT
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I`m with you James. We are missing so much of what the Lord has for us both in worship to Him and ministering to each other.
Churches were local assemblies of believers that ministered together and to each other. They were like communes if I can use the word. When and what one member lacked they helped each other with both temperal and spiritual needs.

Subject: Re: Pagan Christianity, the book
Posted by william on Mon, 04 Jul 2011 02:10:49 GMT
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Chapter 5 of the book is probably the most detailed of all of the chapters. It deals with "The Pastor".

He makes a lot of good points about the rise and progression of the hierarchical type of leadership from the days of the apostles down to our present day. I guess I could say from OT times to present, because he goes from the OT priesthood, to the pope, to the pastor!

A lot of material was presented and apart from his premise--that no one person should be in leadership within an assembly--I'd have to give a hearty AMEN to his findings. Plurality of eldership is a fine concept in an ideal world but unfortunately it doesn't fit the pattern set forth in the Bible.[See the topic in this same section entitled: The Concept of Leadership for a look at what the Bible teaches concerning this issue.]

Chapter 6, Church Costumes, was a bit more light-hearted coming off the previous humdinger of a chapter!

More later.

Blessings,
William

Subject: Re: Pagan Christianity, the book
Posted by william on Mon, 04 Jul 2011 14:42:38 GMT
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Chapter 8 deals with music and worship in the assembly.

Worship in our modern assemblies is usually handled by professionals.

Quote:This is in stark contrast to New Testament teaching and example. In the early church, worship and singing were in the hands of all of God's people.' The church herself led her own songs. Singing and leading songs was a corporate affair, not a professional event led by specialists.

Frank Viola;George Barna. Pagan Christianity?: Exploring the Roots of Our Church Practices (Kindle Locations 1651-1653). Kindle Edition.

The book outlines the rise of the 'worship team' which continues to foster the us/them (clergy/laity) mentality. This is also shown to have pagan origins.

Chapter 9 Hits squarely upon the sacred cow of tithing and clergy salaries.

The book shows that the tithe was a part of the Mosaic law and is not a requirement for the Christian Church.

He even deals with the mistaken idea that the tithing command precedes the law and was established by Abraham (we are children of Abraham by faith) thus making it a fundamental requirement for the Christian Church. It is pointed out that Abraham's tithe was totally voluntary and seemingly a one time event. Christian's who want to follow Abraham's example to the letter need only to tithe once in their lifetime to satisfy this voluntary act!

The tithe later became established as a legal requirement under the law to be a sort of 'temple tax'. Christianity has no temple. So unless a Church is predisposed to view the building as their temple there is no need for a mandated tax to maintain the edifice.

Of course this may be a toughie for the modern-day pastor to accept as he is dependent upon the mandated tithe for his own salary. Sadly, in many Churches, tithing is used as a mark of discipleship and is used as a litmus test to judge the faithfulness of those who would wish to be used in Christian service.

Blessings,
William

Subject: Re: Pagan Christianity, the book
Posted by james on Mon, 04 Jul 2011 21:53:20 GMT
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Good stuff! Now how does we make it mandatory reading in all the churches?

You know, it's hard to break traditions, especially when it's how the bread is buttered. Brother Freeman was way ahead in the teaching on this, but as you stated William, this gives more insight to the way it (the institutional church system) got to be the way it is today.

Subject: Re: Pagan Christianity, the book
Posted by grandom on Mon, 04 Jul 2011 22:48:05 GMT
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It would have to be a forced read James and even then they dont want to know the truth that would set them free.

The (demon)anation spirits are very strong.

The clergy? Forget it. They are fighting this book tooth and nail..

Subject: Re: Pagan Christianity, the book
Posted by james on Tue, 08 Jan 2013 21:15:00 GMT
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I picked up a copy of 'Pagan Christianity' by Frank Viola and George Barna at a thrift store the other day and have been reading it again. I think it's been about 4-5 years since I first read it and now I'm wondering if I read it all the way through due to some of the info in the last couple of chapters. I either didn't know or didn't remember about Paul's thirteen letters being listed in the NT from the longest (Romans) to the shortest (Philemon), rather than in chronological order.

And even though I know that originally The Bible wasn't divided into chapters (done in 1227, according to this book) and then in 1551 the sentences of the chapters were numbered into verses, I seem to have to remind myself of this from time to time. The writers of the book point out how this has changed the way The Bible is approached by Christians. Picking and choosing, taking passages out of context without any regard to whom it was being written and the subject of the writtings.

It would be easy to point out examples of how scriptures are taken out of context by 'others'...making them 'proof-text' to back up their theologial positions or even to promote false teachings(prosperity gospel/JDS); but I've been guilty of doing the same thing before.

It certainly points out things to consider and pray for understanding and wisdom about.

Subject: Re: Pagan Christianity, the book
Posted by james on Sat, 23 Feb 2013 16:19:06 GMT
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I was 'following links' while reading online about different views as to what constitutes The Church. I came across a Messianic Jewish site where I read the following quote.

"The Church...

In the NT, the word ekklesia refers to the group of "called out" people (from every tribe and tongue) in covenant with God by means of their trust in Jesus Christ. In particular, this ekklesia is composed of ONLY those people who confess their faith that Jesus (Yeshua) is none other than God (Adonai) come in the flesh, who died as a sinless substitutionary sacrifice for their sins, was buried, and resurrected from the dead."

The author went on to say that it wasn't through rituals, keeping of 'laws', assemblying in buildings, or any works one could do; but that salvation came through Jesus Christ (The Messiah) and Him alone...(for by grace are ye saved, and that not of yourselves...it's a Gift from God.)

It blessed me because just this last week I met a Messianic Jew and had the oportunity to converse with him while preparing his taxes. It was an edifying experience and also a chance for learning firsthand some of the things they hold to concerning Jewish traditions.

Subject: Re: Pagan Christianity, the book
Posted by Gary on Wed, 30 Dec 2015 15:53:10 GMT
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william wrote on Thu, 23 June 2011 14:52Why put it here? Why not! The whole book deals with things most have taken for granted in the functioning of the Church; those things that need to be totally reexamined if we are to claim that we are 'following the Bible'!

The book points out the inconsistencies of those who say "the Bible is our only guide in the practice of our faith" when many of those practices can be traced back, not to the Bible, but to paganism.

The examples the authors used to get across these inconsistencies are sometimes a bit contrived and hokey, but overall they make their point.

The first chapter --Have we really been doing it by the Book? sets the stage for their premise:
Quote:
"As startling as it may sound, almost everything that is done in our contemporary churches has no basis in the Bible. As pastors preach from their pulpits about being "biblical" and following the "pure Word of God," their words betray them. The truth is that precious little that is observed today in contemporary Christianity maps to anything found in the New Testament church."

Frank Viola;George Barna. Pagan Christianity?: Exploring the Roots of Our Church Practices (Kindle Locations 255-257). Kindle Edition.

The second chapter --The Church Building: Inheriting the Edifice Complex, deals with the unscriptural notion that the building equates to 'the Church'. Most of us already know this but it is nice to see the underlying reasons for this mind-set. The authors give a lot of background information showing exactly how this church/building mentality came to dominate Christianity.

They point out that both the Jews and the pagan religions had three elements: A temple, a priesthood, and sacrifices. The Church of Jesus Christ had no temple, no clergy, and our Sacrifice was a 'once for all' sacrifice. This fact distinguished the early Church from any other contemporary religion. It was a radical departure, founded upon the Rock --Jesus Christ.

I'll try to post more later as time allows but feel free to jump in with any comments or thoughts.

Blessings,
William

Its funny how things change over time.

We read in the Bible: For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?

Williams quote from the book, Pagan Christianity:

Quote:

The book points out the inconsistencies of those who say "the Bible is our only guide in the practice of our faith" when many of those practices can be traced back, not to the Bible, but to paganism.

In the Old Testament we see Israel bringing in the practices of the heathen religions and weaving them into their religion. Prophets of old spoke out and were mocked and ridiculed. Many did not heed the warnings but persecuted the Prophets. It does not seem like its any different today. The church world has brought in the practices of the Pagans, occultists, and the worlds ways, into the church. Then professing Christians will mock and ridicule anyone who speaks out against their practices. While the Bible speaks out against Paganism and its practices.

It appears that man all through the ages has substituted the things of God with what is popular in their day and time.

Ecclesiastes 1:9
That which has been is what will be, That which is done is what will be done, And there is nothing new under the sun.

They say History repeats itself and it almost appears like this is the case.

Gary