

Rethinking Church – Addressing a Danger

Written by Frank Viola at the request of Tyndale Publishers

As I write these words, **Pagan Christianity** (coauthored with George Barna: Tyndale, 2008) will have been out for a decade.

When the book first hit shelves, some described it as “a bomb dropped on the institutional church playground.” Soon afterward, a storm hit with biblical fury. The book was venerated and vilified, honored and hammered, loved and loathed. And of course, profoundly misrepresented by those threatened by its unconventional message.

Yet within its pages, many found lightning in a box.

The message of *Pagan Christianity* was simple: we have departed from what God has called the church to be. More specifically, the common practice of church is radically different from what we find in the New Testament. The book tells the story of how “church” morphed into what it is today.

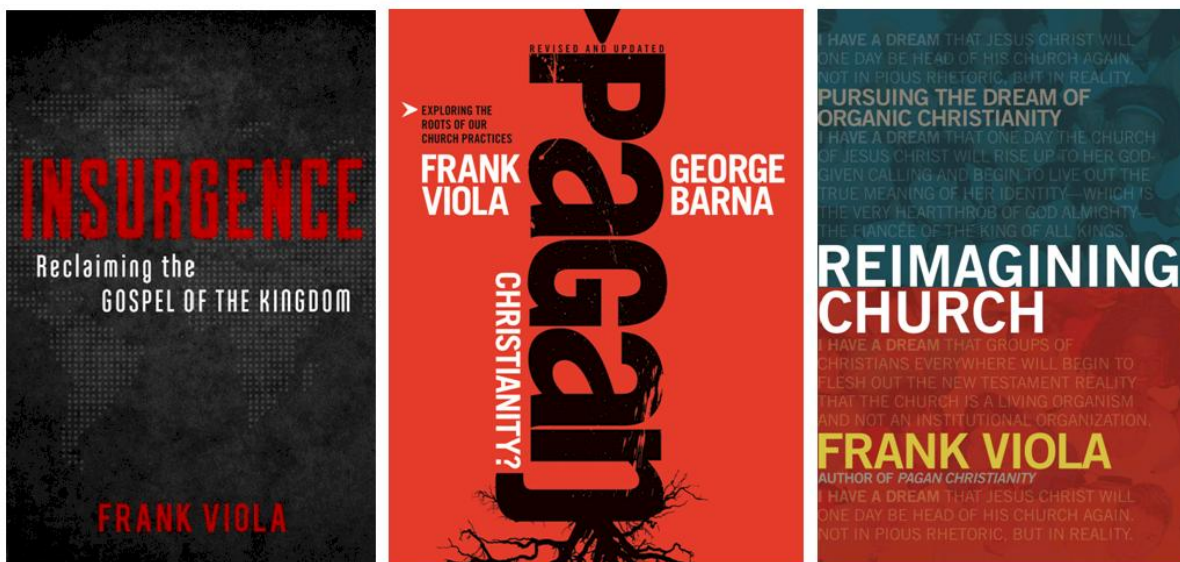
Ten years later (2018), the book has yet to be refuted. Every objection has been thoroughly answered and put to rest (see PaganChristianity.org/answers for details).

Of course, *Pagan Christianity* wasn’t a stand-alone volume. It was only the first part – the deconstructive part – of a fuller argument. The constructive sequels came out within two years – **Reimagining Church** (David C. Cook, 2008), **From Eternity to Here** (David C. Cook, 2009), and **Finding Organic Church** (David C. Cook, 2009).

Together, these four books present a biblically-based vision of how magnificent, compelling, and glorious the body of Christ once was and how it can be recovered today. Each volume holds nothing back, but makes the case with all guns blazing.

The books were not only rooted in decades of biblical study, but they were also forged on the anvil of over 20 years of hard-won experience of living in and raising up NT-styled churches – including the discoveries made through painful failure, glorious success, and enormous suffering – all of which are woven together in the authentic establishment of face-to-face community.

(My newest offering, **Insurgence: Reclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom**, takes the vision sketched out in my previous books on radical church restoration to new dimensions, especially as it relates to the most powerful message in the New Testament – the explosive gospel of the kingdom.)



At the time *Pagan Christianity* released, George Barna and I were virtually lone voices who were hammering an unconventional drum. With the exception of a few others, we were voices crying in the wilderness.

Fast forward to 2018 — a decade later.

Other writers are beginning to tread the path that Barna and I pioneered 10 years ago, echoing the same vision.

This is encouraging, for we no longer have to take the bullets alone.

However, a danger looms. That danger is the temptation to try and reinvent the wheel independently. In every case I've seen of this nature (over the last thirty years, mind you), the result has always been the same: the antidote ends up carrying the disease.

The common trend among Christian leaders today is to fly solo and isolate themselves from their peers, especially those from whom they can learn much. By contrast, cross pollination is written in the bloodstream of God's kingdom. But it requires deep humility and cross-bearing.

My prayer and hope, therefore, is that those who have caught the vision of God's passion for the ekklesia in recent years will resist the temptation to isolate themselves from those who have plowed the ground before them. For only as we reach out to one another will we see the Insurgence spread and watch the Spirit build it on a foundation that no man can topple.

When it comes to the restoration of the church, God is after much more than glorified Bible studies that meet in living rooms. The ekklesia in the beating heart of God transcends polishing the iron on the Titanic. Cross pollinating with those who have experience (including the scars to prove it) is the remedy. And it's a hill worth dying on.

Let those who have ears to hear, let them hear ...

Frank Viola

August 2018

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Frank Viola has helped thousands of people around the world to deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ and enter into a more vibrant and authentic experience of church. His mission is to help serious followers of Jesus know their Lord more deeply so they can experience real transformation and make a lasting impact. Viola has written many books on these themes, including the new release, *Insurgence: Reclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom*. His blog, [frankviola.org](#), is rated as one of the most popular in Christian circles today.

