

In a recent book by Frank Viola and George Barna called 'Pagan Christianity', the authors write a seemingly convincing thesis about the pagan roots of elements of today's Christian church. This book is a challenging read and certainly raises issues about what we do in church, the roots - and motivates us to change to line up with Scripture - all excellent motivations.

While this is an admirable cause, elements of the book appear to be written with a clear agenda in mind, which perhaps undermines their attempts to find a Biblical model, as personal beliefs often seem to transcend the Scriptural evidence and application. While the book is well researched, there are a number of areas where the historical research outweighs convincing Biblical arguments.

One such area that this will focus on is the chapter on worship. A significant effort and level of academic research has gone into showing us how elements of Protestant worship have roots in both Catholic and pagan culture. Around 90% of the chapter expresses these historical legacies, whereas only 10% at most, deals with solutions and suggestions. Unfortunately, this is where some of the arguments come a little unstuck and their own thesis almost undermines their own conclusions.

The core of the argument is that *"the traditional order of the service (is) unscriptural and heavily influenced by paganism... (and) ...does not lead to the spiritual growth God intended."* (p75). Moreover, it *"represses mutual participation and the growth of the Christian community. It puts a choke hold on the functioning of the body of Christ by silencing its members."* The emphasis throughout the four pages of exhortation to a new way of worship, are biased solely towards an informal arrangement of worship where every person can have a word or song. While this is a perfectly Biblical way of doing things, to suggest it is the only way of doing things both undermines the thesis and itself puts a choke hold on the work of the church – something which the authors are at pains to show the existing methods of worship are doing. In our efforts to be strictly Biblical, we must avoid the temptation to become rigid and under the law. God has revealed many ways of worshipping him, on a Sunday morning and beyond. The authors' arguments seem more personal preference than Biblically expansive.

Of course, as the authors admit, just because some things are 'influenced by paganism' does not necessarily make them bad. The authors quote the example of sitting in chairs or using carpets. Neither of these can be considered harmful.

Of course, not everything that we do in church is mentioned in the Bible. It is amusing that churches who insist on using an organ and not having a band (as it is unscriptural) don't seem to find the lack of an organ in the Bible as ironic. Clearly, there are elements of 'pagan' culture that can be used. The Bible is the written Word of God, not his whole counsel. It is what he in his infinite wisdom has made available to us. There is no mention of the internet, yet churches take a Biblical principle and apply it to the contemporary world. Much of our worship is similar. If it were as simple as doing things one way in worship and Christians having it all, we'd be seeing a very different church. But, we can learn from 'the world' and need to, without 'the world' infecting the church.

Furthermore, it is incumbent to point out that when approaching anything in the Bible, we need to take the whole of Scripture into our thinking. As God's Word is his written counsel, the Old Testament has application today, as much as the New Testament. When thinking about 'worship' or 'ways of doing church' or 'leadership', we cannot simply argue that the New Testament 'way' is the 'right way'. Such thinking undermines the legitimacy of the entire of God's counsel as existing in his complete written Word.

In addition, when we read accounts of the 'New Testament' church, we find a model of a church in its infancy and in specific cultures – both in terms of the whole church and in terms of individual churches in towns and cities. We know that (aside from Revelation), the New Testament was written up to 67AD or so. If we consider that the Holy Spirit was given in 33AD (the age of Jesus when he died/was resurrected), this is only a 34-year period of 'the church' on which to base any New Testament models. In this, we see an apostolic movement of the church in its early days. What we do not have is any model of what those churches 'became' over time. Of course, we learn from Acts, Corinthians and the Pauline Epistles, but we must be careful about making sweeping judgements about 'the New Testament Church'. Indeed, when looking at churches like the Corinthian church and the scolding it rightly received from Paul, we could argue there are plenty of elements of the 'New Testament' church that we would not want to copy! Overall, God is big enough and the Scriptures are wide enough to not stipulate exactly how we should do church, outside of the basic truths of God's Word and Christ's work at the Cross. This is one of God's master-strokes in the Bible – with church transcending and expanding over time, cultures, races and nations.

If Christian worship was such a bad thing, the church has done pretty well over the last hundreds of years! It is clearly an exaggeration to simply suggest that the existing model

of church worship has choked the functioning body by silencing members. Even if we look at worship as something musical, there are thousands upon thousands who are involved in musical / worship roles – instrumentation, choirs, vocalists, audio technicians, video technicians, lighting engineers, choir directors, worship leaders and so on. These people have all been liberated by the expression of worship that we now have in many churches. If we trust that we have Almighty God guiding us in all that we do, we must be careful to simply suggest that everything we've been doing in 'church' is wrong. The logical conclusion of this is that we do not place trust in God? If the church were that far off compass, surely God would have already corrected us. It could be argued that God is now doing something new (as he always is), but let's be careful about throwing out years of effective solutions. It could be argued that God has used what is 'pagan' and turned it round for good (Christmas?) After all, there is much 'in the world' that we can learn from!

Moreover, most people on a Sunday morning worship service can be involved in worship by singing and worshipping God physically in all the different ways this involves. Musical worship must have those who are musical involved and many have grown in their instrument or vocally through the unique opportunities available to musicians in churches (see 1 Chronicles 15.22). For many people, their church is the only place they can express and grow in their musical giftings as they serve God in this way. Leadership skills have been developed, team skills built, many key skills learned and relationships enhanced through Sunday morning worship and the meetings beyond. If we extend this beyond musical worship, there have been many more millions of people empowered and given opportunity on Sunday mornings alone. This sense of belonging and involvement is often the key that keeps people in church serving God and then builds their relationship with Jesus.

Second, the argument is that the Protestant order of worship strangles the headship of Jesus Christ, as entire services are directed by one person, which suppresses freedom of Jesus to speak through his body at will. This *"does violence to Paul's vision of the body of Christ, where every member functions in the church meeting for the common good."* (p76, in the authors' interpretation of 1 Corinthians 12)

But is this a Biblical argument? I would suggest not. It is well worth noting that when God authored the Bible, he chose to use individuals to write it down and record it. Paul (For example) was the author of Romans. Here we have a single individual, operating under the instruction of God recording God's Word for others to benefit from. If we accept the

author's argument that we can't have one person representing God in a church meeting, should we reject the Bible? After all, individuals, not a whole body of people, wrote separate chapters! No, because God uses individuals, in and out of church meetings! Yes, the Bible is unique in inception, but we serve the same God and are filled with the same Holy Spirit.

Even in the writing of the book 'Pagan Christianity', one could use the argument that because the authors have written something, it represses the Holy Spirit's freedom to give me unique words, as what I am reading has already been written. We could similarly argue not to use pre-written songs as they are not 'Spirit-led'. Yet in both instance, we have to assume the working of the Holy Spirit in the writing of what has been written. To say the Spirit has more freedom one way than in another seems dishonouring to God, a very limiting legalistic principle, and denying us the freedom God's given us in Christ.

It is undoubtedly true that every church / member of the body can only operate under the headship / lordship of Jesus, expressed through the Holy Spirit, giving glory to God the Father. It is also mostly true that there is a plurality of 'leaders' when studying the New Testament. However, while plurality of leadership is true of the NT church and can be a model outside of the church, it is also true that by having a 'lead person' you are not necessarily denying the headship of Jesus. I lead projects, with a team. We are all equal (although not in responsibility), we all work together to make decisions and things happen but ultimately I am the contact point and the lead person. This does not get in the way of the lordship of Jesus, as all I do is for Jesus and it is disingenuous to suggest otherwise. Simply having a plurality of leadership no more makes a church under the headship of Jesus, than having a leader doesn't make it under the headship of Jesus. It's not about structure, but about character and obedience to the Holy Spirit. After all, a team of leaders is simply a collection of individuals still standing before God, in the same way a single 'leader' would. Yes, there are checks and balances, but there can be with a leader, too. It isn't the principle of 'leader' that is wrong, it is expectation, wrong approach and flawed character that is the issue. This is what we should address.

A preacher or a worship leader has likely spent a long time seeking God, preparing the words or the songs, praying (maybe fasting) and spending time in God's presence. All of this assumes the control, surrender to and leading of the Holy Spirit. It could be argued that giving freedom to anyone to speak on a Sunday morning could be less likely to come from God. Has everyone that wants to give a word spent as much time in God's

presence? They may well have and even if they haven't, as sons and daughters of God they have the same access to God as anyone else, but the question has to be asked. If someone has prepared something in advance, do we do them a great dis-service to push them aside for words that have not been tested, or possibly from a person who may have an agenda, or is not walking closely with God? Even in the strictest worship service, we are free to pray, to thank God, to worship, to read our Bible, to write down notes. Clearly this is a level of freedom – and in many services, the body has far more liberty than this.

But what of the criticisms of the position of 'worship leader'? If worship services are open to anyone to say anything then surely at the moment someone has a Scripture, or a song, or a picture – they 'become' the lead worshipper as they are taking a 'lead'. To argue that there should not be a 'worship leader' is impossible, as without someone taking a 'lead' at some point in some way, there would be silence and a passive church. The 'worship leader' (or servant) is simply someone appointed by the church (the whole church being already active in their appointment) and who has been delegated an authority to do something because of spiritual gifting, as we've seen with Kenaniah in 1 Chronicles 15.22. This is simply good management and happens in every area of life where people are appointed to do something in order to enable others. Not every church has a worship leader, but someone has to be responsible for areas of church life, if only being at home to allow people in for a meeting. The same is true for a worship leader. It may well have been abused in some churches but this is an issue of spirituality, accountability, communication – as with many other areas of church life.

But does allowing anyone to speak or bring a voice actually repress the headship of Christ? The Godhead is ordered and in 1 Corinthians 14, Paul encourages us to have orderly worship because God is a God of order and structure, even down to the atomic structures and DNA that make up living things. Can we have so much 'freedom' that we neglect order, discipline and structure that we lose focus and become less rigorous? Of course, some services have become extremely tight and controlled, but this is often a necessity that comes with large numbers of people in any context. Imagine a church of 10,000 where anyone could say anything – not feasible or desirable!

Moreover, when we read 1 Corinthians 12, we do not have a picture of a church meeting or service; we have a picture of the body of Christ as his church. The authors appear to mistake the Sunday service for the body of the church that operates as one above and

beyond a 2 hour service on a Sunday morning. Time and again, Paul uses the word 'body' in the text. The 'body' is clearly the church in its widest sense, not a specific event.

For the authors of the book, the key to worship is the belief that every member of the church should have a voice in worship. The ideal scenario is one where believers sit together and the Holy Spirit leads everyone in giving a word, starting a song, relating a testimony or reading a Scripture. This is an excellent model of worship and has a Biblical basis from Acts. But is it the only model of doing church, and is it even one we should be simply copying in our contemporary world?

For now, we must argue that although it is a valid form of worship suggested by the authors, God has given his church through the ages, races and cultures many different forms of worship. To claim one is better than another seems presumptuous. While the authors argue from a Biblical basis, there are many things we do today that are not found in the Bible, yet have Scriptural principles underlying them – for example using the internet as a tool for teaching and evangelism. Are we not to do these things?

In fact, the authors' premise that the Protestant order of worship is limiting God could equally be applied to the author's insistence that their preferred way of Sunday worship is the right or best way. If we are to be free in Christ and open to the Holy Spirit leading us, we need to open to different ways of worship, rather than being so prescriptive.

Above this, the truth is that the body expresses its worship throughout the week in a number of ways. People intercede, fast, encourage, prophesy, admonish, teach, show hospitality and so on throughout the week in small groups, meetings and inter-personal relationships. The picture in 1 Corinthians 12 is of one body flowing together in unity (not uniformity). The gifts God has given to his body extend beyond those that have time to operate on a Sunday service. By limiting their argument to a Sunday morning and incorrectly applying 1 Corinthians 12, the authors undermine their own premise.

Thirdly, the argument is that the Sunday service has become boring, predictable and lost any sense of freshness. For many churches this is sadly too true. But the reasonings suggested by the authors are superficial rather than the deeper motivations. Rather than being rooted in seeker-sensitive services, or hymn sandwich combinations (how innovative can anything be ultimately?) – the root is spiritual. Freshness, dynamism in the Christian life comes from our relationship with God and our love for him. It is being open

and submitted to the Holy Spirit, in our ever-growing love for God, his Word and time in his presence that refreshes and inspires us. A Sunday service, of whatever variety is merely the coating of lives that need to be overflowing with Jesus and his life. The root cause is within the individual hearts, rather than in the style.

Fourth, the *“Protestant liturgy... actually hinders spiritual transformation”* (p78) because it devalues participation and passivity, at the expense of involvement and informality. The authors write (correctly) that the *“New Testament is not silent with respect to how we Christians are to meet”* (p79). As we have seen, the suggested approach is one where there is a group of Christians sat together, where all of them have the opportunity to be led by the Spirit and offer words, encouragements, testimonies, readings from Scripture and informal songs (presumably these songs would have to be Spirit-led and not pre-written ones for the reasons previously argued).

There is nothing wrong with this pattern of worship, but are we to be legalistically led by one New Testament pattern of worship? In the ‘delving deeper’ section of the book, we learn more about being under Christ’s headship and how this should allow the freedom for everyone to say something in a service, otherwise ‘we would question whether your church service is under Christ’s headship’ (p82). However, the authors admit that this would need directing so that people understand what this freedom means. In other words, there would need to be clear teaching in order to have an orderly service. Could a Sunday morning be the place for this kind of teaching? Surely it should be.

Yet in a service where there is complete freedom, who leads it? To simply say that it is under the Spirit’s leadership should go without saying, but God has given us common sense and works through his people on the earth. We have already argued that being led by Jesus doesn’t necessarily mean this can only happen in a free and informal gathering, or that it can’t happen elsewhere. After all, there are clear leaders throughout the New Testament (Lydia for example) or the apostles chosen in Acts 6 with the choosing of the seven. As argued previously, the key to worship comes in the Godliness of individual and corporate bodies, not in arguments over structures. We need to be changed from within by the Holy Spirit, not simply tamper with what is visible in service structures and changes. Any service ‘structure’ or ‘un-structure’ can quickly become legalistic.

In a further chapter entitled, “Ministers of Music” the authors make several other points about musical worship on a Sunday that are worth investigating.

Again, the book's argument is that with specific choir or worship leaders, is that it can rob God's people of leading their own singing in meetings with divine worship in their own hands, thus allowing "*Jesus Christ... direct the singing of His church rather than have it led by a human facilitator.*" (p166). But is this really a logical conclusion? I'd suggest not.

Here we must analyse the idea that having a worship leader therefore means the church is disempowered, or that it stops Jesus directing the singing. A worship leader should be chosen because of spiritual character. When choosing songs, many worship leaders are open to other people suggesting songs and regularly listen to and change songs accordingly. Similarly, Jesus has delegated the gospel to us as his physical body on earth. We have our part; God has his part. We don't say that God should simply lead people to Christ and not play our part. Surely the same is true of worship. As we have already argued, depriving musicians and others of their giftings actually disempowers the body, rather than liberating it.

Moreover, does everyone really have the right to choose songs? Worship leaders are not a special breed (they are simply human and a part of the local church) but they do have musical skill and are entrusted to seek God's face. Are we saying that opening up songs to anyone in a church body makes the service more 'led by Jesus', than if a few people 'lead'? It is fair to ask whether everyone should have a voice in a church. Clearly we cannot argue that everyone hears from God to the same level. Aside from disobedience or people actively sinning – they may be passive resistance in terms of people not listening to God. Without being legalistic, it is too simplistic and defies spiritual reason to argue that everyone should have an equal voice in the local church in music or beyond. Should someone who rarely attends church, or never takes responsibility, or is deliberately critical of everything, be given a voice in the Sunday service?

In the section 'delving deeper' the authors further argue that in the Old Testament, only the Levites were chosen to do worship. Under the New Testament covenant of the blood of Jesus, we are all now priests. But let's read one of the passages the authors quote and specifically 1 Chronicles 25. First of all, these musicians were chosen out of the multitude of the body (this has not necessarily changed simply because we are under a new covenant!) and secondly verse 7 clearly states, "all of them trained and skilled in music for the LORD". Even using the authors' own arguments, this cannot have changed. Not everyone is called or skilled in music, or skilled in music for the Lord. The priesthood

of all believers in the NT is true. However, not everyone was a musician in the priesthood. Time and again we learn of musicians being chosen, having skill and doing it because they were good at it. This hasn't changed today!

Arguing against the professionalism of music, the authors argue, "...*the ministry of singing belongs in the hands of all of God's people. And there should be an outlet for this ministry to be expressed.*" (p167). This seems reasonable at first glance. The authors quote Ephesians 5.19 where the Bible encourages us to "speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs." But there are outlets for this – singing together as a church, singing or initiating songs in small groups, listening to CDs, singing on your own or with your family, hearing worship services and joining in via Christian TV or radio.

In 1 Samuel 10.5-6, we discover that music is often associated with prophecy: "*After that you will go to Gibeah of God, where there is a Philistine outpost. As you approach the town, you will meet a procession of prophets coming down from the high place with lyres, tambourines, flutes and harps being played before them, and they will be prophesying. The Spirit of the LORD will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person.*" Here in 1 Samuel, among other places, music is associated with one group specifically – prophets. It could be argued that a worship leader has a highly valid Scriptural basis, being closely associated with the work of a prophet. While this is in the Old Testament, the work of a prophet is clearly a gift of God to his church today (1 Corinthians 12.28). Additionally, it could be argued that the worship leader was an outcome of a clear move of the Holy Spirit in the 1960s. The worship leaders of the church today (as with the songwriters of the past) have been given incredible gifts and songs that have radically impacted the body of Christ.

We cannot take Ephesians 5.19 and apply it solely to Sunday morning worship as this is clearly not the context in which Paul wrote this – instead it is a set of guidelines about the Christian life.

Furthermore, Ephesians 5.19 continues to say, "Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord." Should we therefore argue that music should be silent?! Of course not as a literal translation of the Bible (without context or correct application) will always be in danger of concluding incorrect doctrine. In reality, Paul is writing about an attitude of the heart – of thankfulness and gratitude (worship) to God for all that he has done and does do for us.

This is done inwardly in our hearts and verbally through the mouth – out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks! (Matt 12.34).

If everyone is able to choose a song on a Sunday morning, the result can be chaos. We already know that in brethren churches that started with great intentions, often we find ‘Mr Smith’ getting up and praying the same kind of prayer, ‘Mrs Small’ getting up and singing her favourite hymn etc. Additionally, without any kind of guidance just in terms of song choice, the result could be chaos. Unlike the ‘early church’ we have 100s of 1000s of songs now, with churches writing their own songs, songs in different languages and styles (music is not always as playable on an instrument that isn’t the one used to construct a song – eg hymns with chord changes per syllable have to be re-developed for guitar).

Then we have the issue of choice – with so many 100s of songs, what do we do if people choose songs that others don’t know, or that have theological problems etc. This is an issue beyond style. Certainly we don’t want to control people but to liberate. But a good worship leader does liberate. It isn’t the position, but the character of the person that is the key issue, as with any other ministry in church. Worship leaders today are often theologically trained and aware. Surely this means their great expertise should be used.

The authors yet again show their personal preference of a brethren style meeting before concluding, *“This is exactly how the first-century Christians worshipped, by the way.”* (p167) That may well be so. But we live in the 21st century world, not the 1st century...

The Bible has relevance for all time and God’s Word is completely true and faithful. But to announce that the first century way is the way is inadequate. We don’t only baptise people in lakes because Jesus was baptised in a lake; we don’t all get baptised in the Holy Spirit by visible tongues of fire resting on us (Acts 2.3). We cannot simply take what the Bible says outside of its core doctrine and apply it line-for-line in every context, culture, age and situation (or we could argue that we should all go and build an ark, or eat milk and honey etc!) But we can learn from the Bible, as all Scripture is God breathed (2 Timothy 3.16).

The authors then use 1 Corinthians 14 as part of their arguments and indeed this does seem to confirm some of their reasoning. For example, verse 26 says, “When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an

interpretation.” But surely Paul is making a statement of fact, not a theological basis for church. Paul does not say that this is the model for church. In fact he never gives a direct model. He goes on to state that only 2-3 people should speak in tongues (and there should be interpretation) and only 2-3 people are allowed to prophesy. Furthermore, in the middle of Paul’s exhortation to the church at Corinth, he reminds them that women should be silent, as it is a disgrace for a woman to speak in church (verse 34-35). Interestingly, the authors do not argue that women should be silent in church despite this clear statement from Paul being within the same passage of Scripture...

To clarify, when Paul speaks he says that every one in the church has a word - but then goes on to say that only 2-3 people should speak. So, far from encouraging a church where everyone has a word, Paul is clearly encouraging a more disciplined approach where only 2-3 people speak or prophesy.

So what do we conclude overall from the second half of 1 Corinthians 14? Well, we know that there are Biblical principles to learn from about orderly worship. Paul is concerned with the glory of God and a church that honours God in word and deed and yet is accessible to those who do not believe. We must consider the motivation of people who speak out in a service (‘all of these must be done for the strengthening of the church’ verse 26). Furthermore, where church is done this way, people should carefully weigh what has been said as Paul writes that the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. Put simply; prophecy (note this comes from prophets) must also be tested by those who are prophetic.

Overall, the revelation of 1 Corinthians 14 is that while the Scripture does enlighten us today, the context was both for the Corinthian church (especially relating to women not speaking) and moreover to be applied where church is done in this way. It does not suggest that church must be done this way. We do know that there must be order and there is clear evidence from Paul’s letter this was not happening, hence the letter. The same risks are surely true today.

There are a number of other factors in the 21st century that influence a Sunday service, worship and music that the authors don’t touch on, but that impact our church life. For example, we live in a technological culture so technology is a valid mechanism to use to reach and teach. So is the pursuit of excellence and quality. We need to be ordered in

worship, to be directly led by God as he calls specific churches to fulfil specific roles (for example, Crossover Church in Tampa is a hip-hop church).

Churches reach and teach different peoples, sub-cultures, ages and races. We live in a world where quality music is expected, so why not use quality music for God on a Sunday morning, among other things. Many unbelievers feel comfortable coming into an Anglican church with a set order, as they know what to expect. Others enjoy coming to high quality, visually accessible services. Would every person feel comfortable in a room where they are sat in a circle and anything could happen? Many people don't even like this in fun contexts. There are many Biblical and other practical factors as to why different expressions of meetings and worship are valid.

In essence, the book is an argument for the priesthood of all believers and this is quite correct and should be encouraged constantly. The mistake comes in applying this to a Sunday morning service, musical worship, the sermon and so on. Our churches do need to change, do need to be increasingly Biblical and this is a work Christ is doing in his body. But the concept of everyone being involved on a Sunday service by singing, speaking words, having Scriptures or sharing thoughts as an outworking of the priesthood of all believers, doesn't stand Biblical scrutiny or practical outworking, especially in medium to large churches.

Why? Put simply - the priesthood of all believers is an expression of the church in its fullness and not simply an outworking of a Sunday morning service. We are not all teachers (note there are people who 'teach' – when do they do this if church is simply an expression of everyone's opinion. Do we give as much credence to those who are not teachers, as to those who are teachers, or prophets?) We are not all apostles, not all have the gift of healing or miracles. But each and every element, connected together forms the body of the church. Limiting application of this to a Sunday morning service is clearly not the Biblical standpoint.

So what can we conclude from this assessment of two chapters of 'Pagan Christianity?' While the authors' are to be heavily commended for their research and thought-provoking analysis, the conclusions they bring must be subject to Biblical and practical thoughts.

Firstly, there is evidence to suggest that the book, while written with the best of intentions, seems to want to bring the conclusions that the authors wish to bring. But the

purpose of rigorous Scriptural interpretation must be to reveal God's truth, rather than to simply support a pre-existing thesis.

Secondly, we must be cautious to accept determinations based on incorrect interpretations of the Bible. The inferences contained within the book regarding 1 Chronicles 25, 1 Corinthians 12, 1 Corinthians 14 and Ephesians 5.19 are sufficiently incorrect to raise serious questions about conclusions made from these texts.

Nevertheless, the authors are to be respected and congratulated for opening up new angles and ideas. For all of us, our heart is to know God and his Word more deeply, see the Kingdom of God grow and for the bride of Christ to become ever more ready (Revelation 19.7). Any questions raised must be taken very seriously, new and creative solutions must be implemented with thought. We must be very open to new ideas and what the Spirit of God is saying to us today. The book is useful in challenging the excesses of leadership - pastoral or musical – and in the excesses of the church. The conclusions often reached are to change what we have. It could be better argued that we simply need to capture God's heart in all that we do, rather than throw things out.

Certainly the book seems to target the larger American model of churches and its application is far less relevant in the smaller and less commercialised UK church, where there are far fewer 'pew fillers' and churches increasingly work together across cities and many are involved in church. Therefore any conclusions reached in a UK context should be subject to even further interrogation, thought and Biblical testing.

It is also very true to say that the ways of doing church expressed by the authors are extremely valid and have a Biblical foundation. But this book leaves you with the distinct impression that on the quest to find God's heart and understand the Bible, personal preference has become too high a priority in conclusions made. It may well be that some ideas in this book are right for you and your church. It is equally likely that they will not be.

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