

REMNANT, RESTORATION, AND REVOLUTION

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GOING OUTSIDE THE CAMP.

It is no secret that many Christians are going outside the camp, so to speak, for worship and ministry. By that I mean that they are leaving the churches in order to pursue a more fulfilling Christian experience. They are rejecting the “one-size-fits-all” character of many of the churches in the traditional denominations. They are even rejecting the newer non-denominational churches if they perceive the same pattern of lack of God’s presence, shortage of lasting spiritual fruit, and lack of opportunities to minister.

What Christians are seeking outside the camp is a personal intimate relationship with God, first-hand, not through a pastoral intermediary. They are seeking a venue that allows them to minister hands-on, rather than to just sit in a pew and watch the show. They are seeking to minister to both God and man. They are seeking an opportunity to not just go to church but to be the Church. They are moving away from reliance on church to reliance on God, alone.

This new Christian behavior has been noticed by that premier statistician of Christianity, George Barna. He has tasked his professional Barna Group to investigate it. And, Barna has published the research results in his 2005 book entitled, Revolution¹. Their results are based on studying a dozen representative mini-movements having total membership of less than three million and operating outside the established churches.

The title expresses Barna's opinion that this new Christian venture is as revolutionary as those eighteenth and nineteenth century (peculiarly American) movements, the first and second Great Awakenings. However, Barna believes that this movement is different in kind from the two "Awakenings." Whereas those were Revivals of the institutional churches, this one is Restoration of the Church. It is restoring a Church through which Jesus, via the Holy Spirit, can work effectively. And, I remember that Jesus said the Church shall be restored, prior to His second coming [Mat. 17:11].

ON BEING THE CORPORATE JESUS.

Several things attracted me about Barna's new book. First was his assertion that the new "Revolutionaries" demonstrate something more than just how to worship in the presence of God. They demonstrate what it is to be the presence of God. This immediately brings to mind that Bible verse about creation waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God [Rom. 8:19]. And, in fact, Barna says that Saint Paul was describing "Revolutionaries" in the Book of Romans, offering guidance in seven areas of a changed life.

If Barna's revolutionary Christian movement is the long-awaited manifestation of the sons of God, then there is another connection to be made. The apostle John tells us that it's one thing to be a son of God, but it's another to understand what that means. And, it's going to take Jesus' appearance (Gk.- *phaneroo*) in the Church before we will know what it means to be a son of God [1 John 3:2]. That means that the manifestation of sons of God will be seen as the *phaneroo* appearance of Jesus in His Body, the Church.

This spiritual appearance is prior to Jesus' physical *parousia* return [1 John 2:28]. In the book, The Church Visited², I have previously made the case that Jesus' *phaneroo* appearance in the Church is where Jesus reveals Himself, to build its confidence during the Great Tribulation period. If this is Barna's current revolutionary movement, that means that we may be farther into the Great Tribulation timeframe than we realize.

A second feature of Barna's book that attracted me is his discovery of some revolutionary characterizations that come in sevens. These include seven "passions" of a revolutionary and seven areas of a revolutionary changed life (Romans). The seven revolutionary passions are faith-based conversations, intentional spiritual growth, intimate worship, spiritual friendships, servanthood, family faith, and resource investment.

The Church model developed in The Church Visited is also seven-fold³. So, in Figure 1., below, I examine Barna's seven "passions," to see if they match the Church's seven-fold contexts of FAITH, TRUTH, SPIRIT, POWER, MINISTRY, DOCTRINE, and MATURITY. In the order I've listed the passions above, they do. I also match the passions to Paul's seven charismatic motivational gifts of the Book of Romans and John's seven focuses of the end-times churches of the Book of Revelation. All of these biblical 'sevens' characterize the seven-fold model for Christianity.

BARNA'S PASSIONS	MOTIVATION [Rom. 12:6-8]	FOCUS [Rev. 2-3]	CHRISTIAN CONTEXT
Faith-based Conversations	Sharing (Most Valuable Possession)	First Works [Rev. 2:5]	FAITH
Intentional Spiritual Growth	Exhortation (Building Up)	Witnessing [Rev. 2:13]	TRUTH
Intimate Worship	Prophecy (Hearing God)	Spirituality [Rev. 2:8-11]	SPIRITUALITY
Spiritual Friendships	Leadership	Increased Works [Rev. 2:18]	POWER
Servanthood	Ministry	Watchfulness [Rev. 3:2]	MINISTRY
Family Faith	Teaching	Vision [Rev. 3:18-19]	DOCTRINE
Resource Investment	Mercy	Opening, Shutting [Rev. 3:7]	MATURITY

Figure 1. Relating Barna's Passions to Biblical Motivation and Focus.

WHERE IS THIS REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT?

According to Barna, these ministries outside the organized churches are poorly structured, inadequately led, lacking a larger strategic framework, with no incremental plan ... humanly speaking. And, they are almost impossible to characterize or market. Although they are each narrowly focused, they lack a focal point and are virtually invisible. This means two things to me. First, they are God-driven. Second, they are exactly what is needed in a time of persecution of Christians, as is the Great Tribulation.

Barna estimates that in the U.S. population of 300-Million, 77-Million are churched. But, there are presently 20-Million additional, who are "revolutionaries." He predicts that by 2025 the revolutionary numbers will equal the churched numbers, at 30%-35% of the population. He contrasts "macro" models of existing and new church experience with the "micro-" model of the revolutionary movement. (Macro means large scale modeling, such as of denominations. Micro means modeling on a smaller scale, as of individual independent groups.)

Four Holistic Macro-Models.

Barna defines a macro-model church as an all-inclusive faith community that addresses the complete array of passions that lead a person to a Christlike life. Such communities are organizationally visible. There are four of these forms, as listed below:

1. Local Church Congregational Form.

Barna defines the Congregational form as a definable group of people that regularly meets at the same place to engage in religious routines and programs under

the guidance of a paid pastor who provides doctrinal teaching and organizational direction. As such, this first macro form is organized the same as the denominational churches. Only the focus is different. And, there are examples of such churches, such as Highland Baptist in Waco, Texas and Calvary Baptist Church in Houston. Prior to 1999, Aldersgate United Methodist Church in College Station, Texas also met these specifications.

2. Family-Based Faith Experience.

This is a church focused on the array of seven passions, and whose members comprise an extended family, becoming a close-knit faith community.

3. House Church.

These are not the same as small groups spawned by standard-form local churches to supplement what occurs on the local church campus. Rather, these are small aggregations of believers that meet in someone's home on a regular basis to fulfill all the functions of a traditional congregation focused on the passions. These include worship, teaching, fellowship, and stewardship.

4. Internet-Based Cyber Church.

This name refers to the range of spiritual experiences delivered through the Internet. Again, this points to Websites that are focused on the seven passions, rather than standard church websites. And, there must be an on-line worship experience.

Summarizing the Macro Models.

The first three of the above Macro Church forms are the same as for the standard church. The only thing different is the focus on Barna's passions. And, that range of passions would be characterized as 'full-gospel.' Therefore, some of the full-sized churches visible today could well be included among Barna's Macro Churches. It's not a matter of organizational form as much as it is a matter of focus.

Barna says that the fastest growing are numbers 3. and 4., the house-based and Internet (cyber)-based. They may be described as discrete, in that they may be located, physically and organizationally. In contrast, Barna describes the revolutionary micro-model as distributed. And it is the fastest growing of all. The distributed revolutionary movement is organizationally invisible.

Numerous Holistic Micro-Models.

Barna says that the individual micro-models are each separately focused on just one of the seven revolutionary passions. Examples include:

1. Independent Worship Events.

These events are designed to help people connect with God through an intense worship experience. The event is geared toward getting people to worship God and grow from that foundation. The events are not associated with a specific church or denomination. The attendees have had no prior connection to each other.

2. Marketplace Fellowships.

An example might be a businessmen's prayer breakfast.

3. Coaching Communities.

A group of coaches meeting with a Christian (passion) objective.

4. Narrow-cast Internet-based Faith Groups.

An example is Andrew Strom's Revival School site at <http://www.revivalschool.com/>, which is a prophetic community (Barna's 'intimate worship' passion).

5. Numerous other Parachurch Ministries.

Barna comments that these are generally one-dimensional in their focus, that is focused on just one of the passions.

Summarizing the Micro Models.

Because these micro-models are one-dimensional, they cannot claim to be each a complete spiritual approach to God. But, they may well provide Christian growth that could be obtained in no other way available to the individual in his/her locale. Thus, they fulfill a particular need at a particular time. For a continuing, complete approach to embracing multiple passions (motivated by one's [Rom. 12] charismatic gifts, it would seem that a macro model group would better suffice, with micro models employed as needs dictate.

A DISTRIBUTED REMNANT OF THE REMNANT.

Micro-Model Groups.

The sevenfold model for Christianity is a model of both structure (static) and process (dynamic). It is the way the Church is organized and functions. It is not the way the present-day churches are organized and function. It is doubtful that man could manage physical Christianity, if it were so organized. But, God can manage spiritual Christianity, with its seven-fold organization.

Barna's Christian revolutionary movement appears to fit the sevenfold Christian model. And, it appears to be God-driven, not man-driven. Therefore, it may well represent the manifestation of God's mature Church for the very end-times.

If an individual revolutionary micro-movement focuses predominantly on just one of the sevenfold Christian model elements (passions), that will mean that its members will all be similarly gifted [Rom. 12:6-8]. Their charismatic giftings will be what draw them together into the individual, differently-focused movements. For instance, those prophetically gifted will be drawn into micro-movements emphasizing the spiritual. Those gifted in sharing will be drawn into movements emphasizing faith. Etc., etc.

What this will mean is that God's Earthly Micro-Church will be distributed, not lumped into denominations, etc. God will manage His entire Micro-Church by managing its distributed parts, rather than the whole as a single organization. And, God can do that. Only God can do that.

Macro-Model Groups.

On the other hand, if a group wishes to regularly pursue more than one of the passions in the same setting, it would have to be in a macro-group, one focusing on multiple passions. And, that could be in any of the four that Barna found. Knowing these facts, now, will help those searching to either find satisfactory macro-groups or to start them.

Summarizing.

Barna's growth figures suggest that both micro-model and macro-model groups will remain relatively invisible, compared to the well organized denominational and non-denominational churches. Although Barna doesn't say so, we assume that this Revolutionary Christian Movement is predominantly an American movement, as were the Charismatic and Pentecostal movements just preceding it. If revolutionary membership grows to 100-Million, that is significant in a nation of perhaps 300-Million. However, it is not large in a world of 10-Billion. In fact, 100-Million out of 10-Billion is 1%.

When the Bible talks about a "remnant," it is generally accepted that it is ten-percent or so of the original. One-percent can be reckoned as a remnant of a remnant. When one looks at the pattern walked out by ancient Israel and Judah, their second temple was rebuilt by a remnant of the remnant Judah. The same pattern was walked out by the Protestant churches of the Reformation, since they were a remnant of the remnant Christian Church. Protestant Christianity has now been thoroughly institutionalized, and has birthed the Fundamentalist movement of the late 1800s, as a remnant. Barna's new Revolutionary Movement may be the remnant of the remnant that restores the Church of the very end-times.

WHAT DOES THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT MEAN TO ITSELF?

George Barna does not ask the deep question about the meaning of this revolutionary movement. The closest he comes is asking why it matters. And, he answers that question by predicting its impacts on religion and culture, again limited to America.

In particular, Barna does not attempt to connect to the Bible his findings about this Christian Revolution. That is, he does not attempt to find a place for the revolution in the biblical prophecies about the very end-times. He does not connect the revolution to the Day of the Lord that Jesus also called the Great Tribulation.

This writing is not the place to try to do that. It can be done, but it deserves a separate venue. All I will say here is that this revolution fits into the scenario of the very end-times that is outlined in *The Church Visited*² and other of my writings. This quiet revolutionary development in American Christianity fills the bill for the effective Christian entity that must be birthed before the Great Tribulation can commence. Another way of saying it is that this revolution is one of Jesus' signs of the times.

Characterizing the place of this revolution in biblical prophecy is important for one particular reason. It is important that the revolutionaries of this movement understand their place in God's Plan for the very end-times. It is important that they understand that the revolution is not just about them, personally and individually. They need to know God's corporate purpose for them on Earth, now and in the near future.

ENDING ON A PERSONAL NOTE.

I count myself as a Revolutionary. And, I believe that my Christian associates on the Internet are also revolutionaries. I know of quite a few ministry venues that

qualify for that descriptor. But, I doubt that those revolutionaries think of themselves as such. And, I doubt that they have a global view of how they fit in God's Earthly Plan for the Second Day of the Lord.

Personally, I've been searching for my Christian place in the Grand Drama of the very end-times. I've been searching for that "missing link" of understanding about how God is going to use the restored Church in the Great Tribulation. I believe that this revolutionary idea of Barna's may well open a path to that understanding. He did not finish the job, and I probably won't, either. And that is because part of God's Plan is that His servants must work together on this task. That will be so that no man may take credit for it. The Plan is God's, and He only requires that His scribes write it down as He reveals it.

I have said that we work for a "just in time" God, on a "need to know" basis. The timing is His. He reveals what He reveals on His time-table. As His servants, we wait on Him. That's what being a servant means. I believe that He is now revealing the elements of his Earthly Plan for the very end-times. He is opening up the mysteries of these times to those who can hear and who will listen to Him. I await with earnest expectation the *apocalypse* of the next element of His Plan.

¹ Revolution, by George Barna, Tyndale House Publ., Inc., 2005, ISBN-13: 978-1-4143-0758-9.

² The Church Visited, by John Painter, Gazelle Press, 2002, ISBN-1-58169-093-2, pp. 106-108.

³ Op. Cit., The Church Visited, pp. 12-15, 176-178.