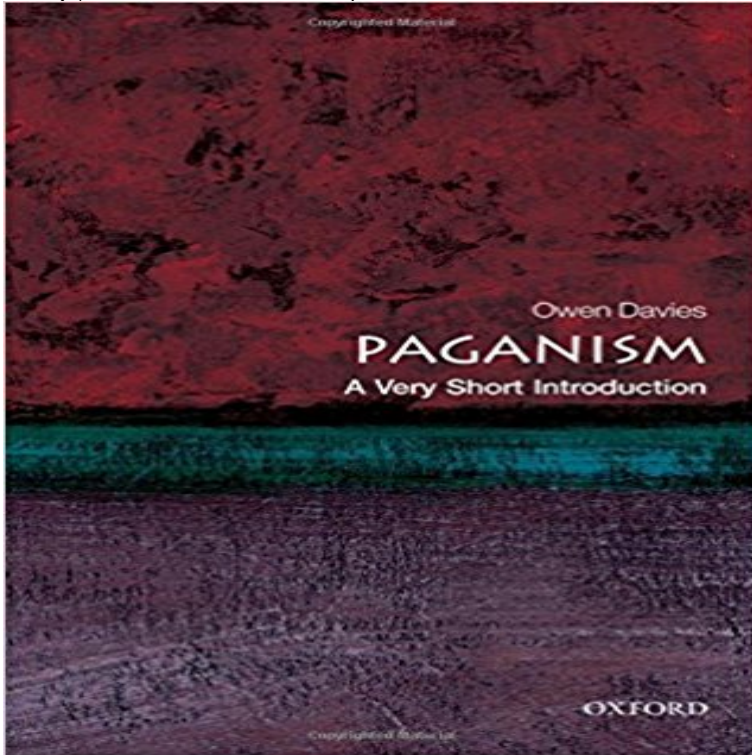


# Paganism: A Very Short Introduction



Paganism is an evocative word that even today conjures up deep-seated emotions and prejudices. Until recently, it was primarily a derogatory term used by Christians to describe the non-Christian cultures vanquished by their churches. For some it evokes images of sacrifice and barbaric behavior, while for others it symbolizes a peace-loving, nature-worshipping spiritual relationship with the earth. Written in a concise and lively style, this Very Short Introduction explores the meaning of the words pagan and paganism--through a chronological overview of the attitudes towards its practices and beliefs--from the ancient world through to the present day. Owen Davies looks at paganism largely through the eyes of the Christian world, describing how, over the centuries, notions and representations of paganism were shaped by religious conflict, power struggles, colonialism, and scholarship. Although the emphasis is on the experience of paganism in Europe, Davies also discusses how the idea of paganism spread around the globe as Europe came into contact with new cultures through colonial expansion, missionary work, and anthropological study.

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