

provide greater depth and context to Christian life. As advocates for this approach the authors are successful, and they will hopefully open the doors to continued engagement between theology and the wide world of human knowledge.

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Suzanne Owen and Angela Puca, eds., *Pagan Religions in 5 Minutes* (Sheffield; Bristol, CT: Equinox, 2024), pp. xi + 224, ISBN 978-1800505254. £22.95

According to the 2022 census, Paganism is now the fourth-largest religion practised in Scotland, with 19,113 people declaring it to be their religion of choice.³ At the time of writing the social media platform TikTok hashtag #witchtok has over eight million posts with content including live-streaming tutorials, educational videos and online journals from creators who subscribe to various Pagan traditions, including Wicca. With the growing interest in Pagan traditions, *Pagan Religions in Five Minutes*, edited by Suzanne Owen and Angela Puca, offers an accessible and insightful compilation of short essays by established scholars in the field that explore the complexity of Pagan identities and practices, both historical and contemporary.

The preface explains that this work is the culmination of a planned public event at Leeds Trinity University scheduled for 24 March 2020 entitled, “Everything You Wanted to Know About Paganism (But Where

³ See “Scotland’s Census 2022 – Ethnic group, national identity, language and religion”, 21 May 2024, <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/2022-reports/scotland-s-census-2022-ethnic-group-national-identity-language-and-religion/>.



Afraid to Ask)”, where the authors would present a short paper and collect questions from the audience to answer. While the event could not go ahead due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the authors collected questions from students, scholars, and patrons of Puca’s online platform *Angela’s Symposium* which form the basis of the questions the contributors answer in this collaborative edition. The book presents answers to seventy questions which are divided into five categories: (1) Paganism, (2) Pagan Religions, (3) Pagan Beliefs and Practices, (4) Pagan Discussions, and (5) Studying and Teaching Pagan Religions.

One of the interesting features of the book is the ‘five-minute essay’ format. Though this formula could be criticised as lacking nuance and depth, in many ways it is a positive approach, given that each chapter is short enough so that the author can focus on a single question or theme making it easy for newcomers to Pagan traditions to digest. Each entry also includes suggestions for further reading, both contained within the volume and external scholarly sources that allow for a deeper exploration of the topic at hand. The book is not intended to be a single, unified argument, so readers wishing for a narrative or chronological discussion of the history of Paganism may find this structure less satisfying.

The treatment of terminology was particularly useful. The editors explain in the preface that their aim was to ‘present a comprehensive yet concise overview of contemporary Pagan religions, addressing Paganism’s multifaceted practices, beliefs, and traditions’ (p. xviii). The entry by Graham Harvey (chapter 3) does well to draw out the distinctions between Pagan, pagan, Paganism and neo-paganism in a concise way, concluding that ‘using a capital letter for “Pagan” and “Paganism” indicates that this is the name with which people choose to identify themselves and their traditions’ (p. 10). Other chapters which provide helpful guidance on terminology include Mary Hammer’s discussion on the difference between Wicca and witchcraft (chapter 21), Jefferson Calico’s entry on Heathenry (chapter 22), and Jennifer Uzzell’s submission on the difference between Druidism and Druidry (chapter 23). All of which help to unpack some of the confusion surrounding contemporary Pagan practices and traditions.

It is also heartening to see topics which may be controversial tackled within this volume. Ethan Doyle White’s discussion on Paganism and Satanism (chapter 50) draws out the complexities of this question given the limited word count for his response. Questions around ritual sex (Puca, chapter 40), the practice of sacrifice (White, chapter 50), and the issue of



fascism in contemporary Paganism (Hale, chapter 58), are all handled with care and provide readers with an entry-level insight into these important often misunderstood issues. It could be argued that the brevity of these chapters may reinforce unhelpful stereotypes for readers, but the external readings provided guide readers on how they can explore these topics in more depth should they wish to do so.

There is also some consideration given to traditions from outside Western Europe. Highlights include the two entries dedicated to the Lithuanian Romuva tradition explored by Milda Ališauskienė (chapter 27) and Rasa Pranskevičiūtė-Amoson (chapter 28); Katrina Oliveira Bezerra's discussion on how Paganism developed in Brazil (chapter 29), and Mary Hearn-Ayodele provides an important entry on African spiritual traditions and the question of paganism (chapter 55). It could be argued that more could be done to include further examples from outside the focus of Western Paganism (UK, US, Europe). However, in a work designed to be an introduction to Paganism, the entries from outside the Western hegemony work well and do not feel forced or token. They help to show the diverse and ever evolving complexities within the Pagan worldview, recognising that there is a wider cultural context outside of the 'Western Pagan revival'.

Pagan Religions in Five Minutes is a strong introductory volume that does exactly what it set out to do. It provides clear and digestible answers to many of the questions people commonly have about Paganism and works hard to dispel the myths and misunderstandings commonly hold. The work is clearly intended to be a primer for anyone wishing to engage with Paganism and is an excellent resource for those completely new to the subject.

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Kirsty Pattison received her PhD from the University of Glasgow in 2025. Her thesis exploring the history of magic and esotericism in medieval and renaissance Scotland was funded by the Hooper Holt Scholarship.

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