

The Pagan Origins Of Christian Holidays

An examination of the sacred botany and the pagan origins and rituals of Christmas • Analyzes the symbolism of the many plants associated with Christmas • Reveals the shamanic rituals that are at the heart of the Christmas celebration The day on which many commemorate the birth of Christ has its origins in pagan rituals that center on tree worship, agriculture, magic, and social exchange. But Christmas is no ordinary folk observance. It is an evolving feast that over the centuries has absorbed elements from cultures all over the world--practices that give plants and plant spirits pride of place. In fact, the symbolic use of plants at Christmas effectively transforms the modern-day living room into a place of shamanic ritual. Christian Räscher and Claudia Müller-Ebeling show how the ancient meaning of the botanical elements of Christmas provides a unique view of the religion that existed in Europe before the introduction of Christianity. The fir tree was originally revered as the sacred World Tree in northern Europe. When the church was unable to drive the tree cult out of people's consciousness, it incorporated the fir tree by dedicating it to the Christ child. Father Christmas in his red-and-white suit, who flies through the sky in a sleigh drawn by reindeer, has his mythological roots in the shamanic reindeer-herding tribes of arctic Europe and Siberia. These northern shamans used the hallucinogenic fly agaric mushroom, which is red and white, to make their soul flights to the other world. Apples, which figure heavily in Christmas baking, are symbols of the sun god Apollo, so they find a natural place at winter solstice celebrations of the return of the sun. In fact, the authors contend that the emphasis of Christmas on green plants and the promise of the return of life in the dead of winter is just an adaptation of the pagan winter solstice celebration.

The contemporary search for the feminine face of God requires a re-examination of the relationship of Christianity to the pagan world in which it was born. This study inquires into extra-biblical sources of Marian piety, belief and doctrine. This publication has also been published in hardback, please click here for details.

The intent of this book is to merely present before you the compromise that has occurred between Christianity and paganism. Under the facade of Christianity the duplicitous ancient mystery religious system that began in Babylon continues. This religion is perpetuated through the most powerful religious institution in the world- the Roman Catholic Church. How is this possible? In a strategic effort to appeal to the pagans of Rome the Universal Church simply fused the pagan customs and festivals of sun worshipers with the rites of the one true faith. The Pagan Origins of Christian Holidays is an examination of the holidays that are observed by Christians today. This book reveals a piercing truth; Satan has deceived the whole world.

To the ordinary public, the connection between Paganism and Christianity still seems rather remote. Indeed the common notion is that Christianity was really a miraculous interposition into and dislocation of the old order of the world; and that the pagan gods (as in Milton's Hymn on the Nativity) fled away in dismay before the sign of the Cross, and at the sound of the name of Jesus. Doubtless this was a view much encouraged by the early Church itself, if only to enhance its own authority and importance. Yet, as is well known to every student, this view of the originality of the Christian revelation is quite misleading and contrary to fact. The main Christian doctrines and festivals, besides a great mass of affiliated legend and ceremonial, are really quite directly derived from, and related to, preceding Nature worships; and it has only been by a good deal of deliberate mystification and falsification that this derivation has been kept out of sight.

Public reaction to the church, and its influence on the lives of early Christian women.

A New York Times Notable Book of 2018 "Searingly passionate...Nixey writes up a storm. Each sentence is rich, textured, evocative, felt...[A] ballista-bolt of a book." —New York Times Book Review In Harran, the locals refused to convert. They were dismembered, their limbs hung along the town's main street. In Alexandria, zealots pulled the elderly philosopher-mathematician Hypatia from her chariot and flayed her to death with shards of broken pottery. Not long before, their fellow Christians had invaded the city's greatest temple and razed it—smashing its world-famous statues and destroying all that was left of Alexandria's Great Library. Today, we refer to Christianity's conquest of the West as a "triumph." But this victory entailed an orgy of destruction in which Jesus's followers attacked and suppressed classical culture, helping to pitch Western civilization into a thousand-year-long decline. Just one percent of Latin literature would survive the purge; countless antiquities, artworks, and ancient traditions were lost forever. As Catherine Nixey reveals, evidence of early Christians' campaign of terror has been hiding in plain sight: in the palimpsests and shattered statues proudly displayed in churches and museums the world over. In *The Darkening Age*, Nixey resurrects this lost history, offering a wrenching account of the rise of Christianity and its terrible cost.

"MacMullen...has published several books in recent years which establish him, rightfully, as a leading social historian of the Roman Empire. The current volume exhibits many of the characteristics of its predecessors: the presentation of novel, revisionist points of view...; discrete set pieces of trenchant argument which do not necessarily conform to the boundaries of traditional history; and an impressive, authoritative, and up-to-date documentation, especially rich in primary sources...A stimulating and provocative discourse on Roman paganism as a phenomenon worthy of synthetic investigation in its own right and as the fundamental context for the rise of Christianity."--Richard Brilliant, *History*

"MacMullen's latest work represents many features of paganism in its social context more vividly and clearly than ever before."--Fergus Millar, *American Historical Review* "The major cults...are examined from a social and cultural perspective and with the aid of many recently published specialized studies...Students of the Roman Empire...should read this book."--Robert J. Penella, *Classical World* "A distinguished book with much exact observation...An indispensable mine of erudition on a grand theme." Henry Chadwick, *Times Literary Supplement* Ramsay MacMullen is Dunham Professor of History and Classics at Yale University and the author of *Roman Government's Response to Crisis, A.D. 235-337* and *Roman Social Relations, 50 B.C. to A.D. 284*

A provocative argument for a mystical, rather than historical, understanding of Jesus, leading to a radical rebirth of

Christianity in our time. For forty years, scholar and religious commentator Tom Harpur has challenged church orthodoxy and guided thousands of readers on subjects as controversial as the true nature of Christ and life after death. Now, in his most radical and groundbreaking work, Harpur digs deep into the origins of Christianity. Long before the advent of Jesus Christ, the Egyptians and other peoples believed in the coming of a messiah, a virgin birth, a madonna and her child, and the incarnation of the spirit in flesh. While the early Christian church accepted these ancient truths as the very basis of Christianity, it disavowed their origins. What had begun as a universal belief system built on myth and allegory was transformed, by the third and fourth centuries A.D., into a ritualistic institution based on a literal interpretation of myths and symbols. But, as Tom Harpur argues in *The Pagan Christ*, "to take the Gospels literally as history or biography is to utterly miss their inner spiritual meaning." At a time of religious extremism, Tom Harpur reveals the virtue of a cosmic faith based on ancient truths that the modern church has renounced. His message is clear: Our blind faith in literalism is killing Christianity. Only with a return to an inclusive religion where Christ lives within each of us will we gain a true understanding of who we are and who we are intended to become. *The Pagan Christ* is a book of rare insight and power that will reilluminate the Bible and change the way we think about religion.

After more than 52 weeks on the Toronto Star's bestseller list and 43 weeks on The Globe and Mail's bestseller list, Tom Harpur's groundbreaking book, *The Pagan Christ*, is now available in paperback. This new edition includes the twenty-page discussion guide, with more than 100 questions, to help facilitate a deeper, chapter-by-chapter analysis and more profound understanding of the findings and arguments found in the book. Subjects for discussion include: the ancient Egyptian roots of Christianity, the real meaning of the Bible, the key to whether Jesus really existed, the re-mythologizing of Christianity, the meaning of the Christ within all of us and the need to understand myth and allegory. With a new introduction by Tom Harpur, this paperback edition sheds further light on what has become one of the most talked about books of the new millennium.

Challenging church orthodoxy, a religious scholar argues that the biblical Gospels should not be taken literally and that there is a connection between Egyptian mythology and Christianity, in a radical reinterpretation of scripture, the nature of Christianity, and its connections to other of the world's spiritual traditions. Reprint. 25,000 first printing.

In *Pagan Origins of the Christ Myth*, John G. Jackson sources the pagan origins of Christian doctrine with particular focus on the creation and atonement myths. Rooted in historical facts, Jackson's claims are steeped in research and demonstrate how Christianity synthesizes the rituals, beliefs, and characteristics of savior gods from ancient Egyptian, Greek, Aztec, and Hindu origins. This concise introduction remains an insightful contribution to comparative religion studies.

This "fresh, blunt, and highly persuasive account of how the West was won—for Jesus" (*Newsweek*) is now available in paperback. Stark's provocative report challenges conventional wisdom and finds that Christianity's astounding dominance of the Western world arose from its offer of a better, more secure way of life. "Compelling reading" (*Library Journal*) that is sure to "generate spirited argument" (*Publishers Weekly*), this account of Christianity's remarkable growth within the Roman Empire is the subject of much fanfare. "Anyone who has puzzled over Christianity's rise to dominance...must read it." says Yale University's Wayne A. Meeks, for *The Rise of Christianity* makes a compelling case for startling conclusions. Combining his expertise in social science with historical evidence, and his insight into contemporary religion's appeal, Stark finds that early Christianity attracted the privileged rather than the poor, that most early converts were women or marginalized Jews—and ultimately "that Christianity was a success because it proved those who joined it with a more appealing, more assuring, happier, and perhaps longer life" (Andrew M. Greeley, University of Chicago).

Have you ever wondered why we Christians do what we do for church every Sunday morning? Why do we "dress up" for church? Why does the pastor preach a sermon each week? Why do we have pews, steeples, and choirs? This groundbreaking book, now in affordable softcover, makes an unsettling proposal: most of what Christians do in present-day churches is rooted, not in the New Testament, but in pagan culture and rituals developed long after the death of the apostles. Coauthors Frank Viola and George Barna support their thesis with compelling historical evidence and extensive footnotes that document the origins of modern Christian church practices. In the process, the authors uncover the problems that emerge when the church functions more like a business organization than the living organism it was created to be. As you reconsider Christ's revolutionary plan for his church—to be the head of a fully functioning body in which all believers play an active role—you'll be challenged to decide whether you can ever do church the same way again.

The Hebrew Old Testament, which contains some of the world's most ancient religious texts, was written and repeatedly re-edited over the course of several centuries from about 1000 BCE. It reached its final form at the hands of editors who were monotheists. They believed that their god Yahweh was the only true God, and that he had been worshipped exclusively by their ancestors from the time of Abraham. They edited their sources to reflect this belief. However, we can strip away this veneer of later monotheism to view the ancient stories themselves. These bear witness to Israelite religion as practised before 600 BCE. Far from being monotheistic, this religion was a fascinating polytheistic paganism, close to the religion of the surrounding Canaanites. In this religion, Yahweh, far from being God as understood by modern western monotheism, was a distinctive tribal deity. This book will be of particular interest to the large numbers of western people who come from a broadly Christian or Jewish background but have left those faiths behind to explore paganism or New Age spirituality.

This is a new release of the original 1928 edition.

Drawing on the cutting edge of modern scholarship, this astonishing book completely undermines the traditional history of Christianity that has been perpetuated for centuries by the Church and presents overwhelming evidence that the Jesus of the New

Testament is a mythical figure. "Whether you conclude that this book is the most alarming heresy of the millennium or the mother of all revelations, The Jesus Mysteries deserves to be read." —Fort Worth Star-Telegram Far from being eyewitness accounts, as is traditionally held, the Gospels are actually Jewish adaptations of ancient Pagan myths of the dying and resurrecting godman Osiris-Dionysus. The supernatural story of Jesus is not the history of a miraculous Messiah but a carefully crafted spiritual allegory designed to guide initiates on a journey of mystical discovery. A little more than a century ago, most people believed that the strange story of Adam and Eve was history; today it is understood to be a myth. Within a few decades, authors Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy argue, we will likewise be amazed that the fabulous story of God incarnate—who was born of a virgin, who turned water into wine, and who rose from the dead—could have been interpreted as anything but a profound parable.

"Magisterial. . . . A learned, brilliant and enjoyable study."—Géza Vermès, Times Literary Supplement In this exciting book, Paula Fredriksen explains the variety of New Testament images of Jesus by exploring the ways that the new Christian communities interpreted his mission and message in light of the delay of the Kingdom he had preached. This edition includes an introduction reviews the most recent scholarship on Jesus and its implications for both history and theology. "Brilliant and lucidly written, full of original and fascinating insights."—Reginald H. Fuller, Journal of the American Academy of Religion "This is a first-rate work of a first-rate historian."—James D. Tabor, Journal of Religion "Fredriksen confronts her documents—principally the writings of the New Testament—as an archaeologist would an especially rich complex site. With great care she distinguishes the literary images from historical fact. As she does so, she explains the images of Jesus in terms of the strategies and purposes of the writers Paul, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John."—Thomas D'Evelyn, Christian Science Monitor

A provocative and contrarian religious history that charts the rise of Christianity from the point of view of traditional" religion from the religious scholar and critically acclaimed author of Augustine. Pagans explores the rise of Christianity from a surprising and unique viewpoint: that of the people who witnessed their ways of life destroyed by what seemed then a powerful religious cult. These "pagans" were actually pious Greeks, Romans, Syrians, and Gauls who observed the traditions of their ancestors. To these devout polytheists, Christians who worshipped only one deity were immoral atheists who believed that a splash of water on the deathbed could erase a lifetime of sin. Religious scholar James J. O'Donnell takes us on a lively tour of the Ancient Roman world through the fourth century CE, when Romans of every nationality, social class, and religious preference found their world suddenly constrained by rulers who preferred a strange new god. Some joined this new cult, while others denied its power, erroneously believing it was little more than a passing fad. In Pagans, O'Donnell brings to life various pagan rites and essential features of Roman religion and life, offers fresh portraits of iconic historical figures, including Constantine, Julian, and Augustine, and explores important themes—Rome versus the east, civilization versus barbarism, plurality versus unity, rich versus poor, and tradition versus innovation—in this startling account.

Traditionalist Christians who oppose same-sex marriage and other cultural developments in the United States wonder why they are being forced to bracket their beliefs in order to participate in public life. This situation is not new, says Steven D. Smith: Christians two thousand years ago faced very similar challenges. Picking up poet T. S. Eliot's World War II-era thesis that the future of the West would be determined by a contest between Christianity and "modern paganism," Smith argues in this book that today's culture wars can be seen as a reprise of the basic antagonism that pitted pagans against Christians in the Roman Empire. Smith's Pagans and Christians in the City looks at that historical conflict and explores how the same competing ideas continue to clash today. All of us, Smith shows, have much to learn by observing how patterns from ancient history are reemerging in today's most controversial issues.

Examines the basis for the accusations made by pagan Romans against the Christians and discusses the reactions of the Christians to these charges

A provocative argument for a mystical, rather than historical, understanding of Jesus, leading to a radical rebirth of Christianity in our time. For forty years, scholar and religious commentator Tom Harpur has challenged church orthodoxy and guided thousands of readers on subjects as controversial as the true nature of Christ and life after death. Now, in his most radical and groundbreaking work, Harpur digs deep into the origins of Christianity. At a time of religious extremism, Tom Harpur reveals the virtue of a cosmic faith based on ancient truths that the modern church has renounced. His message is clear: Our blind faith in literalism is killing Christianity. Only with a return to an inclusive religion where Christ lives within each of us will we gain a true understanding of who we are and who we are intended to become. The Pagan Christ is a book of rare insight and power that will reilluminate the Bible and change the way we think about religion.

The first comprehensive study of its kind, this fully illustrated book establishes Paganism as a persistent force in European history with a profound influence on modern thinking. From the serpent goddesses of ancient Crete to modern nature-worship and the restoration of the indigenous religions of eastern Europe, this wide-ranging book offers a rewarding new perspective of European history. In this definitive study, Prudence Jones and Nigel Pennick draw together the fragmented sources of Europe's native religions and establish the coherence and continuity of the Pagan world vision. Exploring Paganism as it developed from the ancient world through the Celtic and Germanic periods, the authors finally appraise modern Paganism and its apparent causes as well as addressing feminist spirituality, the heritage movement, nature-worship and 'deep' ecology This innovative and comprehensive history of European Paganism will provide a stimulating, reliable guide to this popular dimension of religious culture for the academic and the general reader alike.

1925 Contents: Preface; Introductory; Administration, Municipalities, Guilds; Communications; society and Social Ethics; Eastern and Western Elements in Graeco-Roman Civilisation; the Decline of Rationalism; Union with God and the Immortality of.

This revisionist reading of early anti-Judaism offers a richer and more varied picture of the Jews and Christians of antiquity.

The Mysteries of Mithras presents a revival of this ancient Roman mystery religion, popular from the late second century B.C. Payam Nabarz reveals the history and tenets of Mithraism, its connections to Christianity, Islam, and Freemasonry, and the modern neo-pagan practice of Mithraism today. Included are seven of its initiatory rituals.

Have you ever wondered what a Christmas tree has to do with the birth of Christ, or, why children decorate eggs in commemoration of Christ's death? Well, the answer is a sobering one. Because of the compromise between pagans and the Catholic Church many Christian holidays are Christian in name only. In this book Elisha J. Israel traces the origins of this unholy compromise. Elisha J. Israel is the author of Into Egypt Again With Ships: A Message to the Forgotten Israelites (African Americans) and Killing Black Innocents: The Program to Control "African American" Reproduction (from Slavery's End to the Present-Day Self-Inflicted Genocide).

The "marvelous" (Reza Aslan, bestselling author of Zealot), New York Times bestselling story of how Christianity became the dominant religion in the West. How did a religion whose first believers were twenty or so illiterate day laborers in a remote part of the empire become the official religion of Rome, converting some thirty million people in just four centuries? In The Triumph of Christianity, early Christian

historian Bart D. Ehrman weaves the rigorously-researched answer to this question "into a vivid, nuanced, and enormously readable narrative" (Elaine Pagels, National Book Award-winning author of *The Gnostic Gospels*), showing how a handful of charismatic characters used a brilliant social strategy and an irresistible message to win over hearts and minds one at a time. This "humane, thoughtful and intelligent" book (*The New York Times Book Review*) upends the way we think about the single most important cultural transformation our world has ever seen—one that revolutionized art, music, literature, philosophy, ethics, economics, and law.

A study of the role of the devil in biblical and modern times theorizes that dissident social groups that resisted Christianity, such as pagans and Jews, were typically portrayed as demons and therefore established as threats. Reprint. 60,000 first printing.

Refers to New Testament teachings while delineating the nature of early Christian worship of God. Bibliogs

"Have you ever wondered why we Christians do what we do for church every Sunday morning? Why do we "dress up" for church? Why does the pastor preach a sermon each week? Why do we have pews, steeples, and choirs? This ground-breaking book, ... makes an unsettling proposal: most of what Christians do in present-day churches is rooted, not in the New Testament, but in pagan culture and rituals developed long after the death of the apostles. Coauthors Frank Viola and George Barna support their thesis with compelling historical evidence and extensive footnotes that document the origins of modern Christian church practices. In the process, the authors uncover the problems that emerge when the church functions more like a business organization than the living organism it was created to be. As you reconsider Christ's revolutionary plan for his church--to be the head of a fully functioning body in which all believers play an active role--you'll be challenged to decide whether you can ever do church the same way again"--Amazon.com, viewed March 2, 2012.

Contemporary Paganism is a movement that is still young and establishing its identity and place on the global religious landscape. The members of the movement are simultaneously growing, unifying, and maintaining its characteristic diversity of traditions, identities, and rituals. The modern Pagan movement has had a restless formation period but has also been the catalyst for some of the most innovative religious expressions, praxis, theologies, and communities. As Contemporary Paganism continues to grow and mature, new angles of inquiry about it have emerged and are explored in this collection. This examination and study of contemporary Paganism contributes new ways to observe and examine other religions, where innovations, paradoxes, and inconsistencies can be more accurately documented and explained. Reveals how Christian mythology has more to do with long-standing pagan traditions than the Bible • Explains how the church fathers knowingly incorporated pagan elements into the Christian faith to ease the transition to the new religion • Identifies pagan deities that were incorporated into each of the saints • Shows how all the major holidays in the Christian calendar are modeled on pagan rituals and myths, including Easter and Christmas In this extensive study of the Christian mythology that animated Europe in the Middle Ages, author Philippe Walter reveals how these stories and the holiday traditions connected with them are based on long-standing pagan rituals and myths and have very little connection to the Bible. The author explains how the church fathers knowingly incorporated pagan elements into the Christian faith to ease the transition to the new religion. Rather than tear down the pagan temples in Britain, Pope Gregory the Great advised Saint Augustine of Canterbury to add the pagan rituals into the mix of Christian practices and transform the pagan temples into churches. Instead of religious conversion, it was simply a matter of convincing the populace to include Jesus in their current religious practices. Providing extensive documentation, Walter shows which major calendar days of the Christian year are founded on pagan rituals and myths, including the high holidays of Easter and Christmas. Examining hagiographic accounts of the saints, he reveals the origin of these symbolic figures in the deities worshipped in pagan Europe for centuries. He also explores how the identities of saints and pagan figures became so intermingled that some saints were transformed into pagan incarnations, such as Mary Magdalene's conversion into one of the Celtic Ladies of the Lake. In revealing the pagan roots of many Christian figures, stories, and rituals, Walter provides a new understanding of the evolution of religious belief.

Rabbi or Messiah? Prophet or the Son of God? People have debated the identity of Jesus of Nazareth since the first century. But what if there was no Jesus? What if there was no Mary or Joseph, no twelve apostles? What if the story of Jesus was no more than a myth to convey spiritual truth? These claims have been around for hundreds of years and have become more prominent with well-known religion columnist Tom Harpur's recent book, *The Pagan Christ*. Harpur claims that Jesus was not a historical figure, but was one version of an ancient myth that can be traced from ancient Egyptian religion to the Roman mystery cults. Stanley Porter and Stephen Bedard tackle this radical claim by looking at the roots of the "pagan Christ idea," examining the supposed pagan parallels and presenting the evidence for the historical Jesus. The authors demonstrate that the suggestion of pagan origins for the Gospel story is not based on historical or textual evidence, but rather on a desire to create a universalistic spirituality revolving around a "Cosmic Christ" within each person. A fair examination of both the mythological and biblical texts reveal that the traditional understanding of an actual historical figure known as Jesus of Nazareth appearing two thousand years ago is indeed the only logical conclusion. Stanley E. Porter is President and Dean, and Professor of New Testament at McMaster Divinity College, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. Porter has M.A. degrees from Claremont Graduate School and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and the Ph.D. from the University of Sheffield. He has written widely on issues of concern in study of the New Testament, such as Jesus, Paul, the book of Acts, and John. He has a passion for education in the church, and preaches and teaches regularly. Stephen J. Bedard is the pastor of Woodford Baptist Church and First Baptist Church, Meaford, Ontario, Canada. He holds the M.Div. and M.Th. degrees from McMaster Divinity College, and is actively engaged in further graduate study. Bedard is an advocate of informed preaching and teaching, and is devoted to the ministry of the local church.

Do the terms "pagan" and "Christian," "transition from paganism to Christianity" still hold as explanatory devices to apply to the political, religious and cultural transformation experienced Empire-wide? Revisiting "pagans" and "Christians" in Late Antiquity has been a fertile site of scholarship in recent years: the paradigm shift in the interpretation of the relations between "pagans" and "Christians" replaced the old "conflict model" with a subtler, complex approach and triggered the upsurge of new explanatory models such as multiculturalism, cohabitation, cooperation, identity, or group cohesion. This collection of essays, inscribes itself into the revisionist discussion of pagan-Christian relations over a broad territory and time-span, the Roman Empire from the fourth to the eighth century. A set of papers argues that if "paganism" had never been fully extirpated or denied by the multiethnic educated elite that managed the Roman Empire, "Christianity" came to be presented by the same elite as providing a way for a wider group of people to combine true philosophy and right religion. The speed with which this happened is just as remarkable as the long persistence of paganism after the sea-change of the fourth century that made Christianity the official religion of the State. For a long time afterwards, "pagans" and "Christians" lived "in between" polytheistic and monotheist traditions and disputed Classical and non-Classical legacies. ÿ

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