

Many modern Pagan Witches, when distinguishing themselves from Satanists, have said things like “Satanism is just upside-down Christianity,” or “Satanism is a Christian heresy,” or even “Satanism is Christian.” Although Satanism does have obvious roots in Christianity, most forms of Satanism draw ideas from non-Abrahamic sources too and differ from Christianity on too many points to be “just upside-down Christianity” or just “Christian heresies.” (And it should be noted here that modern Wicca *also* has roots in Christianity, as well as in pre-Abrahamic religions and in Hermetics. Wicca re-paganizes some ancient traditions that were adopted by Christians, e.g. the holidays and the “dying and rising god” theme, while ignoring other ancient ideas and practices that were ignored by Christians.) Satanism also is not necessarily “dualistic,” as some modern Pagans have claimed. To distinguish themselves from Satanists, modern Pagan Witches should simply say something like, “Our pantheon does not include Satan, either as a revered deity or as a symbol. We focus on deities from pre-Abrahamic cultures.”

Luciferianism and “Illuminati” conspiracy claims

Proponents of “Illuminati” conspiracy claims often point to the “Luciferianism” of various historical figures as evidence that they were devoted to “Evil” and part of a malignant conspiracy to destroy and/or enslave most of the human race. In fact, to many Enlightenment-era “Luciferians,” “Lucifer” was associated with progressive ideals that were revolutionary back then, but which most of us today take for granted, including separation of Church and State, equal rights for women and men, and the elimination of special privileges for the nobility. “Satan” was similarly associated with progressive ideals by many Romantic-era “Satanists.”

(Many of today’s LaVey-influenced Satanists hold political views that are more right wing, and some also enjoy pretending to be, themselves, a conspiracy similar to what is envisioned by “Illuminati” conspiracy believers. But LaVey’s Church of Satan is far from genuinely “Elite,” having proven unable even to preserve Anton LaVey’s house after he died.)

Extreme right wingers have long claimed that progressive ideals are really just part of a plot by some evil “elite” cabal (e.g. “The Illuminati” or “the Elders of Zion”) to enslave us all. In fact, the triumphs of Enlightenment ideals, here in the West, have greatly improved the lives of many people.

Committee Against Satanic Panics
New Yorkers Against Religion-Based Bigotry
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Satanism and Luciferianism:

A response to popular myths

Various categories of people, including Freemasons, modern Pagans, and some of the alleged witches of Europe’s witchhunt era, have been falsely alleged to “worship Satan,” and have also been falsely accused of violent crimes as an alleged part of the worship of either Satan or ancient gods. In 1980-1995, there was an epidemic of probably-false accusations and even convictions of child sexual abuse, as alleged activities of alleged “Satanic cults,” thanks to (1) the hiring of a lot of new and inexperienced child abuse investigators (as part of an otherwise praiseworthy effort to take child abuse more seriously than before) and (2) the “recovered memory” hypnotherapy fad (which, many psychologists now believe, induced a lot of false “memories” in response to leading questions by the therapists). Many of the falsely accused were ordinary mainstream middle-class and working-class people, not even Pagans.

At the same time, there do exist Satanists and Luciferians, people with favorable interpretations of the figures of “Satan” and “Lucifer,” respectively. But their beliefs have been wildly misunderstood by the general public. For example, today’s best-known form of Satanism, Anton LaVey’s Church of Satan, specifically prohibits animal sacrifice and any harm to children, as do most other Satanist groups.

Satanism/Luciferianism is not one single religion. Satanism and Luciferianism are distinct, though overlapping, broad categories of religions plus nonreligious worldviews and literature, all involving favorable views of the figures of “Satan” and/or “Lucifer.”

Luciferianism

In Latin, “Lucifer” literally means “light-bearer” and was originally a reference to the planet Venus as the morning star. Most Christians think of “Lucifer” as a name of the Devil, because of a metaphorical interpretation of Isaiah 14:12, a Bible verse about the fall of the king of Babylon. However, in the Latin Vulgate Bible, the term “Lucifer” is also used in more approving contexts, including two references to Jesus Christ as “the morning star” (2 Peter 1:19; Revelation/Apocalypse 22:16).

In the 1800’s and 1900’s, various intellectuals called themselves “Luciferian” or spoke favorably of a “Lucifer.” Their point was to declare themselves in favor of enlightenment, in defiance of what they saw as the Church’s hostility toward

enlightenment. Back in the days before separation of Church and State, the Church was often an extremely repressive and corrupt institution. Europe had just barely outgrown the savagery of religious wars and burning heretics at the stake. In some parts of Europe, there was still zero religious freedom. So, to people who upheld the progressive ideals of the Enlightenment (religious tolerance, science, and freedom of thought), the common Christian use of “Lucifer” as a name of the Devil seemed an ironically appropriate symbol of Church and state hostility toward Enlightenment philosophy. Praising “Lucifer” was thus an ironic rebuke against the Church and against the Church-dominated state.

“Luciferianism” was not just a secret society thing. It was a public literary phenomenon. For example, the first edition of Diderot's *Encyclopedia* had a drawing of “Lucifer” on the cover page, as a symbol of enlightenment.

Satanism

In the early 1800's, an even more defiant literary trend emerged: favorable portrayals of the Devil. Examples include:

- William Blake, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell"
- Mark Twain, *Letters from the Earth* and *A Pen Warmed in Hell*
- Giosue Carducci (Nobel prize-winning Italian poet), "Hymn to Satan"
- Charles Baudelaire, "Litanies of Satan"
- George Bernard Shaw, *The Devil's Disciple* (with preface, “On Diabolonian Ethics”)

The literary Satanist theme can be found in some 1800's nonfiction works too, as well as fiction and poetry. Examples:

- Jules Michelet (French historian), *La Sorciere* (available in English under the title *Satanism and Witchcraft*), a very influential though now outdated history of the witchhunts
- Matilda Gage (American feminist), *Woman, Church, and State* (includes favorable portrayal of an alleged medieval peasant Black Mass, based on Michelet)
- Mikhail Aleksandrovich Bakunin (Russian anarchist), *God and the State*

Nearly all authors of literary Satanic works were symbolic Satanists only, not Devil worshipers. Some Devil worshipers may have existed back then too, most likely influenced by literary Satanism, but the best-known allegations of Devil worship were fraudulent (e.g. the infamous Leo Taxil hoax).

Then and now, most Satanists do **not** think of themselves as “evil” except in an ironic sense. Instead, most Satanists associate Satan with such values as pride, independence, individuality, strength, knowledge, achievement, thinking for oneself, and exploring unknown and forbidden realms. Most Satanists see themselves as rejecting Christian concepts of good and evil - as do many non-Satanists too. Many of the moral values

espoused in the Bible seem very strange to **most** modern Westerners, not just to Satanists. For example, in the Bible, slavery is okay, but religious differences (“idolatry” and “blasphemy”) are punishable by death.

Luciferianism vs. Satanism

“Luciferianism” and “Satanism” can exist separately or in combination, as follows:

1) Luciferianism without Satanism. Because “Lucifer” is not **just** a name of the Devil, “Luciferianism” need not involve the Christian Devil concept or any reinterpretation of thereof. A “Luciferian” could, for example, think of oneself as a true follower of Jesus as the light-bearer. Some (though not all or most) modern Pagan Witches revere a “Lucifer” (e.g. the “God of the Sun and of the Moon” in *Aradia: Gospel of the Witches* by Charles G. Leland) whom they do not identify with any figure from Christian theology. Some occultists revere a “Lucifer” who is understood in Gnostic terms.

2) Luciferian Satanism. Satanism can be and often is Luciferian, insofar as Satan is seen as a bringer of enlightenment. An example is Giosue Carducci's “Hymn to Satan,” which celebrates many historical challengers to the power of the Catholic Church. Many Satanists, like the ancient Gnostics, have noticed that the Bible sometimes seems to portray God as opposed to human knowledge and achievement, e.g. in the Garden of Eden and Tower of Babel stories, much like the way Zeus punished Prometheus for empowering humans to use fire.

3) Non-Luciferian Satanism. In some forms of Satanism, Satan is praised as something other than a bringer of enlightenment. For example, in William Blake's “Marriage of Heaven and Hell,” the Devil represents “Energy,” as distinct from Reason.

Satanist theologies, and some common Pagan misconceptions

Today's best-known form of Satanism, Anton LaVey's Church of Satan, is atheistic and regards Satan as only a symbol of a so-called “dark force in nature.” Theistic Satanists, who believe in and revere Satan as an actual being, exist too, and hold a wide variety of different beliefs.

Most theistic Satanists do **not** simply accept Christian theology except for siding with the Other Guy. Many theistic Satanists are either pantheistic or polytheistic. For example, the Christian characterization of Satan as “god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4) can be reinterpreted in a pantheistic sense. Other theistic Satanists see “Satan” as the Christian-era manifestation of some pre-Abrahamic deity, e.g. the Egyptian Set. Others have an Ophidian Gnostic-style interpretation of the Garden of Eden myth. Still others see the Christian “God” and “Satan” as just two of the world's many gods.