

creeping paganism

TRENDS

From the now-you've-heard-everything department: Teenagers are not only jumping on the Wiccan bandwagon in startling numbers, there's even a growing sub-movement of teenage Wiccans who embrace Christianity. It's "What Would Jesus Do...If He Was a Witch?" Maybe it's just a fad, but there's a much bigger cultural shift fueling the trend—it's best spotted in the beliefs and practices of an increasingly secular Europe.

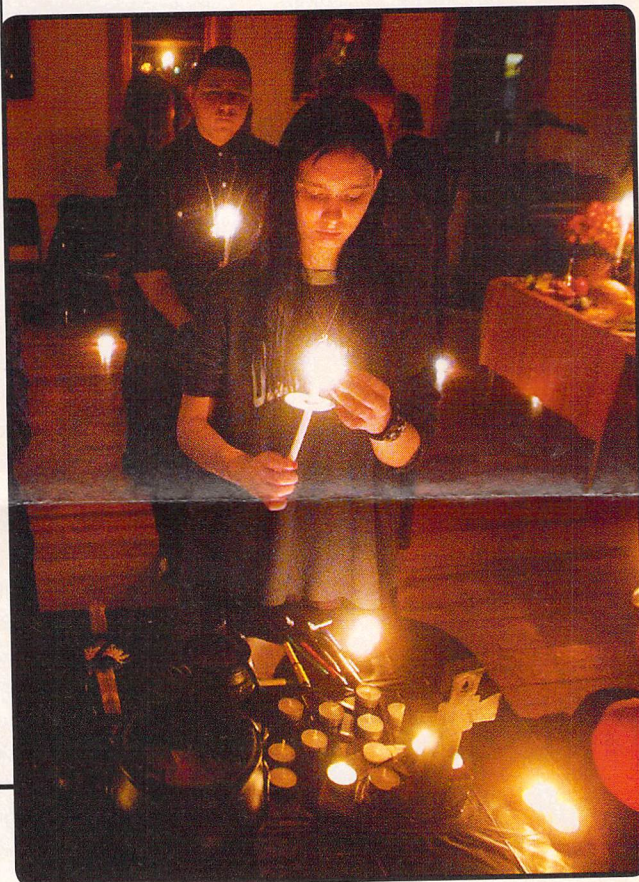
"The clash between those who believe and those who don't believe will be a dominant aspect of relations between the U.S. and Europe in the coming years," says Jacques Delors, former president of the European Commission, in a Christian Science Monitor interview. "This question of a values gap is being posed more sharply now than at any time in the history of European-U.S. relations since 1945." In general, European lawmakers are working to marginalize religion in public life, and European public opinion polls support that direction.

Only a fifth of all Europeans (21%) say religion is "very important" to them—the percentage of Americans who said so is three times that (59%). Almost half of Americans (44%) attend a place of worship once a week, but the average in Europe is just 15%. Lost in these comparisons is how far both numbers have slipped in the U.S. over the last few decades. For example, in the decade of the '90s *alone*, U.S. church attendance dropped by 12%, and the downturn was largely fueled by higher numbers of young adults staying away from church than in generations past.

Now back to the Christian Wiccan mini-movement. As the traditional beliefs of Christianity lose their footing overseas and younger generations of Americans stop going to church, the door is pried open to invite in moral-but-not-religious and Christian/pagan approaches to spirituality. For example, according to the Christian Wicca Ministries Web site, here's a sampling

of what teenagers who practice Christian witchcraft believe:

- The Bible is the source of truth, but not necessarily the Word of God.
- The Holy Spirit is the feminine side of God. The trinity is made up of the Father, Mother (Holy Spirit), and Son.
- The Holy Spirit offers baptized people individual powers.
- We are meant to be our own "priests"—we should follow only God, not religious leaders.



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what's in?

BIG-BOX GAMES—Wal-Mart's the late-night playing field of choice for a growing number of college kids, especially in rural areas, according to The Wall Street Journal. Instead of hanging out at more traditional venues, groups of students invade the mega-store's maze of aisles to play a variety of games, scavenger hunts, and relays, taking advantage

of Wal-Mart's inventory of some 100,000 items. For example, to play "10 in 10," two teams each choose a captain who spends 10 minutes selecting 10 items from out-of-the-way corners of the store. Then each team must return the other team's 10 items to their original locations—first team to finish wins.

"THE TRUTH IS, THE REAL WORLD IS NOT AN INCREDIBLY FASCINATING PLACE FOR A PERSON WITH A FAIR DEGREE OF CREATIVITY."

—**DIRK PARHAM**, a master sergeant in the U.S. Air Force who's an avid L.A.R.Per (Live Action Role-Player), a growing movement of people who dress up like their favorite fantasy characters and role play stories with each other, quoted in Cool News of the Day