

## **Jesse Walker on “Inside the Spiritual Jacuzzi”**

**Walker discusses several religious trends**

**Borrowing from and combining ideas and practices from multiple religions**

**The blurring of boundaries between art and faith**

**Acceptance by religious adherents of the idea that their beliefs are “a collection of myths and metaphors.”**

“In a way, none of this is unusual. There have always been people who discard the elements of their faith that they dislike, and there have always been syncretic religions that fuse one spiritual system with another. What is new is the ease of the former, the speed of the latter, and the extent to which the two have combined.

“There is a wide gulf, of course, between someone who merely fine-tunes her Catholicism and someone who replaces the Virgin Mary with the goddess of chaos; between a Jew who mixes milk with meat and a Jew who practices witchcraft. If I am describing a trend, it is one that covers a wide spectrum of behavior, from the ordinary to the outré. As a journalist, I have naturally focused on the latter—but it’s the former, obviously, that is reshaping society.”

## **Charlotte Allen on “The Scholars and the Goddess”**

**Allen provides an illustration of constructing a religion with Wicca.**

**Some Wiccans claim their religion is a continuation of an ancient religion that was suppressed by Christianity.**

**However, recent scholarship points toward a recent invention. Scholarship also casts doubt on the claim that egalitarian/matriarchal societies dominated by Goddess worship existed before being replaced by patriarchal monotheists.**

**However, many Wiccans are comfortable with these scholarly findings.**