

Author makes case for masculine spirituality

Wildmen, Warriors and Kings, by Patrick M. Arnold, SJ; Crossroad Publishing Company (New York, N.Y., 1991); 240 pages; \$19.95.

By Bishop Dennis W. Hickey

Oldsters may recall a ditty that occasionally surfaced on Father's Day: "Momma gets this and momma gets that, but papa gets nothing at all."

In order to counter this imbalance, Father Patrick M. Arnold, SJ, has given us *Wildmen, Warriors, and Kings*. He is persuaded that the richness of masculine spirituality has been overshadowed too long by the feminist movement, which he supported wholeheartedly until he detected "a dark undertow to the tide of feminist change that only lately I could name misandry (Greek: male bashing)."

He believes that churches have come late in addressing the men's crisis. Feminist women's presence in seminars is seen as one symptom. Let it be stated at the outset that this is no book for the fainthearted.

The author borrows from the New Men's Movement the goal of articulating a masculine spirituality. He grieves because of the divorce which has developed over the generations between men and Christian spirituality. Many factors are listed as responsible for this state of affairs. Men themselves must do the bulk of the work in repairing the split. Feminists must speak for women — they cannot speak for men.

Father Arnold lists the primary colors in the masculine spirit, which are personified in the archetype of the

warrior, the prophet and the wildman. Competitiveness, fighting for life — including the protection of the female — is the first color cited and listed under the heading of the Warrior.

The drive for personal freedom in opposition to a patriarchal world falls under the archetype of the wildman. The reader may explore several other colors that are mentioned.

The author deplors what he sees as the church's failure to address male needs. It is derived, he writes, from the "largely unacknowledged and historical tilt in Christian spirituality toward feminine values." Males are not basically indifferent or uninterested in faith, an unrecognized truth about males. "As Western culture increasingly tilts toward feminism, the need for masculine affirming religiosity grows steadily," Father Arnold insists.

He offers seven suggestions for reaching men. I doubt that the author is aware some of them have been tried and found wanting. When this reviewer, as pastor, tried to implement a program of studying contemporary issues in terms of Catholic teaching for a parish's Men's Club, he was rebuffed by officers who wanted nothing more than beer and card playing on the agenda.

Some of the suggestions mentioned by Father Arnold are unique and should be helpful.

The reflections on men and liturgy are insightful. He writes: "Men need certain regularity and consistency in their worship; spontaneity has its appeal for men but not in the midst of ri-

tual. "Ceremonies that are trivial or flighty don't command male respect," he adds.

A postlude is added to this section, possibly striking a harmonious chord in grooms: "One of the most alienating worship services that most men ever encounter is their own wedding ceremony. The blunt truth is that Christian nuptials are rarely celebrated anymore as a rite truly sensitive on the spiritual needs of both husband and wife. On the contrary the typical wedding is a once-in-a-lifetime chance for the bride and her mother to fulfill their childhood fancies."

Although this does not happen in the Diocese of Rochester, all would agree that "Men, too, have a right to find their wedding ceremony a meaningful and appropriate experience."

Although a strain is sometimes put on the reader's credulity, the section on "Masculine Archetype and the Bible" is fascinating. The author uses Old Testament figures such as Moses, Abraham *et al* as models of male spirituality.

He casts them successively as Wildmen, Warriors, Prophets, Kings. In so doing he is not loathe to note their shortcomings in an intriguing manner. Abraham's treatment of Ishmael, for example, is hardly consistent with what would be expected of a good father.

Solomon's care for the poor and the neglected is likened to Jimmy Carter's building low-income housing with his own hands. Solomon is painted as the

ideal who grew in stature in his responsible position as contrasted with the *puer aeternus* (eternal boy) who never matures in adulthood.

The book's most delightful chapter is "Jonah, the Trickster," providing the clearest explanation of this character that one will ever find (written in modern idiom, too).

The last chapter, titled the "Masculinity of God," is a persuasive plea to continue the use of male metaphors in describing God. The Jewish, Christian and Muslim traditions are distinctive in teaching that God is One and a Person without sex being a factor.

The idea of a divine androgynous — both male and female — is wholly unsatisfactory. Neutering God, according to Arnold, means deconstructing masculine God talk in worship and theology.

Father Arnold makes a strong case that masculine metaphors are essential if we are to remain faithful to Jewish-Christian tradition. A special plea is made for the retention of God as Father (Abba): "Yet one metaphor above all others captured the imagination of Christians because it claimed such centrality in the prayer-life and personal identity of Jesus: God the Father."

Readers will find *Wildmen, Warriors and Kings* challenging, provocative and entertaining. The book will be seen as one-sided by some and might bring a few sensitive souls to the verge of apoplexy.

If you are tired of pabulum, this is the book for you.

Film fails to fulfill promise, just leaves audience 'cold'

NEW YORK (CNS) — A sultry cartoon character lures her creator into his own comic strip, where he discovers he's in a whole other universe — the *Cool World* (Paramount).

When Jack Deebs (Gabriel Byrne) lands in his two-dimensional world of cartoon doodles, voluptuous Holli Would welcomes him with open arms. She desperately wants to return with him to Las Vegas as a real person — or "noid," as humans are nicknamed.

Standing in their way is the only other flesh-and-blood guy around, hard-boiled detective Frank Harris (Brad Pitt). Years before, he tumbled into the cool world, and now his mission is to preserve the balance of the universe by keeping doodles and noids from mating.

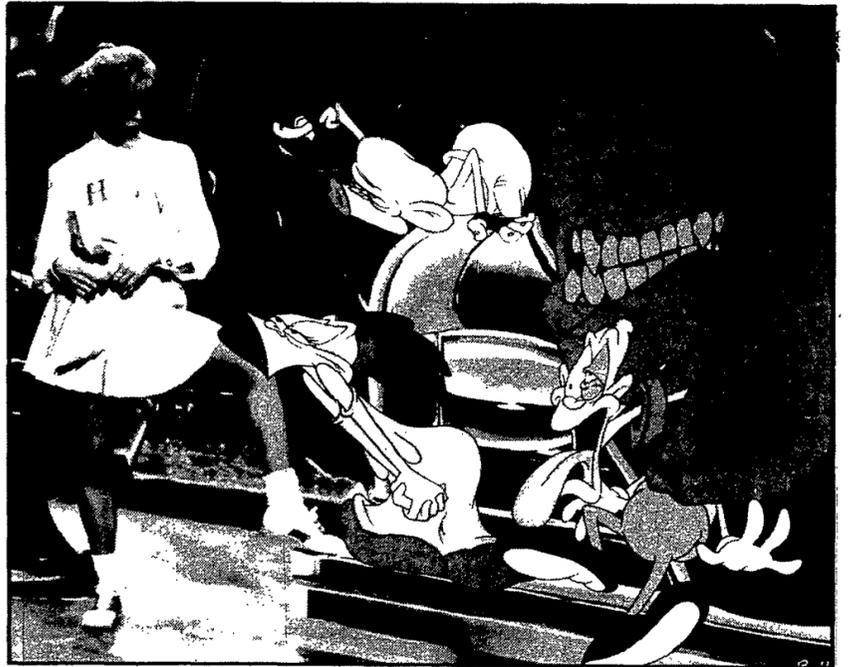
Or something like that. In director Ralph Bakshi's manic mix of live action and frantic animation, only the eye-popping visual design is well-defined.

Jack, Harris and Holli (played by Kim Basinger in human form), all remain ciphers. The story is pure male adolescent fantasy, with the female doodles sashaying around in tight outfits.

The film is race-paced and fairly bursts with cartoon craziness. The deliberately flat animation makes a colorful contrast when blended with the live action.

Yet a full-length movie needs more than eye-catching visuals. Instead, *Cool World* becomes merely chaotic. Starting out with originality, it soon ends up looking silly.

Because of cartoon violence and suggestive sexual situations, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 — parents are strongly cautioned that some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.



Merrick Morton-Paramount Pictures
After becoming human, seductress Holli Would (Kim Basinger) bids adieu to the 'doodles' of *Cool World* in the combination live-action and animation film *Cool World*.

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