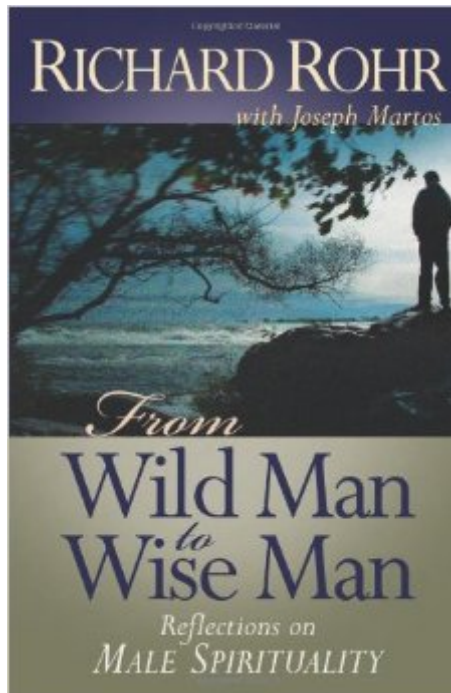


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From Wild Man To Wise Man: Reflections On Male Spirituality



Synopsis

From Wild Man to Wise Man: Reflections on Male Spirituality is a revised and updated edition of Richard Rohr's earlier best-seller, The Wild Man's Journey: Reflections on Male Spirituality. For this new work, Rohr added three chapters that discuss John the Baptist, Saint Paul and grief. An appendix provides a structure for a men's group, based on Rohr's work with M.A.L.E.s (Men As Learners and Elders), a program of the Center for Action and Contemplation, which Richard Rohr founded and now directs in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

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Customer Reviews

I confess to not having read much on male spirituality, but I have found myself struggling to reconcile the common images put forth amongst Christian writers (of the right and left). I can't bring myself to fully endorse the 'God-mandated Male leadership' view championed by more conservative evangelicals. On the other side, I have found authors of mainline Protestantism to want to throw the baby out with the bath water and not recognize and integrate obvious male difference into their theology of maleness. I have found Richard Rohr's book to be a breath of fresh air. Rohr sees the masculine and the feminine as two poles that are not to exist in totality in any one personality, but are to be integrated. It's apparent (and certainly emphasized in modern psychology) that all people (men and women) find themselves on a continuum as it relates to masculine and feminine aspects. However, Rohr celebrates and affirms traditional maleness and views it as pointing to a major (but not total) aspect of God. Rohr sees masculine spirituality as emphasizing "movement over stillness, action over theory, service to the world over religious discussions, speaking truth over social

niceties, and doing justice instead of any self-serving charity" (p. 10). Obviously if these characteristics are not integrated with a healthy feminine side as well as being subordinated to love, then they can spell danger for a man's life. Throughout the book Rohr emphasizes the need for men to die (or 'descend'). This usually comes in the 'second half' of life when the 'boy must die so that that the man may live". There comes a time (usually after age 35) when a man will become disillusioned (his 'system of logic, meaning, success, and truth breaks down').

But the most telling thing about the newly discovered baptismal cave of John the Baptist, found nearby, is that there are exactly 28 steps down into the "drowning pool," exactly like the 28 hot rocks that are brought into the Native sweat lodge. These so-called primitive people understood the cyclic death symbolism of 28 and used it for initiation. Every woman knows it every month, but men have to be taught, and it seems that John's original baptism was indeed an initiation into that precise meaning, the necessary cycle of death and rebirth. (Rohr and Martos, *From Wild Man to Wise Man*, 51.) The above quote, taken from Richard Rohr's book on male spirituality, encapsulates its essence in a way that I find myself almost incapable of doing: it is a strange combination of Christianity, vague spirituality, numerical mysticism, and general symbolism that defies neat categorization. After reading it I am very nearly, wonder of wonders, at a loss for words, and it is an odd combination of factors that has brought me to this position. The first of these is that several men whose recommendations I trust commended Rohr to me as an author worth reading for spiritual growth. And the second is the actual experience of reading the book, which frequently returned such nonsensical and bizarre statements as the quote above. For the life of me, I struggle to envision what those who recommended Rohr to me had in mind when they did so, and that puzzle niggles me even more than the specific absurdities of Rohr's logic. Of course, I welcome puzzles, and despite my mystification (or perhaps, more accurately, as a consequence of it), I want to attempt three things.

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