

ABSTRACT

As a spiritual icon, Henri Nouwen is still helping shape America's religious landscape through the continuing impact of his life and work even after his death in 1996. This dissertation focuses on Nouwen's spiritual formation dynamics and his lived spirituality: his *approach* and his *person*—two key factors which, I submit, primarily account for his lingering influence in our postmodern age.

This study, first of all, synthesizes Nouwen's integrated approach to spiritual formation and soul care—one that weaves *spirituality*, *psychology*, *ministry*, and *theology* in a seamless fashion. Secondly, this work explores Nouwen's brand of spirituality which is both counterintuitive and countercultural—a *spirituality of imperfection* he embodied throughout his lived experience—where the journey to perfection is through the realities of imperfection.

Primarily, through descriptive analysis and synthesis of his writings, I contend that Nouwen's integrative pursuit of the spiritual life and its formation is grounded in his own experience of spiritual imperfection—with its coinherent *psychological* (wholeness through brokenness), *ministerial* (power through weakness), and *theological* (communion through suffering) facets. Overall, this dissertation demonstrates how one imperfect saint continues to affect the spiritual climate of America and beyond in ways that are not only cross-denominational and broadly ecumenical, but, most importantly, countercultural.