

**A SPIRITUALITY OF IMPERFECTION**

**The Coinherence of Spirituality with Psychology, Ministry, and Theology  
in Henri Nouwen's Integrated Approach to Soul Care and Spiritual Formation**

(Excerpted from a Ph.D. Dissertation by the same title)

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June 2006

## Introduction

As a spiritual icon, Henri Nouwen is still shaping America's religious landscape through the continuing impact of his life and work even after his death a decade ago. This study focuses on Nouwen's spiritual formation dynamics and his lived spirituality. The first part presents an approach to spirituality which is holistic, one that Nouwen modeled in his ministry of soul care and spiritual formation. Nouwen construed the spiritual journey as integrative—incorporating spirituality, theology, psychology, and ministry in a seamless fashion.

Such integrated view stems from Nouwen's fundamental understanding of the nature of the spiritual life which involves cultivating—*inwardly*, *outwardly*, and *upwardly*—one's relation with *self*, *others*, and *God*. In his book *Reaching Out*, Nouwen laid out this same concept schematically—unraveling the interlocking relationships of psychology, ministry, and theology with spirituality (RO:13-14). They all represent a “coinherence,”<sup>1</sup> that is, a “full and mutual sharing of one thing in the complete reality of the other.” This kind of coinherence is what framed Nouwen's integrated approach to ministry.

The second part of this study explores a brand of spirituality that is decidedly counterintuitive and countercultural: a *spirituality of imperfection* which Nouwen himself exemplified in his life. He recognized the spiritual journey to perfection as a journey through imperfection, factoring in the realities of struggle, weakness, and incompleteness.

Overall, this study shows how one imperfect saint, with a rare combination of spiritual, theological, psychological, and ministerial insights, has reoriented Christians—and continues to do so to this day through his writings—to a much more realistic and integrated view of the spiritual life and its formation.

## Spirituality's Coinherence with Psychology, Ministry and Theology

### Psychology and Spirituality

Biographer Michael Ford distills Henri Nouwen's instinctive ability to integrate the psychological with the spiritual by his following comment:

Trained in psychology and steeped in the riches of Christian spirituality, Nouwen managed to balance his awareness of the dynamics of the human psyche with his openness to the workings of the Spirit.<sup>2</sup>

Nouwen considered the matrix of psychology beneficial in the understanding of 'self' which he felt is integral to the development of the spiritual life. But he reckoned self-knowledge always in relation to God. Like Augustine, Nouwen held that the knowledge of self and the knowledge of God are inextricably bound together. Illustrating their reciprocal dynamic, he declared: "we become strangers to ourselves" the more we act as strangers before God.<sup>3</sup> The self, as Nouwen viewed it, ultimately derives its meaning in relation to God in that "we can be most ourselves when most like God" (LS:38). As he himself affirmed: "I am hidden in God and I have to find myself in that relationship."<sup>4</sup>

Nouwen's own grasp of what John Calvin referred to as 'double knowledge' goes beyond the theoretical; he had his experience to back up it up. In reading *The Genesee Diary*, one can sense Nouwen's evident "growth in self-knowledge and God-knowledge" which brought about greater integrity to his journey.<sup>5</sup> Indeed his experience of the dynamic between psychology and spirituality brings to clearer focus our joint pursuit of wholeness and holiness.

### Spirituality and Ministry

Not only is psychology integrated with spirituality but spirituality itself is entwined with ministry. The Bible's command to love our neighbor as our self assumes that we do in fact love our self. We cannot give ourselves to others if we do not have a self that we fully accept and intimately

know. To the degree that we love ourselves, we are able to love and give of ourselves to others. Ministry requires precisely that—the “giving of self” (G!:85; cf. CM:51).

Thus, the love of God and the love of neighbor just cannot be separated (cf. 1 Jn 4:20-21). From the way Nouwen unpacks the dynamic of the Great Commandment, “The first commandment receives concreteness and specificity through the second; the second ... becomes possible through the first” (LR:32). Loving God enables us to truly love others; loving others proves that we truly love God. The melding of these two corresponds to the marriage between spirituality and ministry.

Ministry must be fueled by genuine spirituality for it to be effective. For spirituality to be authentic, it must give birth to actual practice of ministry. Nouwen embraced the conviction that communion with God results in deep community with others and true community leads to creative ministry. Spirituality and ministry do go hand in hand together.

### Theology and Spirituality

Theology is the final domain that clinches the coinherence trilogy of spirituality. Like psychology and ministry, theology indivisibly fuses with spirituality. Henri Nouwen saw no discrepancy between them. He understood the word *theologia* to be “the highest level of prayer” which the Desert Fathers equated with “a direct intimate communion with God.”<sup>6</sup>

With Nouwen, all theology is spiritual and practical. As one academician attested: “[Nouwen] was a pastoral theologian, somebody who made theology existential enough to become a living theology.”<sup>7</sup> For one, he always insisted on “situat[ing] our knowledge of God in the concrete circumstances of our existence.”<sup>8</sup> His conviction that our doctrinal life is never to be disengaged from our life of faith is evidenced in his *Letters to Marv*—the book which captures Nouwen’s doctrine of the spiritual life wherein his faith was fleshed out by what he has “lived out and lived

through” (LM:6-7). Nouwen by no means exhibited perfect balance in his spiritual life, but his writings show that he genuinely strove for integrity in living it out.<sup>9</sup>

Concerning the conjoined status of theology and spirituality, Nouwen considered theological moments as “moments of doxology in which knowing God, loving God, and praising God”<sup>10</sup> are one. In an overlapping fashion, they both constitute what a living encounter with God entails.

### **Journey of Integration and Imperfection**

Henri Nouwen’s proclivity for integration represented a major step toward wholeness. On a deeper analysis, his commitment to pursuing it spoke more about his heightened awareness of his fractured human condition than an obsessive drive for perfection. Nouwen’s integrative pursuit of the spiritual life never obviated but instead incorporated facets of psychological, ministerial, and theological imperfections. Integration, for him, coexisted with imperfection.

#### Wholeness through Brokenness

Spirituality does integrate with psychology (the *inward* movement to the innermost self) but it is a *psychology* of imperfection—wherein the path to increasing wholeness involves the psychological realities of brokenness. Referring to our universal human condition, Henri Nouwen openly admitted: “Our brokenness is so visible and tangible, so concrete and specific” (LOB: 69). He, of course, spoke as a deeply broken man himself: “broken with psychological wounds, physical limitations, and emotional needs.”<sup>11</sup> Yet with author Frederick Buechner, Nouwen regarded brokenness as “a way of being human in this world, which is the way to wholeness.”<sup>12</sup>

In a way, Nouwen’s life mirrored the eucharistic formula invoked during Holy Communion: “taken or chosen, blessed, broken, and given.” It could be said that “his life became spiritual bread and wine, body and blood, for others.”<sup>13</sup> We are recipients today of untold blessings flowing out of Nouwen’s brokenness. His inward journey of imperfection, marked by authentic self-knowledge, continues to inspire us in our own pursuit of wholeness.

## Power through Weakness

Similarly, spirituality integrates with ministry (the *outward* movement toward others) but it is one characterized by a ministry of imperfection—where the key to a powerful ministry is unlocked via the exercise of powerlessness. The way of God, Henri Nouwen asserted, is the way of weakness manifested in Christ’s birth and death in voluntary powerlessness (FWH:33, 35)

Appealing to Christ’s example, Nouwen stressed that the way of the Christian minister “is not the way of upward mobility ... but the way of downward mobility ending on the cross” (INJ:62). The mystery of ministry lies in the reality that “ministers are powerless people who have nothing to boast of except their weakness.”<sup>14</sup> Like the apostle Paul, “it is precisely in such ‘weakness’ that true power, the power of God, becomes effective in [our] ministry.”<sup>15</sup>

The path of power is through weakness, but it is one which “claims power, God’s power, the all-transforming *power of love* ” (FWH:42). Again, Paul demonstrated this in his own ministry. “Like the cross of Christ, Paul’s weakness is, an expression of love ... (2 Cor 4:15).”<sup>16</sup> Ministry then, as a movement toward others, is a powerful love in action, albeit via weakness.

## Communion through Suffering

Lastly, spirituality integrates with theology (the *upward* movement to God) but it is, nonetheless, represented by a *theology* of imperfection in which the route toward union with God is paved with suffering as a prelude to glory. Nouwen declared with certainty: “There is no journey to God outside of the journey that Jesus made” (RPS:56)—and that includes the inevitable way of suffering.

To Nouwen, it is illusory to think that “reaching out to God will free us from pain and suffering” (RO:150). Without any trace of triumphalism, he accepted our residual fallenness as a factor in the suffering that has now become our inevitable lot.<sup>17</sup> As one whose ceaseless struggle

proved to be the bane of his existence, Nouwen knew suffering intimately. By any measure, he suffered well himself.<sup>18</sup>

Nouwen further acknowledged that if “communion with Jesus means becoming like him ... lead[ing] us to a new realm of being ... usher[ing] us into the Kingdom” (BH:74) then suffering is the expected pathway to the said Kingdom. Communion with God is a communion with and through suffering.

To summarize: The inward, outward, and upward journeys are journeys of imperfection which Henri Nouwen himself exemplified. Yet, in the midst of his personal encounters with the glaring realities of imperfection associated with the experience of brokenness, weakness, and suffering, Nouwen never stopped giving of himself to others through the avenue of ministry—the ministry of soul care and spiritual formation in particular.

### **Integrated Approach to Soul Care and Spiritual Formation**

Henri Nouwen’s ministry style was expressly broad. As a minister, he functioned more as a generalist than a specialist, instinctively combining the dynamics of soul care and spiritual formation into a singular thrust and engaging the disciplines of the mind, heart and body in order to create space for God.<sup>19</sup> Such an integrated mindset and approach account for much of his practical style of ministry.

Indicative of such holistic approach, Nouwen combined the ministerial tasks of *healing*, *sustaining*, and *guiding* which all stand for the same foundational principles of pastoral theology advocated by Seward Hiltner, one of his mentors at Meninger Clinic. Integrating them into his own applied understanding, Nouwen recast these three shepherding functions into the overlapping roles of a *pastor* (one who heals the wounds of the past), a *priest* (one who sustains life in the present), and a *prophet* (one who guides others to the future) [LR:75].

In his ministry of formation, Nouwen wore all three hats, so to speak, in ways that seemed almost indistinguishable. It is difficult if not impossible to pigeonhole Nouwen into one exclusive role. Depending on the situation, Nouwen displayed flexibility in his ministry approach. Conversant with a whole gamut of soul care and spiritual formation helps including spiritual friendship, spiritual guidance, spiritual mentoring, and spiritual direction, Nouwen was able to make productive use of their combined elements with creativity and ease.<sup>20</sup>

### Integrated Ministerial Dynamics

Henri Nouwen believed that a real minister is a convener<sup>21</sup>—a task he equated with the exercise of hospitality. In his thinking, all of ministry is to be seen as hospitality: “To help, to serve, to care, to guide, to heal ... [are] all used to express a reaching out toward our neighbor whereby we perceive life as a gift not to possess but to share” (RO:109).

Soul care is exactly this: a selfless sharing of one’s life motivated by a deep caring for another person’s life. As Nouwen defines it, care “is the loving attention given to another person” (GG:58). For him, “the care of the soul is paramount, not the cure of the soul, as a necessary first step in deepening one’s own spirituality.”<sup>22</sup>

It was apparent that Nouwen’s focal thrust in ministry was formational. Yet he never claimed it was his job to form others. He looked at spiritual formation as the process of emptying our heart for the Spirit to be released to do his work.<sup>23</sup> As he elaborated: “the point of spiritual formation is to discern where something is happening ... [where] God is doing something. Our task is to become aware of where and how God is presently acting and to recognize that indeed it is God who is acting.”<sup>24</sup>

### Spiritual Journey of Imperfection

Henri Nouwen’s integrative approach to ministry, based on his clear grasp of the coinherence of spirituality, psychology, ministry, and theology, were both propelled and tempered by

his own experience of imperfection. With characteristic honesty, Nouwen was one of the first to confess: “I am unable to say that I have arrived; I never will in this life ...” (RPS:17). He, in fact, issued this warning: “Those who think they have arrived, have lost their way. Those who think they have reached their goal, have missed it” (GD:133). Evidently, “the spiritual journey for Nouwen was never about perfection, but about struggling to live in a deep and meaningful relationship with God that would bear fruit in the lives of others.”<sup>25</sup>

### A Perfect Example of Imperfection

Henri Nouwen never hesitated to expose his own spiritual inabilities, even if by doing so it would seem, on the surface, to neutralize the power of the gospel that he sought to proclaim. On the contrary, instead of jeopardizing his witness, Nouwen’s credibility increases even as he “becomes a mirror for all of us Christians who daily fail to be ‘perfect as [our] heavenly Father is perfect.’”<sup>26</sup>

At the same time, Nouwen possessed a spiritual wisdom that ensured that imperfection did not become the overriding theme of his life as much as his courage and willingness to confront imperfection in light of the power of the gospel. His transparent life bore out the truth that only in the full awareness of one’s limitations does one discover God’s ample supply of power and grace. Herein lies the blessed side of a genuinely imperfect existence.<sup>27</sup> As a restless seeker, wounded healer, and faithful struggler, Henri Nouwen emerges as the embodiment of an authentic spirituality lodged in an imperfect personality.

### *A Restless Seeker*

Nouwen is a quintessential example of a restless, wandering soul searching for himself, seeking out others and the world, and deeply longing for God. Through his restless seeking, Nouwen confronted his troubled self, his conflicted relationships with others, and his sometimes wavering relationship with God. To his dismay, he confessed one time: “My own restlessness ... [has] made me flee solitude as soon as I have found it” (GG:1).

Coming out of his seven-month experience of living as a monk at the Abbey of the Genesee, Nouwen looked back and with searing honesty bemoaned:

Somehow I had expected that my restlessness would turn into quietude, my tensions into a peaceful life-style [*sic*], and my ambiguities and ambivalences into a single-minded commitment to God (GD:217).

During his fifty-fourth birthday, six months before settling into his newfound “home” at L’Arche Daybreak, Nouwen reflected upon his life and the restlessness that beset him still.

Looking back, ... [V]ery little, if anything has changed with regard to my search for inner unity and peace. I am still the restless, nervous, intense, distracted, and impulse-driven person I was when I set out on this spiritual journey (RD:127).

Suffice it to say, the lifelong battle to secure peace and quiet for his soul never subsided for Nouwen. Although he could not fully resolve his restlessness, he realized that it always brought him back to God, the Perfect One whom he was ultimately seeking. Thus it could be said that, in the midst of imperfection, Nouwen was, at least, drawing closer to Perfection.

#### *A Wounded Healer*

None of us is whole, at least not yet. We are a damaged, broken, and wounded lot. Not only did Nouwen acknowledge this intrinsic condition we share with all of humanity; he vividly lived its reality as a “saint with wounds.”<sup>28</sup> At best he has been identified with a memorable phrase that has become the virtual cornerstone of his spirituality: ‘the wounded healer.’

Nouwen wrestled all through his life with a deep wound of loneliness that no earthly relationships could satisfy. He himself characterized it with such personal familiarity—“this immense need for affection, and this immense fear of rejection”—pointing to its fragility in his own life (SJ:25).

Despite the agonizing struggle that came with having to live with his inner wound, Nouwen devoted his energy to bringing healing to other wounded souls. As one testified:

He guided many through the dark places of doubt and loss of faith. While he was doing this for others he was himself powerfully afflicted by dark thoughts and mental

pains. He knew anxiety and depression, from which there was only temporary release.<sup>29</sup>

Nouwen's enduring concept of the wounded healer did not lack its share of critics though. One in particular complained: "Many see the Nouwen minister as a weakling ... The wounded-healer pastor may become an inward-looking chaplain of the emotions who forgets his [*sic*] function as a prophet of God and servant of those in need."<sup>30</sup> The fact is that Nouwen, in his book *The Wounded Healer*, warned against a form of "spiritual exhibitionism" that grossly misuses the wounded healer concept (WH:88). He actually urged us to "find the freedom to step over our wounds" (HN:45).

In reality, Nouwen's woundedness served as a vast channel through which God's limitless power could freely be displayed. "It is indeed through our broken, vulnerable, mortal ways of being that the healing power of the eternal God becomes visible to us," Nouwen claimed (CFM:144). Nouwen simply lived out his humanity and his unique calling. The core of his humanity was his being "wounded" and the core of his true calling was his being a "healer."<sup>31</sup> He lived both core truths well.

In restlessness as in woundedness, Nouwen embodied imperfection. In both, struggle proved to be the common thread of his experience. As a genuine seeker, Nouwen was restless. As a true healer, he was deeply wounded. As a real struggler, Henri Nouwen was faithful.

### *A Faithful Struggler*

At the heart of an authentic spiritual life lies the perennial experience of struggle. As Nouwen paints it, our new life is "a life of joy, but also of sacrifice. It is a glorious life, but also one of suffering. It is a life of peace, but also of struggle" (HSH:43-44). From experience he testified again and again that struggle was the stuff of imperfection he had to live with.

For many, the spiritual life more resembles that of a tug-of-war. Nouwen was no stranger to this experience of constantly being pulled in opposite directions. His journals sometimes read more like a dizzying record of contradictory statements than a coherent expression of thoughts. They

showcase Nouwen's continual struggles to translate his intentions into actions, his ideas into reality, and his endless professions into concrete expressions. He conceded: "There are so many contradictions within me. ... the distance between insight and practice is huge" (SJ:13). Sue Mosteller concluded that Nouwen's "struggle to close the gap between the ideal and the reality is so real, so painful, and so human!"<sup>32</sup>

None of Nouwen's struggles is unfamiliar to any of our own experiences except that, unlike most of us, he has freely gone on record to talk about them openly. Yet like many of us, he genuinely longed to overcome this lifelong battle. All the same, Nouwen recognized the existence of spiritual tension that made the process of overcoming a challenge of huge proportion.

Nouwen posed a revealing question to which he volunteered his own answer: "Can the tension be resolved in an integrated life? ... [F]ew have accomplished this wholeness. I certainly have not" (SJ:39). The presence of tension is further exacerbated by the inevitable presence of darkness looming both inside and outside all of us.

Much as he wanted to dispel it, darkness hovered about like a heavy cloud in Nouwen's life that simply would not move away. Even when it seemed like he had finally found the "light" at L'Arche after a long, dark journey, Nouwen had to admit:

Life in community does not keep the darkness away. To the contrary. It seems that the light that attracted me to L'Arche also made me conscious of the darkness in myself. . . . Community life has opened me up to the real spiritual combat: the struggle to keep moving toward the light precisely when the darkness is so real (RPS:136).

Despite his awareness that times of darkness are standard ingredients for a life of faith," Nouwen never envisioned going through the worst of them.

It was while serving as pastor of L'Arche that Nouwen encountered the darkest episode of his life. It concerned the breakdown of his friendship with Nathan Ball. From his anguished account, we glimpse Nouwen's version of the "dark night":

Here I was, ... flat on the ground and in total darkness. ...It was as if all that had given my life meaning was pulled away and I could see nothing in front of me but a bottomless abyss. ... I felt that God had abandoned me. . . . The anguish completely paralyzed me. ... All had become darkness (IVL:xiii-xiv).

By God's grace, Nouwen came out of his own dark night with a far greater motivation to love more deeply. Because he decided "to choose, in the face of it all, not death but life," Nouwen was able "to look back at that period of [his] life and see it as a time of intense purification that had led [him] gradually to a new inner freedom, a new hope, and a new creativity" (IVL: xvii-xviii; 59-60).

Henri Nouwen openly embraced the reality of struggle as a normative experience of spiritual imperfection. He welcomed spiritual tension and learned to manage its imposing presence. He accepted spiritual darkness and willingly passed through its black corridors without losing his spiritual vision. Through it all, Nouwen never gave up on the struggle but remained faithful.

Faithfulness is the one outstanding trait for which Nouwen is best remembered by people closest to him. In Nathan Ball's recollection, "So often and in so many ways, Henri expressed his desire to be faithful—faithful to God, to his own inner self, to the demands of love, to friendships, and to his chosen vocation as a priest."<sup>33</sup> Determination proved to be key for him in exercising faithfulness.

Drawing upon such determination, Nouwen confronted what most assumed to be the crux of his struggle, which was dealing with his homosexual orientation. Michael Ford's revealing portrait of Nouwen exposed this largely hidden struggle and depicted the priest's sexuality as "a source of deep anxiety and conflict" due to his unbending "commitment to live out his vow of celibacy."<sup>34</sup>

Celibacy was no small issue for Nouwen who understood well the complications of trying to live a chaste life (RD: 169). Still, he faithfully committed to conduct his "hidden and secret life" with purity of heart no matter what (SJ:24). For someone whose craving for human love and affection seemed insatiable, the protracted struggle could be punishingly painful. To the best of his closest

friends' knowledge, "Nouwen may have struggled, but he made no compromises with his convictions."<sup>35</sup> "[G]uided by the deep awareness that we are called to be living signs of God's faithful presence among us," (HN:129) Nouwen quietly struggled his way through until the end of his life in a posture of fidelity.

### A Spiritual Profile of an Imperfect Saint

Henri Nouwen has freely chosen to reveal himself candidly in all of his writings and as such, no more accurate sketch of his spirituality is needed other than what he himself so keenly portrayed. It is a spirituality of imperfection that is no less deep, no less authentic. Nouwen was of the conviction that even "while we ourselves are overwhelmed by our own weaknesses and limitations, we can still be so transparent that the Spirit of God, the divine counselor, can shine through us and bring light to others" (LR:68). In a way, it was his imperfection that qualified him even more to minister to others.

In his book *The Holy Longing*, Ronald Rolheiser wrote a moving dedication to Henri Nouwen that best captures Nouwen's "imperfect" influence upon so many:

By sharing his own struggles, he mentored us all, helping us to pray while not knowing how to pray, to rest while feeling restless, to be at peace while tempted, to feel safe while still anxious, to be surrounded by a cloud of light while still in darkness, and to love while still in doubt.<sup>36</sup>

How can such an imperfect vessel also be a fountain out of which abundant blessings flow? What accounted for much of the impact of Henri Nouwen's spirituality? Despite what may sound like a platitudinous rhetoric, it must be Jesus, Nouwen's Jesus, that made all the difference: "Nouwen embraced his crosses, carried them, and allowed them to lead him to Jesus."<sup>37</sup> Much as many would have preferred Nouwen's woundedness to feature less prominently in his life, his close friend Robert Jonas cleverly reminds us that "his ever-present, accompanying shadow was there only because of the Light in which he walked."<sup>38</sup> Henri Nouwen did walk with Jesus, his true love and the true lover of his wounded soul.

On September 21, 1996, the restless, wounded, and struggling soul of God's beloved at long last found peace, wholeness, and contentment in the arms of his Eternal Lover in God's eternal home. The world mourned the death of a saint, so scarred, so wounded, so imperfect that the church to which he belonged might consider him the least likely candidate for beatification, much less, canonization. The Christian world, however, lost a real saint who by his life demonstrated that the journey to perfection is through imperfection.

### **Conclusion**

Henri Nouwen's writings still speak—even more loudly today—and continue to arrest many of our spiritual distortions. They beckon us to listen, but in a rather different mode: counterintuitively and counterculturally. G.K. Chesterton remarked that “the saint needed by each culture is the one who contradicts it the most.”<sup>39</sup> Nouwen assumes that role even today.

To a culture that remains highly individualistic, Henri Nouwen inculcates the ideals of community; to the narcissistic tendencies of the majority, he promotes the value of compassionate living; instead of the cherished notion of *upward* mobility with its undue emphases on success and productivity, he elevates the path of *downward* mobility with its themes of self-sacrifice and humility; to a wounded lot seeking recovery and healing, he enhances the value of *care* more than *cure* of souls; and finally, to a professedly ‘spiritual’ generation seeking power and perfection, he introduces a theology of weakness, powerlessness, and imperfection. All in all, Henri Nouwen's spirituality is summed up in a simple but compelling phrase: *a spirituality of imperfection*.

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## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> See Timothy George and Alister McGrath, eds., *For All the Saints: Evangelical Theology and Christian Spirituality* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 3.
- <sup>2</sup> Michael Ford, *Wounded Prophet: A Portrait of Henri J.M. Nouwen* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 15.
- <sup>3</sup> Henri Nouwen, "Spiritual Direction," *Worship* 55 (September 1981): 402.
- <sup>4</sup> James R. and Elizabeth Newby, *Between Peril & Promise* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 40.
- <sup>5</sup> See Luci Shaw, *Life Path* (East Sussex, England: Christina Press, 1997), 13. Cf. Henri Nouwen, *The Genesee Diary: Report from a Trappist Monastery* (New York: Doubleday, 1976).
- <sup>6</sup> Henri Nouwen, "Theology as Doxology: Reflections on Theological Education," in *Caring for the Commonweal: Education for Religious and Public Life*, ed. Parker J. Palmer, Barbara G. Wheeler, and James W. Fowler (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1990), 96.
- <sup>7</sup> Quoted in Ford, *Wounded Prophet*, 113.
- <sup>8</sup> Nouwen, "Theology as Doxology," 94.
- <sup>9</sup> See, in particular, Henri Nouwen, *Spiritual Journals: Three Books in One* (New York: Continuum, 1997).
- <sup>10</sup> Nouwen, "Theology as Doxology," 109.
- <sup>11</sup> Rebecca Laird and Michael J. Christensen, *The Heart of Nouwen: His Words of Blessing* (New York: Crossroad, 2003), 131.
- <sup>12</sup> Frederick Buechner, *The Longing for Home: Recollections and Reflections* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 109-10. See Henri Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 75.
- <sup>13</sup> Laird and Christensen, *Heart of Nouwen*, 14.
- <sup>14</sup> Henri Nouwen, "The Monk and the Cripple: Toward a Spirituality of Ministry," *America* 142 (March 1980): 207, 205.
- <sup>15</sup> Timothy B. Savage, *Power Through Weakness: Paul's Understanding of the Christian Ministry in 2 Corinthians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 185-6.
- <sup>16</sup> Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 293.
- <sup>17</sup> See Henri Nouwen, "Living the Spiritual Life: An Interview with Henri Nouwen," by Catherine Walsh, *Saint Anthony Messenger* 93 (April 1986): 11-5.
- <sup>18</sup> As Michael O'Laughlin describes him, Nouwen was "a man of sorrows walking his own personal *via dolorosa*" (*God's Beloved: A Spiritual Biography of Henri Nouwen* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004], 7).
- <sup>19</sup> See Henri Nouwen, "Prayer and Health Care," *CHAC Review* 17 (winter 1989): 11-6.
- <sup>20</sup> See Beth Porter with Susan S. Brown and Philip Coulter, eds., *Befriending Life: Encounters with Henri Nouwen* (New York: Doubleday, 2001) and Christopher de Vinck, ed., *Nouwen Then: Personal Reflections on Henri* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999).
- <sup>21</sup> See Henri Nouwen, "A Visit with Henri Nouwen," an interview by Todd Brennan, *The Critic* 36 (summer 1978): 46.
- <sup>22</sup> Jay M. Uomoto, "Human Suffering, Psychotherapy and Soul Care: The Spirituality of Henri J.M. Nouwen at the Nexus," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 14 (winter 1995): 347; 352.
- <sup>23</sup> Henri Nouwen, *From Resentment to Gratitude* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1974), 30.
- <sup>24</sup> Nouwen, "A Visit with Henri Nouwen," 45.
- <sup>25</sup> Deirdre LaNoue, *The Spiritual Legacy of Henri Nouwen* (New York: Continuum, 2000), 108.
- <sup>26</sup> Robert Waldron, *Walking with Henri Nouwen: A Reflective Journey* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2003), 9.
- <sup>27</sup> From Wallace Stevens's poetic metaphor: "The imperfect is our paradise" (quoted in Philip Simmons, *Learning to Fall: The Blessings of an Imperfect Life* [New York: Bantam Books, 2002], 32).
- <sup>28</sup> Ford, *Wounded Prophet*, 8; also pp. 44, 50.
- <sup>29</sup> Vera Phillips and Edwin Robertson, *The Wounded Healer* (London: SPCK, 1984), vii-viii.
- <sup>30</sup> John McFarland, "The Minister as Narrator," *The Christian Ministry* 189 (January 1987): 20.
- <sup>31</sup> Nathan Ball, interview by author, tape recording, Richmond Hill, Ontario, 28 April 2004.
- <sup>32</sup> Sue Mosteller, foreword to *Sabbatical Journey: The Diary of His Final Year*, by Henri Nouwen (New York: Crossroad, 1998), ix.
- <sup>33</sup> Nathan Ball, "A Covenant of Friendship," in *Befriending Life*, 95.
- <sup>34</sup> Robert Durback, "Henri Nouwen: Memories of a Wounded Prophet," *America* 181 (3-10 July 1999): 16-17.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.
- <sup>36</sup> Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), np.
- <sup>37</sup> Waldron, *Walking with Jesus*, 86.
- <sup>38</sup> Robert A. Jonas, ed., *Henri Nouwen: Writings Selected with an Introduction by Robert A. Jonas* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), xiv.
- <sup>39</sup> Cited in Mark S. Burrows, "Gospel Fantasy," *Christian Century* (1 June 2004): 23.

## ABBREVIATED TITLES OF HENRI NOUWEN'S BOOKS

- BH** *With Burning Hearts: A Meditation on the Eucharistic Life* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002).
- CFM** *A Cry for Mercy: Prayers from the Genesee* (New York: Image Books, 2002).
- CM** *Creative Ministry* (New York: Image Books, 1978).
- FWH** *Finding My Way Home: Pathways to Life and the Spirit* (New York: Crossroad, 2001).
- G!** *¡Gracias! A Latin American Journal* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993).
- GD** *The Genesee Diary: Report from a Trappist Monastery* (New York: Doubleday, 1976).
- GG** *Our Greatest Gift: A Meditation on Death and Dying* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995). [
- HN** *Here and Now: Living in the Spirit* (New York: Crossroad, 1994).
- HSH** *Heart Speaks to Heart: Three Prayers to Jesus* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1989).
- INJ** *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (New York: Crossroad, 1989).
- IVL** *The Inner Voice of Love: A Journey Through Anguish to Freedom* (New York: Image Books, 1998).
- LM** *Letters to Marc About Jesus: Living a Spiritual Life in a Material World* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1988).
- LOB** *Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World* (New York: Crossroad, 1992).
- LR** *The Living Reminder: Service and Prayer in Memory of Jesus Christ* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1977).
- LS** *Lifesigns: Intimacy, Fecundity, and Ecstasy in Christian Perspective* (New York: Doubleday, 1986).
- RD** *The Road to Daybreak: A Spiritual Journey* (New York: Doubleday, 1988).
- RPS** *The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming* (New York: Image Books, 1992).
- RO** *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (New York: Image Books, 1975).
- SJ** *Sabbatical Journey: The Diary of His Final Year* (New York: Crossroad, 1998).
- WH** *The Wounded Healer* (New York: Image Books, 1979).