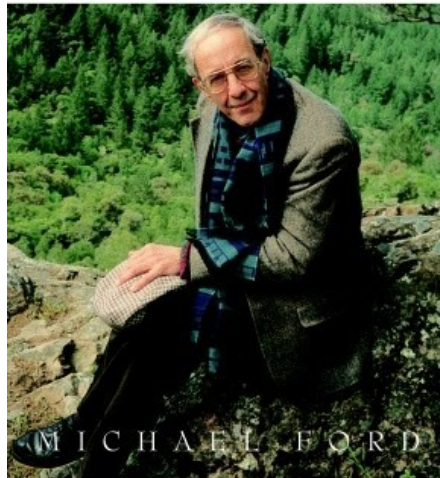


WOUNDED
PROPHET
« A Portrait of Henri J. M. Nouwen »



Wounded Prophet: A Portrait of Henri J.M. Nouwen

Michael Ford

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Henri Nouwen, a Dutch Roman Catholic priest, was one of the most beloved and important spiritual writers of the twentieth century. Since his death in 1996, his stature has only increased; and his books, including *The Inner Voice of Love*, *The Wounded Healer*, and *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, have become cherished classics. For thousands of readers around the world, Nouwen's influence as a teacher and author is considered equal to, or greater than, that of the century's great spiritual writers, C. S. Lewis and Thomas Merton.

Although Nouwen could be radically revealing about his personal thoughts and struggles, there are nonetheless gaps in our understanding of who he was.

With *Wounded Prophet*, readers are given the first extensive look into this man who touched so many, not only through his own words but, most powerfully, through the eyes of those around the world who knew Nouwen best. While researching this compelling biography, BBC producer Michael Ford conducted wide-ranging interviews with Nouwen's friends, colleagues, and family members. What he discovered was far more compelling than what he had imagined: Though Nouwen was indeed the generous and loving man many thought he was, he was also never able to find consistent peace in his own life. Tormenting him were profound feelings of anxiety, insecurity, and loneliness. This portrait gives an honest and well-balanced account of Nouwen's life that leaves no stone unturned, investigating his childhood, his family, his sexuality, and his life as a priest and member of the L'Arche Daybreak community in Toronto.

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From Reader Review Wounded Prophet: A Portrait of Henri J.M. Nouwen for online ebook

Jack Kooyman says

After reading this "portrait" of Nouwen and learning about some of his lifelong struggles with some of his personal demons, I gained a new appreciation for this very human person. If you're not prepared to learn about his shortcomings and struggles as a fellow brother in Christ on this earthly journey, I suggest reading it nonetheless. In many ways, Nouwen was simply another broken and sinful human in need of God's loving grace and healing. The beauty here, in my opinion, is that God chooses to do his work through us and in spite of us and our brokenness.

Philippe Lazaro says

"There was never any question in my own mind of the gifts which Henri Nouwen offered to his readers as a direct result of his own personal human-ness; his own imperfections -- his woundedness."

—Michael Ford

A friend gave this to me. I wish I had read something directly by Nouwen before reading this writeup of his life. I feel like that would have allowed me to appreciate it a little bit more.

Interesting picture painted of Nouwen as a complex but endearing writer, imperfect but a true source of encouragement to those he was able to minister to. The journalistic style seemed to drag a little bit towards the middle, but a good look at an inspiring figure.

Anthony Wick says

A wonderful book about a wonderful man. Henri Nouwen lived within the tension that was faith, and was able to bring people into the presence of God through his life and writings. I highly recommend this book to anyone who loves his books or who want to know more about him. His witness to Christ is something we desperately need today.

Sandy says

This is a nice biography of Henri Nouwen. Nouwen was a Catholic priest whose prolific writings are popular devotionals. Nouwen always struggled with finding himself and the book talks about his struggle with homosexuality, particularly at the end of his life. This is a man who had a big heart and the book does a good job of capturing his complexity.

Jamie Howison says

This is a good and sometimes unsettling biography of Nouwen. Read his books, and you see what he longed for. Read this biography, and you get a sense of where his longing came from. In the end, though, it is an encouraging book for anyone in ministry of any kind. You're reminded that good things can be offered by wounded people.

Wade says

Though the part of this biography that probably garnered the most attention was the matter of fact statement of Nouwen's homosexuality, the greater theme of the biography was his struggle with true intimacy in human relationships. I thought that it there were interesting observations about the myriad extenuating circumstances that made this such a central problem for Nouwen: his role as a priest with its calls to 'self-availability' and celibacy, his fame and the connections that were perceived between himself as authors and his readers, but the loneliness of the distance that his fame interposed, as well as the proper living out of his sexuality within the context of his own vows of celibacy and Roman Catholic teaching. I plan to read other biographies of HJM Nouwen, but this was a good start.

Mark says

This is another instance for me of the curse of Bette Davis. When you read a study or biography or reflection on the work/oeuvre/output of an individual and your admiration for their skill in their chosen field is heightened but conversely your attraction towards them as a person seems somehow lessened.

Michael Ford has written a very lucid and easy to read reflection on the amazing life and outpouring of thought of Nouwen, this man who has inspired and reinvigorated the spiritual lives and hopes of huge numbers of people but as I read the story unfolding Nouwen came across as an extraordinarily self obsessed and self centred man.

He undoubtedly aimed to be a wonderful friend who gave huge amounts of his time and energy to others. He rang and wrote and visited all over and was amazingly generous with gifts and flowers but underlying all of this I couldn't help but see his need for people to praise and tend him, cosset and support him and accept his very selfish way of being.

I find it weird that this was the impression I drew from what is evidently a book written by a huge admirer but it began to strike me as the Emperor's new clothes. Nobody ever seemed to see the obvious that someone ought to have said to Henri what might have been really helpful. Stop thinking of yourself all the time and camouflaging it as being there for people, stop running away, the world does not revolve around you.

He would ring people at all hours of the night.....excused by....oh well Henri forgets the time difference. At a farewell meal for someone else the hostess had asked all people to give their gifts quietly and unobtrusively, Henri gets up mid meal and gives his gift complete with flowery speech....excused by....oh Henri would be so upset had he realized what he had done....He was an intelligent man he knew exactly what he had done and if he didn't he should have been told. When he came to live with the L'Arche Community he would invite people to come without any notice for meals and therefore unnerve and unsettle the actual community...excused by...that was Henri's ministry. Well it may have been but his much trumpeted

sensitivity should have extended beyond himself to realize how he was affecting detrimentally those who had taken him in. I could go on but I won't.

I was sad to read this book because it has, to an extent, poisoned my reading of the rest of his works; I realized he wasn't a saint, that he had faults and failings like the rest of us but he was an astoundingly self centred man it seemed to me. So many of his struggles and strains were self inflicted. He went away regularly on sabbaticals which he then promptly ignored and began ringing and visiting and trumpeting his presence and then fell limp and tired as a poor exhausted flower which others had to then bolster and cater for. He struck up conversations with total strangers, which in itself is wonderful, but then he would invite them to come and stay or visit or email them and make them think they were special to him.....but they weren't. It struck me that they were just yet more people commandeered to worship at the ego of Fr Nouwen. As I re-read this I am quite shocked by the force of my feeling but I actually have to say it is what I felt as I read the book.

Once the memory has faded then I shall pick another of his volumes off my shelf and hopefully be inspired again but for the present it is one of those horrible moments when you realize your heroes have feet of clay.

Nouwen said amazingly lovely and inspring things. He introduced all sorts of wonderful images and thoughts for me as far as my relationship with God is concerned but he himself, from this biography, left me cold and uninspired.

margaret says

from the heart, part unsettling but wonderful example of committment to God

Rebecca says

I have loved reading several of Henri Nouwen's books. He seems to talk directly to me. So much of it just makes sense to me. He can somehow be simultaneously profound and down-to-earth. His words are so wise and compassionate and supportive. One of the main points of this biography is that Nouwen didn't always live up to his own wisdom. He struggled with solitude, he loved attention, and he suffered intensely from depression, anxiety, and crushing darkness. Basically, he was best at teaching that which he still needed to learn. This only makes me love him more.

Joy Matteson says

After having read at least 75% of Nouwen's incredible books, all of which have moved me immensely from one degree to another, I decided to give his post-humous biography a try. I was not disappointed--Mr. Ford tells Nouwen's life story with humility and love. He does not elevate Henri to an iconic pedestal, although many have been tempted to do so, myself included. His greatest gift was in his shared woundedness and vulnerability to others. Ironically, his closest relationships suffered from a lack of true intimacy, because he was constantly afraid of becoming too dependent on others. I so prefer biographies of great saints such as Nouwen who are truly human--who can snap at their friends, get mad at their fathers or mothers, and yet know when to admit mistakes and life-long struggles and trials. Give me more biographies like this!

Veronica Zundel says

Henri Nouwen's writings have inspired millions, but many are also aware of his internal struggles and contradictions. Ford's biography, the first word on Nouwen's life, shows us a man in love with a vision of life which he was rarely able to live in practice. For a spiritual writer, the disjunction between what one writes about and how far one lives it out, is always a source of disquiet. Yet Nouwen's very success in opening the eyes of others to a deeper experience of God, is an encouragement especially to the fellow Christian writer, like myself, who often wonders whether she lives up to what she writes about. For this reason I found it a particularly challenging and inspiring read.

Melanie says

This book is an intimate look at the life of Henri Nouwen, an inspirational and intriguing--but clearly tortured--person whose writings on spirituality continue to be influential. Very interesting.
