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Exploring Possibilities of StrengtheningChristian Spirituality inContemporary China

HE Zeyin

(Dept. of Humanities and Information Management, Chengdu Medical College, Chengdu City, Sichuan Province, China)

Author: Spirituality is an indispensable part of Christianity. Religious practices are extremely crucial to any religion. This paper aims at exploring some possibilities of strengthening Christian pirituality in contemporary China. It hopes to clarify the general relationship between Christianity and Chinese culture. The first issue is how to strengthen the, to further the development of a true Christian faith. Another issue deals with clarifying the relationship between Chinese culture and Christian theology. Perhaps by studying the spirituality of Chinese Christians within historical and cultural dimensions, the indigenization of the Christian faith may become more effective.

The paper includes four parts. First, it is a re-reading of the historical development of Christian theology and spiritual practices in China, from its introduction by missionaries in the 7th century to the present. The implications of the different periods will be analyzed. Second, it is a discussion of the importance of spiritual practices and the understanding of spirituality among Chinese Christians in the contemporary context. Third, it will examine a model of Christian spiritual life in the person of Henri Nouwen, who can be a source of hope and inspiration to Chinese Christians in contemporary China. Finally, it will offer some summaries, implications for how to strengthen the level of indigenization of the Christian faith. Certain suggestions will be presented in light of the analysis done.

Key words: Christian theology and spiritual practices, contemporary context of China, Henri Nouwen, suggestions

Author: HE Zeyin, Ph. D. visiting scholar of IASACT (2006), Member of Council of the Chinese Association of Religion, and associate professor of Chengdu Medical College. Address: Dept. of Humanities and Information Management, Chengdu Medical College, Chengdu City, Sichuan Province, Mainland China. Postcode: 610083. Tel: 18208183599, 18628176965. Email: hezeyin86@163.com, 946983232@qq.com.

Introduction

As a scholar of Mainland China, I would like to pay more attention to the academic issues of my country in relation toChristian Spirituality. The first issue is how to strengthen the, so that a true Christian faith may be developed. Another issue deals with clarifying the relationship between Chinese culture and Christian theology. Perhaps by studying the spirituality of Chinese Christians within historical and cultural dimensions, indigenization of Christian faith become more effective.

This paper aims at exploring some possibilities for strengtheningChristian pirituality in contemporary China. It hopes to clarify the general relationship between Christianity and Chinese culture. In particular, it will explore some feasible ways toward indigenization of Christian pirituality, thereby responding to the heated discussions and efforts being undertaken in constructing Chinese Christian theology.

Spirituality is an indispensable part of Christianity. Religious practices arecrucial to any religion. practices, religion will simply fall to the level of pure scholarly discussion or the preservation of religious traditions. As for Christianity, it will become a purely scholarly discussion or a defensive effort to protect dogmatic truths and maintain imperialist ideals that were passed on by Christian missionaries during the introduction of the Christian faith to colonized countries.

Likewise, clear goal are necessary. If these are vague, there will be difficulty not just the secular aspect of faith, but also its transcendental element, which is. Christians may be led away from what is truly essential in their life of faith. To obscure this aspect of the spiritual life may eventually compromise the development, as it may fade away due to secularization.

There are four main parts in this paper. First, it is a re-reading of the historical development of Christian theology and spiritual practices in China, from its introduction by missionaries in the 7th century to the present. mplications of the different periods will be analyzed. Second, it will discuss the importance of spiritual practices and the understanding of spirituality among Chinese Christians in contemporary China. Third, it will examine a model of Christian spiritual life in the person of Henri Nouwen,[1] who can be a source of hope and inspiration to contemporary Chinese. Finally, it will try to offer some summaries, conclusions, and implications on how to strengthen the. Certain suggestions will be presented in light of the analysis done.

Part One: Re-Reading the Historical Development of Christian Spirituality in Mainland China

This part willtrace the history of Christian spiritual practice from the time was China clarify relationship between Christianity and Chinese culture.

A. Brief History of the Introduction of the Christian Faith in Mainland China (635—1949)

The status of Chinese spirituality has assumed various formssince Christianity was first brought to China. W the characteristics of the faithand forms of spiritual practice give a brief description of Chinese Christianity as a whole during thperiod 635—1949 A. D. in Chinese history.

During these periods of Christianity, different forms of the Christian faith existed in China. These was the Nestorian Christianity of the Tang Dynasty, ArekhawiunChristianity of the Yuan Dynasty, Catholicism and its Ritual Disputes (礼仪之争) between the Ming and Qing Dynasties, Foreign-Christianity (洋教), the Anti-Christianity Movement (非基运动), Indigenization (本色化), and Three-Self-Movement (三自运动).

Nestorian Christianity of the Tang Dynasty (635—845) Nestorian Christianity adhered to doctrines of

[1] Nouwen is a western spiritual writer, well respected by many for his deep Christian faith and testimony to the love of God and neighbor. Details will be introduced in the following paper.

God's presence at all times in human history. It also introduced the doctrines of the Trinity, Creation, Jesus' birth and his works, the necessity of following of Jesus' teachings, and the formation of the Church. It seems that these are more authentic doctrines of Christianity. Thus, it may be deduced that the spiritual contents of that time were more faithful to the Christian tradition of the West. In terms of the forms used, it is possible that the words which expressed the doctrines may be compared to typical Daoism. In other words, the form used shows a rich element of Chinese culture.

The Arekhawiun Christianity of the Yuan Dynasty (1289—1368) was a continuation of Nestorian Christianity; spiritual practices had the same character as the earlier Nestorians.

Catholicism and the Rites Controversies in the Ming and QingDynastiesDuring this period, there were two types of spiritual practice. One is Christian spiritual content with the spiritual form of Chinese culture, and the other is a totally Christian spiritual content with Christian spiritual form. Matteo Ricci (1552—1610) is a representative of the former and Nicolas Longobardi (1559—1654) of the latter. But the latter in the prohibition of Christianity in China, for Longobardi refused to accept any element of Chinese culture in Christian ritual.

Ocean (Foreign) Christianity (1840—1939) and the Anti-Christianization Movement (1922—1927) "Ocean" Christianity got its name because it was introduced from the other side of the Ocean. It came into existence after the elimination of the Qing Dynastyby the forces of the invaders. The Anti-Christianization Movement showed the resistance of the oppressed Chinese people. The missionaries, however, followed the model of nearly pure Christian spiritual content during this period.

It may be argued that as a religion, the ascendancy of Christianitypoint to the Kingdom of God ruling over the heavenly (or spiritual), rather than the earthly, world.[2] Thus, the magisterium of Christianity and the political regime of a nation should point to different goals or dimensions of life, and they should not be entangled in a power struggle with each other. Thus, the Church should not be concerned with the profane, but with the spiritual life of people. Otherwise it will result in crusades, jihads, or other invasions to introduce the Christian faith. At least, we can argue that the propagation of the gospel should fit the respective inclinations or diversity of sinners. As for a nation, it should not give up its dominion over society since it is its duty to serve the common good.

Indigenization and the Three-Self Movement (about 1912—1949) Chinese Christians initiated the indigenization movement, the goal being to sever the bondage of Chinese Christians from the church of foreign (imperialist) countries. The Three-Self Movement was initiated both by Chinese Christians and some foreign missionaries. Compared with the previous periods, the spiritual form tends toward indigenization while the content is still the Christian faith.

B. General Analysis of the Relationship between Christianity and Chinese Culture

Based on the historical facts above, if we consider the matter from the perspective of culture, there will be three kinds of relationships between Chinese culture and Christianity, which are Christianization,

[2] "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." (Eph 1:21)

Indigenization (本土化), and No-Christianization.

Firstly, Christianization. This assumes that Christianity must hold the dominant role among all other cultures, and any other culture or religion must completely adapt to it. In the context of this paper, it mainly implies that China's Confucian culture must be entirely suitable to Christianity. Typical evidence can be seen by exploring Nicolas Longobardi's position and the period of Ocean Christianity. Thus, there arose an irreconcilable contradiction between being a Chinese and being a Christian.

Secondly, Indigenization (本土化). Indigenization, acculturation, inculturation, and enculturation are all related terms for evangelization which aims to speak to a particular culture. Here we will use one word, indigenization, to denote them all.[3] Indigenization means that one religion should adapt to some local religion or culture when it is introduced into that culture. The indigenization of Chinese Christianity indicates that Christianity should adapt to existing Chinese culture, religion, or customs in its introduction. Thus, indigenization is considered vital to the progress of Christianity in China.

There areconditions with varying degrees of change after adaptation. At this point, a new question arises, namely, is it a new religion after Christianity's adaptation or is it a new form of Christianity with some new appearances, but without changing the essence of Christianity at all? Or is it a new form of Christianity with some non-essential changes to its beliefs only? Where can we draw the line or set the boundary for Christianity? In other words, what criteria should be used to judge whether one religion is Christianity or not? We will argue that there should be a minimum criterion such as the object of faith: God, and all other factors necessary to live a Christian life, namely, believing in God, and the spiritual practices corresponding to Christian doctrines. While accepting the diversity of cultural appearances of temple, vestments, customs, and languages, and all the diverse things or behaviors relating to human beings, one should always be guided by Christian principles.

For example, if a Chinese prays to God, perhaps he/she will say, "Jesus, 我的命为什么这么苦啊 (Why my fate is so bad?) Save me, please!" This prayer uses a sentence conveying a Daoist concept of bad fate, which is expressed unconsciously by a person who is suffering. Will Jesus reply, "No, I cannot give you my salvation, for you expressed your plea with non-Christian words"? Of course not, for Jesus loves everyone despite his/her cultural differences, because all are loved and accepted by God even though one knows nothing about God.

Thirdly, when we refer toNo-Christianization, this would indicate the absolute rejection or refusal of Christianity in the context of other cultures or religions as, for example, during the period of the prohibition of Christianity after the Rites Controversies.

Part Two: The Importance of Spiritual Practices and the Understanding of Spirituality among Chinese Christians Today

The role of spirituality is to achieve the Christian goal of living with God.[4] The object of Christian

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[3] Why do I choose to use *Bentuhua* (本土化) instead of Bensehua (本色化) to express Indigenization? *Bense* (本色) in Chinese implies a turning back to the original appearance. And *Bensehua* when applied to of Christianity, has the implication of "Christianization".

[4] The corresponding expression in the Bible is to live in the kingdom of God. "And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God." (Luke 13:29).

faith is God (including Jesus and the Holy Spirit) and its religious goal is live one's life with God. Engaging in some spiritual practices is one way to achieve this goal. But how can Christians reach the sacred goal via spiritual practice? One should endeavor to fulfill it in this life by attaining some spiritual experience of living with God. Thus, spirituality has a double role, one of which is to fulfill the goal of living with God.[5] The other is to cultivate a spiritual life through works of Christian charity or love for others. Spiritual means may involve worshipping, singing hymns, reading the Bible, praying, meditating, loving our neighbors, communicating with God, etc.[6]

Christian practice, on the other hand, consists of all those actions or deeds which pertain to the Christian faith. Christian form is superficial but the content is indwelling, whereas for Christian spirituality, the criterion of content is more important than that of form. For example, a spiritual practice connected to death constitutes the important part of the spiritual content. In particular, Jesus' death implies redemption and sanctification of people who are loved and made holy by God. Therefore, for an ordinary person, perhaps the implication of one's death is to fulfill the spiritual goal of living with God completely and to get rid of the dread of death and live out the teachings of Jesus. This section of the paper will probe into the status quo of contemporary Chinese Christian spirituality and analyze it from the perspective of Christians.

A. Brief Exploration of the*Status Quo* in Chinese Christian Spirituality

Through studying, we can find that there exist four characteristics of Chinese Christian Spirituality.

First, spiritual practice is designed to establish a relationship with God. It begins when a person is baptized and becomes a member of the Church, when one can recognize his/her personal faith in Jesus even without receiving baptism or becoming a member of the Church. Thus, there are two kinds of spiritualaffinity. The former is organizational spiritual practice and the latter is non-organizational.

Second, mainstream spiritual practice shows a trend toward secularization. It indicates that most spiritual practices are grounded on the goals of health, career, money, family, etc.[7] Contrasted with those who pursue living with God or living in the Kingdom of God, these people often have a low level of education[8] and most

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[5] This paper will argue the task of fulfilling the goal from this life. Although I am interested in the other life, I have not found the materials on it. In addition, the paper will not discuss the issue of resurrection, though the goal of living with God after life may only be realized after resurrection.

[6] The spiritual thoughts introduced here are deduced from an analysis of a book, *Gain or Loss of Pursuing a Spiritual Life: Review of the Merit and Crisis of Four Traditions of Christian Spiritual Practice* [《追求属灵的得与失——评基督教灵修学四大传统的优点与危机》*Zhuiqiu shuling de de yu shi - Ping jidujiao lingxiuxue si da chuantong de youdian yu weiji*], by Milton Wan 温伟耀 [WEN Weiyao]. The structure of contents on contemporary Christian spirituality in the Mainland and on Nouwen's spirituality is consistent with that of the book. See, http://www.livingwater4u.com/reader/b_zhuiqiushulingdeyushi/chapter01.html ~ chapter16.html.

[7] HE Fangyao 何方耀 argues that the faith of the Han nationality takes on an appearance of utility. See, He Fangyao, "My opinions on the characteristics of Chinese religious activities" 中国宗教活动特点之我见, *Lingnan Culture and History* [《岭南文史》*Lingnan wenshi*], no. 2 (1997).

[8] On this point, Liang Ming 梁明 says, "we can forecast that the number of village churches and country Christians be more than that of city, if we compute based on the actual evidenced." See Liang Ming, "Problems and new challenges: discussing how to pastor Christians in an urban church [问题、新挑战——有关城市教会牧养的讨论 Wenti, xin tiaozhan——Youguan chengshi jiaohui muyang de taolun], *Heavenly Wind* [《天风》*Tianfeng*], no. 4 (2003).

of them are female.[9] Some Chinese scholars call this group of people "Martha-type" Chinese Christians.[10] But there exist exceptions in the practices of Li-zi-village Church (李子教点). Despite lacking a professional priest with professional training from a city church to guide them, some mature ways of manifesting local styles have come forth.[11]

Third, a new trend of otherworldly pursuit is emerging. It is good to note these changes. This is a new trend of achieving sacred goals through spiritual practices. We can see this in the many young people who go to church and take part in spiritual practices. Some of them are eager to know more about doctrine, theology, life and death, living with God, or living in the Kingdom of God.[12] It seems that there is a progressive tendency to search for the meaning and the core of the Christian faith.

Fourth, it is noticeable that some bear the character of elite-spirituality. This kind of spiritual practice belongs to the non-organizational kind of spiritual affinity. Although there are still a few of the personal profane issues such as success in their careers and family harmony, more of the contents relate to a higher status of spiritual practice. The contents are geared toward the mission of Jesus such as loving neighbors, living with God, or living in the Kingdom of God. Also to be noted are the spiritual practices which consist of reading the Bible, reading the testimonies of the saints of past eras, praying, communicating with God, and doing meditation, etc. These Christians are often classified as "Cultural Christians," for they mostly are more well-educated.[13] Many are cultural persons, scholars, or scientists.

B. Analysis of theCurrent Status of Chinese Christian Spirituality

Certain characteristics evident in contemporary Chinese Spirituality are pointed out in this part of the study. Each is examined in light of the information cited above.

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〔9〕 TU Wenshu 屠文淑, Yao Lei 姚蕾, Discussing the issue of females and religion in the new phase 浅谈新时期妇女与宗教问题, *Journal of Zhejiang Business Technology Institute* [《浙江工商职业技术学院学报》Zhejiang gongshang zhiye jishu xueyuan xuebao], Vol. 2 No. 1 (Mar. 2003).

〔10〕 See WANG Zaixing 王再兴, "The phenomenon of 'Martha' among Christians and its causes from a sociological perspective: a case study of the church of Nanchong, Sichuang Province [基督教社群中的"马大现象"及其社会学根源——以四川南充地区教会为考察对象 Jidujiao shequn zhong de "Mada xianxiang" jiqi shehuixue genyuan——Yi Sichuan Nanchong diqu jiaohui wei kaocha duixiang], *Religious Studies* [《宗教学研究》Zongjiaoxue yanjiu], no 1 (2003); Jin Yanyan 金妍妍, "Exploring the 'Martha phenomenon' Christianity: a case study of Chengguan, HuangChuang, Henan Province" [基督教的"马大现象"探悉——以河南潢川城关教会为考察对象 Jidujiao "Mada xianxiang" tanxi——Yi Henan HUangchuan chengguan jiaohui wei kaocha duixiang], *Journal of Chaohu College* [《巢湖学院学报》Chaohu xueyuan xuebao], vol. 7 no. 5 (2005).

〔11〕 XU Shiqiang 徐世强, ""A sketch of the religious life of rural Christians in southwest China: a case study of the Christians of Li-zi-village Church" [中国西南偏远山区农村基督徒的宗教生活素描(上)——以李子教点信徒为个案 Zhongguo xinan pianyuan shanqu nongcun jidutu de zongjiao shenghuo sumiao (shang)——Yi Lizi jiaodian xintu wei gean], *Journal of Southwest University for Nationalities. Humanities and Social Science* [《西南民族大学学报·人文社科版》Xi'nan minzu daxue xueban renwen sheke ban], vol. 24 no. 12 Dec 2003.

〔12〕 "The church's future is prosperous if it can gain the trust of the young Christians" [教会得着青年,就是得着未来 Jiaohui dezhuo qingnian, jiushi dezhuo weilai], *Heavenly Wind* [《天风》Tianfeng], no. 10 (2003).

〔13〕 There are many discussions on cultural Christians. See *Cultural Christians: Phenomenon and Dispute* [《文化基督徒:现象与论争》Wenhua jidutu: Xianxiang yu lunzheng], (Hong Kong 香港: Institute of Sino-Christian Studies 汉语基督教文化研究所, 1997). "Cultural Christians" here mainly indicates the people who have faith in Jesus without accepting baptism or those accepting baptism but who do not always go to church. We hold the same opinion as Xu Zhiwei 许志伟, see XU Zhiwei, "An outlook and reflection on the phenomenon of cultural Christians" ["文化基督徒"现象的综览与反思(下) Wenhua jidutu xianxiang de zonglan yu fansi (xia)], *Regent Chinese Journal* [《维真学刊》Weizhen xuekan], vol. IV, 1998(1).

Characteristic 1: Two thoughts will be drawn from what we have seen. One is that spiritual practice cannot be detached from faith in God, and it is the essential point by which some practices can be determined as to whether they belong to Christianity. The other thought is the relationship between the Church and Christians. Christians are within and beyond the authority of the Church. Perhaps this analysis cannot be acceptable to the Church, as it does not accept Christians with self-authorized faith, but, if it is true, the gospel of Jesus would have been monopolized by the Church. Can the gospel be monopolized? When Martin Luther advocated that one could be justified by faith, the supremacy of the Church was challenged. In fact, if there is a tension between the Church and self-authorized Christians, it will bring more advantages to the Church since it can keep the Church in a status of dynamism and openness.

Characteristic 2: Secularizing spiritual practice should be changed if it is viewed from the perspective of Christianity. It has been demonstrated that the original Christian practices are more appealing as they reveal true yearning for God by Christians. They show that human frailty is manifested because of their unfortunate fates and hard lives. However, there are many affirmative factors in existence from this faith. For instance, it can awaken their consciousness of life and initiate to pursue a better life and an inner understanding of happiness. The harmony between God and his followers can help shape a harmonious community even if faith is not encouraged. This sort of Christian will truly glorify Jesus because his original desire to introduce the mercy of God is evident in their spiritual practices. Jesus has shown his love to all people without any discrimination between the rich and the poor, male and female, local and non-local, homogenous and heterogeneous cultures. Thus, if there are some who may have deficiencies in their spiritual practice, this can be forgiven by God.

Characteristic 3: It is noted that the Christian faith of China is becoming more mature. This is certainly a delightful change and as such needs appropriate guidance from the Church so that the youth who are inclined toward this passion may persist and grow in their Christian faith.

Characteristic 4: On Cultural Christians. It seems that they are not very strong, if we base our judgment on their number, but they have a vital role because of cultural influence, doctrinal interpretation, and the potential of communicating with God. These Christians may be grouped into two kinds. One involves humanist scholars who devote themselves to introducing, translating, or interpreting Christian faith and culture. The other involves some other humanists and scientists who live out their faith through their life and work.

Part Three: Henri Nouwen as a Model of Christian Spirituality for Chinese Christians

One important element fordeveloping spiritual life among Christians will be an inspiration from which they can draw out the passion to grow in their faith. In this part of the paper, I will examine the life of a contemporary Western Christian who was considered a spiritual master: Fr. Henri J. M. Nouwen (1932—1996). Nouwen was chosen as a model of Contemporary Christian spiritual practice for the following reasons:

First, he was a notable writer on spirituality inside and outside the circle of Roman Catholicism.

Second, his story may help change the alien impression missionaries made on Christianity through its introduction into China, especially to ordinary Chinese people, since the Christian life and practices exhibited

by Nouwen present a more open outlook.

Third, the condition of the indigenization of Christianity needs to be strengthened, and Nouwen's writings and practices may contribute to this endeavor.

Fourth, the spiritual growth of Chinese Christians in China should be promoted; thus, Nouwen can be a model that people can learn from.

A. Brief Introduction of Nouwen's Life

An internationally renowned priest and author, respected professor and beloved pastor, Henri Nouwen wrote over 40 books on the spiritual life of Christians. He corresponded regularly in English, Dutch, German, French, and Spanish with hundreds of friends and reached out to thousands through his Eucharistic celebrations, lectures, and retreats. Since his death in 1996, ever-increasing numbers of readers, writers, teachers, and seekers have been guided by his literary legacy. Nouwen's books have sold over 2 million copies and been published in over 22 languages.

Born in Nijkerk, Holland, on January 24, 1932, Nouwen felt called to the priesthood at a very young age. He was ordained in 1957 as a diocesan priest and studied psychology at the Catholic University of Nijmegen. In 1964, he moved to the United States to study at the Menninger Clinic. He went on to teach at the University of Notre Dame and the Divinity Schools of Yale and Harvard. For several months during the 1970s, Nouwen lived and worked with the Trappist monks in the Abbey of the Genesee, and in the early 1980s, he lived with the poor in Peru. In 1985, he was called to join L'Arche in Trosly, France, the first of over 100 communities founded by Jean Vanier, where people with developmental disabilities live with assistants. A year later, Nouwen made his home at L'Arche Daybreak near Toronto, Canada. He died suddenly on September 21st, 1996, in Holland and is buried in King City, Ontario.

Nouwen believed that what is most personal is most universal; he wrote, "By giving words to these intimate experiences I can make my life available to others." His spirit lives on in the work of the Henri Nouwen Society, Henri Nouwen Stichting, the Henri Nouwen Trust, the Henri J. M. Nouwen Archives and Research Collection, and in all who live the spiritual values of communion, community, and ministry, to which he dedicated his life.[14]

B. Nouwen's Spirituality

Nouwen's ideas and method of spirituality are mostly found in two books, The Inner Voice of Life: A Journey Through Anguish to Freedom[15] and Finding My Way Home: Pathways to Life and the Spirit.[16] For Nouwen, there are several ideas and means by which one can develop a strong spirituality.

First, spiritual practice begins through establishing a personal relationship with God. In his opinion, all

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[14] See, http://www.henrinouwen.org/henri/about/.

[15] Henri Nouwen 亨利·卢云, *The Inner Voice of Love: A Journey Through Anguish to Freedom* [《心灵爱语:当我陷入灵命低潮的时候》Xinling aiyu: Dang wo xianru lingming dichao de shihou], (Hong Kong 香港: Excellence Book House [香港卓越书楼 Xianggang zhuoyue shulou], 1997), Trans. by Milton WAN 温伟耀 [WEN Weiyao].

[16] Henri Nouwen 亨利·卢云, *Finding My Way Home: Pathways to Life and the Spirit* [《寻找回家路:生命和灵命的导引》Xunzhao huijialu: Shengming he lingming de daoyin], trans. Liu Xiuyi 刘秀怡 (Hong Kong 香港: Logos Book House [香港基道出版社 Xianggang jidao cubanshe], 2004).

human beings are loved by God, whether a person already has faith or is still struggling or knows nothing about God. His meaning is that a new spiritual life is given to someone, and then he can begin to help others to accept God's love. [17]

Second, Nouwen believes that to engage in spiritual practice is to find one's new spiritual life. There are three steps: First, bring oneself back toward spiritual home. The criterion is to concentrate on how to live a good life or perfect it without meddling in other persons' lives or controlling others to get what one wants. Second, spiritual life should be incarnated in oneself, meaning originating from within oneself. This implies that the Word is made flesh in a person's life and as such, one should show the special life of belonging to the Spirit rather than the negative attitude of one's flesh. Thus, one should not yield to the flesh if it leads to destruction of this new life in Christ. Third, seek, trust, and obey one's unique call from God and then shape it within oneself so as to carry it forward to one's social community. [18]

Third, Nouwen holds the conviction that one can acquire a mature spiritual life by experiencing the process of dying. This means to consider one's death as like that of Jesus so that other persons may benefit from the fruits of your life.[19] Nouwen believes that Jesus' death is an accomplishment: "I very much appreciate how Jesus conceives of his death…His death itself can foster many fruits…"[20] Thus, Jesus has chosen a path of accomplishment. [21] On the other hand, everyone should go through the process of living and dying because no human being has control over these two. We have to make a choice on how to live our life so that our death will have meaning. [22] Likewise, in Nouwen's opinion, death is the absolute emptying of self so that the spirit of love can be poured in. Through this, the spiritual life of the person is nourished through the process of goneness or self-emptying. [23] Though Nouwen also had the feeling of dreading death, he was able to face it and was not knocked down by it. He held the belief that "we can make others blessed by our life and death with our own efforts." [24] It implies that he followed the way of Jesus through love of neighbor not only to the degree of love for self but also exceeding himself as a gauge of Christian love.

Fourth, Nouwen waged inner spiritual warfare against those that may destroy his life as a Christian. The very expression can be found in his book, The Inner Voice of Love, for it speaks of all his lowest moments of spiritual experience. In spite of this low state, he still trusted God and made continuous efforts to turn himself towards God in the midst of doubts or suspicions about God. He questioned closely, and even suffered in despair, when he was in anguish. Let us examine three examples that he cited. One is that he eventually convinced himself that one should "not be equipped by im solely to meet with dying," [25] but that one should have the strength that comes from the love of God to face death without fear. For him, fear of death can only be endured under the shadow of dying to one's selfishness. Thus, he conquered and overcame it by

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〔17〕 *Finding My Way Home*, 97-98.
〔18〕 *The Inner Voice of Love*, 65.
〔19〕 *Finding My Way Home*, 95.
〔20〕 Ibid, 94.
〔21〕 Ibid, 100.
〔22〕 Ibid, 102.
〔23〕 Ibid, 106-7.
〔24〕 Ibid, 107.
〔25〕 *The Inner Voice of Love*, 172.

his dependence on the love poured down by Jesus and the love he showed to his neighbors.[26] Moreover, Nouwen believed that every person is always confronted with making difficult decisions because of conflicting achievements, both visible and invisible. In this connection, he suggests that one should always make the choice towards the Kingdom of God. Nouwen was never free from faltering in his faith. There were times when he questioned such faith in God. Despite this struggle, however, he showed a strong conviction to overcome these doubts and evil inclinations through his warfare, namely, to listen to the voice of God so that one's thoughts, speech, and deeds speak of God's kingdom of enlightenment, truth, and life.[27]

Fifth, Nouwen's spiritual ideas involve a set of practical methods to promote one's spiritual life. The sections in his writing with the heading of "Nouwen's Meditation" deal with some kind of inner puzzles that should be confronted by any ordinary Christian, whereas that of "Permitting Me To Start Off Again" introduces a series of techniques, such as pondering, reflecting, imagining, confiding and talking with God, etc. One can follow the spiritual routine provided by Nouwen.

Sixth, for Nouwen, spiritual practice is a journey of the spiritual life that should be cultivated. He said the standard for maturity in life is when one could make his "lion-self" and "sheep-self" co-exist peacefully within his inner heart. It seems to suggest a balance of profane and transcendent realities in human lives. He believed that it is necessary to work towards self-deprivation in order to overcome one's bad side. Nouwen depicts "lion-self" as "the adult outlook of one person, with full ambitions, … [that] shows the active or aggressive attitude and likes to make decisions;" on the other hand, the "sheep-self" is that part of a person which is "full of dread and fragility" that will "need to be fed with sensibility, sustentions, affirmation and cultivation."[28] Furthermore, if one hopes to seize the true spiritual life, he/she should abandon the mundane attraction of personal affections first of all.[29] The essence of cultivation is to walk out of anguish again and again, and to gain the purer life by accepting Jesus' love.[30]

C. An Analysis of Nouwen's Spirituality

It is obvious that Nouwen's spiritual practices show strong inclination toward the tradition of Catholicism. He indicates that he follows the same pathway as that of Augustine's (354—430) "outer-inner-upward."[31] In his view, first of all, one should abandon the mundane tractions (outer), and only then can possess the spiritual life (inner), and finally he/she should convert to Jesus every now and then, to hold the genuine life (upward). He also implies the tendency of unity with God by way of thinking, talking, and acting in the name of God.

It is arguable that he also shares the spiritual style of Protestants because there exist strong similarities between his spiritual warfare and that of John Bunyan (1628—1688) as disclosed in his bookThe Pilgrim's

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[26] Ibid, 145.

[27] Ibid, 181.

[28] Ibid, 128.

[29] Ibid, 178.

[30] Ibid, 95.

[31] See Milton Wan, *Gain or Loss of Pursuing a Spiritual Life: Review the Merit and Crisis of the Four Christian Spiritual Practical Traditions*, http://www.livingwater4u.com/reader/b_zhuiqiushulingdeyushi/chapter03.html.

Progress.〔32〕 Evidence can be found that he lived out his faith through his actions. He always complied with the Bible to guide his spiritual life.〔33〕

Actually, he transcends all the distinctions of the different religious traditions, for he went to an evangelical ministry (Ontario Tyndale Seminary) to give lectures to varied Christian denominations before his death.〔34〕 Likewise, it must be noted that his ability for high tolerance may be due to the fact that he also drew upon Buddhism.〔35〕 This information needs further research, however, to verify whether Buddhism or some other culture influenced him.

It seems that Nouwen attaches high importance to spiritual practice with the fundamental guidelines of Jesus' love and his love of neighbors. He can confront the actual voice of his inner heart and not evade his fragility and the realities of his struggles in life. Though everyone shares this fragility, the process of overcoming it is not the same in appearance. If we take Nouwen's spirituality as a model of contemporary Western Christian spirituality, it can be deduced that contemporary western Christian spirituality is imbued with high tolerance; thus, it helps pave the way towards dialogue with others and the development of religions in an intercultural context.

After looking at the life of Henri Nouwen, it is clear that there are many aspects to his spirituality which can enlighten Chinese Christians. His life story can inspire them to take up the same commitment to overcoming the bad side of life and living with God, motivated by love of Jesus and of neighbors, especially the oppressed in society.

Part Four: Summaries, Conclusions, and Implicationsfor Strengthening Chinese Christian Spirituality

A. Summaries

From the above, we can observe that there are three factors to consider about Chinese Christian spiritual practice and Christianity as a whole. First, spiritual form takes diverse shapes in Chinese Christian spiritual practice in China. It is closely linked with the historical-cultural context. This has been shown in the outline of events in the propagation of Christianity. As for cultural context, Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, and Confucian culture, etc. exist within Chinese culture now. Second, as for the spiritual content, if we view it from the aspect of whether it is aiming at achieving the goal of living with God, it still needs to be developed further.

Third, the level of Chinese Christian indigenization needs to be raised. Perhaps, because of the bad image of Christianity created by Western invaders, many Chinese are still not familiar with Christianity. Nowadays, however, there emerge heated discussions and arguments about Christianity in China. Its degree of

〔32〕 See Milton Wan, *Gain or Loss of Pursuing a Spiritual Life: Review the Merit and Crisis of the Four Christian Spiritual Practical Traditions*, http://www.livingwater4u.com/reader/b_zhuiqiushulingdeyushi/chapter08.html.

〔33〕 *The Inner Voice of Love*, 188.

〔34〕 Ibid, 188.

〔35〕 HUANG Dongying 黄东英 says, "He is happy to go to understand buggers, or Buddhist doctrines." See introduction of Huang Dongying to *Sabbatical Journey: Winter*《安息日志——冬之旅》(Hong Kong 香港: Logos Book House [香港基道出版社 Xianggang jidao chubanshe], 2002).

indigenization cannot be paralleled with Buddhism, just as it cannot hold the same important role as Confucian culture and Daoism for many ordinary Chinese. The issue of indigenization may involve the translation of the Bible, for if we discuss the doctrines conveyed by the Chinese Bible, it cannot reach the same degree of perfection as that of Confucian culture and Buddhism.

B. Conclusions

We can draw conclusions as follows:

First, spiritual form takes diverse shapes in Chinese Christian spiritual practice in Mainland China.

Second, as for spiritual content, if we view it from the aspect of whether it is aiming at achieving the goal of living with God, it still needs to be developed further.

Third, Nouwen's spiritual practice can be a model for many Chinese Christians to improve their spiritual practice.

Fourth, the level of Chinese Christian indigenization needs to be raised.

C. Implications for Strengthening Chinese Christian Spirituality in Contemporary China

We will discuss the issue from two aspects. One is from the aspect of strengthening the spiritual practice of Chinese Christians. The other is from the aspect of the indigenization of Chinese Christianity.

Strengthening the spiritual practice of Chinese Christians. Regarding the spirituality of individual Christians especially, spiritual content should be closely linked with the sacred goal of living with God; though the spiritual form may not be totally Christian, if it relates to the context, then it is acceptable. One way to improve spiritual practice is to learn from certain people who may be models of Christian life. In this paper, Nouwen was presented as a model from whom we can learn. Although he is from the West, Chinese Christians may find some wisdom in his writings and be inspired to live a good life of following Jesus by his examples. His love of God and neighbor (especially the outcast in society) exemplify how one should live as Christian.

As for the ways of spiritual practice, other religions' experiences can be used for reference. For example, Teresa of Avila ended a prayer with a passage from a Hindu prayer.[36] Another example is how some Roman Catholic monks and nuns in India found that Hindu prayer was beneficial to complement their practice of Christianity.[37]

Strengthening the level of Christian indigenization in contemporary China. First of all, we can analyze the context from three aspects.

First, we will premise our argument within the multi-cultural context of the global context of religions and cultures. Pluralism is an emerging reality in the post-modern context, as may be observed from politics, economics, and varied cultures. This calls for dialogue among religions because of their diversity, which may bring conflict and misunderstanding. Some objective facts also show that there is diversity in nature, plants

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〔36〕 See Milton WAN, *Gain or Loss of Pursuing a Spiritual Life: Review the Merit and Crisis of the Four Christian Spiritual Practical Traditions*, http://www.livingwater4u.com/reader/b_zhuiqiushulingdeyushi/chapter05.html.

〔37〕 "India: monks and nuns go to Hindu center to learn spiritual experiences from Hinduism" [印度:修生、修女在印度教中心寻求灵修 Yindu: Xiusheng, xiunu zai YIndujiao zhongxin xunqiu lingxiu], *Chinese Catholicism* [中国天主教 Zhongguo tianzhujiao], no. 1 (1999).

and animals, ideas, and the inclination of people's pursuit of true religion. Persons who are interested in Christianity will still follow the way of Jesus. With the long history of Christian faith in China, alien feelings have been gradually replaced by acceptance; thus, the degree of understanding, researching, and believing in it has deepened. There seems to be a wide range of spiritual contentment in pursuit of the goal of living with God. The realization of purifying Christian faith and practice has been noted despite the diversity of spiritual forms.

Second, we will place our argument within the general context of contemporary China. We have carried out some relative analysis on the spiritual life and practice of Chinese Christians in the foregoing discussion. When we talk of the general context of China, we are referring to the nation's independent sovereignty, stabilization of politics, developed economics, diversity of culture, freedom to be a religio ("Foreign)_ Christianity seems to be fading; the anger towards Christianity is being withdrawn. Therefore, Chinese people are freer to talk about topics such as the Rites Controversies, Indigenization, and dialogue among religions, etc.

Third, there is a manifestly better vision for respect of cultures in our time, as can be depicted through words like Cultural-toleration, Religion-toleration, Inter-enculturation and Cultural-interaction. All these terms can convey the meaning of harmoniously co-existing and interacting. For Christianity, it is the harmony and the inter-activity among Christians and the members of other religions or cultures of China that really matter.

Next, under the rubric of context, spirituality can be understood from many perspectives and thus indigenization can be developed in corresponding ways. Liu Xiaofeng argues that "it is a fundamental misunderstanding to conceive the conflict between Christianity and Chinese culture as a conflict ofest and ast, and it is questionable whether indigenization of Christianity is actually based on this misunderstanding." [38] He believes that Chinese Christian spirituality can spontaneously be taken from cultural experiences in order to achieve indigenization of the Christian faith among the Chinese. It seems Liu's idea is that faith can be a personal matter without the permission of the church. Thus, spirituality is descriptive of Christian experiences and their spiritual practice. [39] We can deduce that Liu's argument is that spirituality can be established from the perspective of individual Christian spiritual practices without much interference from organizational practices of the Church. On the other hand, Lai Pingchao's argument is that spiritual theology should be established by the practices of church. [40] The issue of indigenization of Christianity, inter-enculturation or interaction between Christianity and Chinese culture is especially crucial. The perspectives of Liu Xiaofeng and Lai Pingchao may both be beneficial to the establishment of Chinese spirituality.

Moreover, if we discuss the issue from the perspective of the Christian Church, it should strengthen the

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〔38〕 LIU Xiaofeng 刘小枫, Chinese Christian theology in the context of modern times [现代语境中的汉语基督教神学 Xiandai yujing zhong de hanyu jidujiao shenxue], Christian Culture Review [《基督教文化评论》 Jidujiao wenhua pinglun], Guiyang 贵阳: Guizhou People Publishing Company [贵州人民出版社 Guizhou renmin chubanshe], 1988) vol. 7.

〔39〕 Evagarius Ponticus said, "Who is the theologian? The theologian is a man who prays." See Milton Wan, Gain or loss of pursuing a spiritual life: review the merit and crisis of the four Christian spiritual practical traditions, http://www. livingwater4u. com/reader/b _ zhuiqiushulingdeyushi/chapter14. html.

〔40〕 LAI Pan-Chiu 赖品超, "Types of Chinese Theology and the routines of development" [汉语神学的类型与发展路向 Hanyu shenxue de leixing yu fazhan luxiang], Jian Dao: A Journal of Bible & Theology [《建道学刊》 Jiandao xuekan], no. 10(1998), 81-108.

Church's guidance of the spiritual practice of Chinese Christians. The need to strengthen indigenization of Chinese Christianity must also be met. Thus, the Church should exhibit an open attitude to all sorts of Christians and non-Christians. The Church should accept the existing cultural Christians and even the non-organizational Christians. It should provide guidance to the spiritual practices of family-church and village-church, especially those without a building. Another task is to train adequate priests or leaders in the Church in order to meet the needs of Christians, especially in Mainland China. There is a need to respond to the increasing demands for leaders of churches in some areas in the countryside. [41]

[41] We can deduce this from the case of Li-zi-village Church. See Xun Shiqiang, A sketch of the religious life of rural Christians in southwest China: a case study on the Christians of Li-zi-village Church, Journal of Southwest University for Nationalities. Humanities and Social Science, vol. 24 no. 12 Dec 2003.

中文题目：

加强当代中国大陆文化语境之汉语基督教灵修学建设的可能性探讨

何则阴，哲学博士，副教授，IASACT(2006)访问学者。地址：中国大陆四川省成都市蓉都大道天回路 601 号 成都医学院 人文信息管理学院，邮编：610083，电话：18628176965，18208183599；邮箱：hezeyin86@163.com，946983232@qq.com

提要：对于基督教来讲，灵修是其不可缺少的核心组成部分。对于任何宗教来讲，宗教修持都具有极其关键而又决定性的意义。本文旨在探讨当代中国大陆文化语境之中，如何加强汉语基督徒灵修建设的一些可能性，并探讨基督教与中国文化之间的关系。其一是论述怎样加强汉语基督徒信仰的本土化建设，这样有助于中国大陆基督教信仰的纯正性；其二是论述中国文化与基督教神学之间的关系。文章以为，通过结合中国历史、文化语境来研究汉语基督教的灵修学建设，对基督教信仰的本土化建设会产生更为有效的促进作用。

本文包括四个方面的内容。第一，对传教士自七世纪传入中国至今的基督教进行重新检阅，考察中国大陆基督教的神学与灵性实践的历史发展情况，尤其会分析不同时期、不同阶段的启发意义。第二，讨论中国当代语境之灵修，与我国当代基督徒对灵修重要性的理解情况。第三，以亨利·卢云为例，考察基督徒的灵修生活，因为，卢云可能会为当代中国大陆的基督徒灵修带去信心与灵感。最后，根据以上分析，对如何加强中国基督教信仰的本土化建设，尝试做一总结，给出一些建议。

关键词：基督教神学与灵修实践；当代中国语境；亨利·卢云；建议