

within a course context. The next step is to place this text in conversation with a hermeneutic of encounter grounded in both the work of Chauvet and possibly that of Eastern Orthodox authors who explore in detail the topics mentioned above to which Wallenfang only alludes. Such a conversation would build on the contribution that Wallenfang makes in this text, a conversation that could open more clearly the implications of choosing silence or action, being or becoming.

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Mothering, Public Leadership, and Women's Life Writing: Explorations in Spirituality Studies and Practical Theology. By Claire E. Wolfeich. Leiden: Brill, 2017. ix + 208 pages. \$57.00.
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I often encounter students and others who struggle with being a mother and following God's call. Claire Wolfeich's book is one I'll offer to these women, for her book directly reflects on mothering in the context of spiritual life. Wolfeich says: "Mothering is a kind of *askesis*, training, spiritual exercise" (4). Wolfeich investigates several well-known mothers who are also spiritual writers. Then she develops a practical theology responding to that spiritual writing.

Wolfeich considers the mystics and mothers Margery Kempe and Jarena Lee. Wolfeich notes that these mystics do not often speak of their children, so that any connection between mothering and spiritual life is left ambiguous. Both women describe (in Wolfeich's terms) "othermother[s]" (45), who share mothering practices and enable each mother to live their other vocations. Yet that leads to questions like these: How well does this kind of spiritual life and mothering go together? How much is community required for spiritual mothering?

Wolfeich next considers the widowed mother Jane de Chantal and her mentor Francis de Sales. Jane's writing describes a wide range of vocations, from mothering to founding a religious community. Francis and Jane write of what Wolfeich names as everyday mothering in spiritual life. For example, Francis describes mothering in connection to spiritual love: "maternal love, the most pressing, the most active, the most ardent of all" (63).

Third, Wolfeich narrates twentieth-century women: Dorothy Day (cofounder of the Catholic Worker), Dolores Huerta (cofounder of United Farm Workers), and Lena Frances Edwards (African American OB-GYN

who instituted a maternity hospital at a migrant camp). These contemporary mothers write both of their active spirituality and of raising children. These women see activism and raising children in some tension; Wolfeich suggests that for Day, in particular, attempting both activism and mothering presents a spiritual problem. Huerta and Edwards have “more confident maternal-spiritual voices” (98).

In part 2, Wolfeich develops three themes: motherwork (from Patricia Hill Collins), time poverty, and mothering as spiritual practice.

Motherwork places mothering as important work, drawing from John Paul II’s *Laborem Excercens*: “The family is simultaneously a *community made possible by work* and the first *school of work*” (114). Wolfeich understands mothering as a very broad vocation with many iterations (e.g., working mothers, stay-at-home mothers, etc.), while also emphasizing the need for “othermothers.”

A danger for mothers and their spiritual lives is time poverty. Many of the spiritual writers Wolfeich discusses struggled with lack of time. Wolfeich examines the practice of Sabbath keeping, especially as expressed by mothers’ voices, as a way of inviting mothers to see Sabbath rest not as one more activity but as a way to provide space in mothering and spiritual life.

Finally, Wolfeich argues that mothers need to recognize their work as “ordinary spiritual theology” (164). Many mothers describe loss of spiritual practice as their lives become busier with children. Wolfeich offers them an alternative, an ordinary spiritual theology that involves “the daily work of caring for children, in care of bodies, in maternal suffering, in political resistance” (167). Wolfeich suggests that while mothers often write about these practices, their voices are “muted or silenced” (167).

This book addresses an important topic, and I shall suggest it to various audiences. That said, I do have concerns. The first is Wolfeich’s reading of Dorothy Day; Day wrote often about spiritual retreats that she attended, and which influenced her work. Day’s writing on the retreats discusses just the kinds of tensions that Wolfeich sees in Day’s writing—only for Day, as well as for Fr. Hugo and others giving the retreats, these tensions manifest a good vision of both spiritual life and the pursuit of motherhood. That’s not to say Day wasn’t conflicted; I think she was—but I think Wolfeich’s reading would benefit from more discussion of the impact those retreats had on Day (and on Tamar).

Second, I am not sure that broadening spirituality to include “ordinary spiritual theology” does the work that the mothers cited in Wolfeich’s book describe and desire. I agree that mothering practices can be part of spiritual life; breastfeeding can provide space for contemplation; holding a sleeping

child can be prayer. Yet writers like de Chantal or Day suggest to me that, in considering mothering practices, they are broadening the understanding of prayer, or what it means to love—and not broadening the concept or numbering of spiritual practices.

That said, this book does important work on an often-overlooked topic and should be read.

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