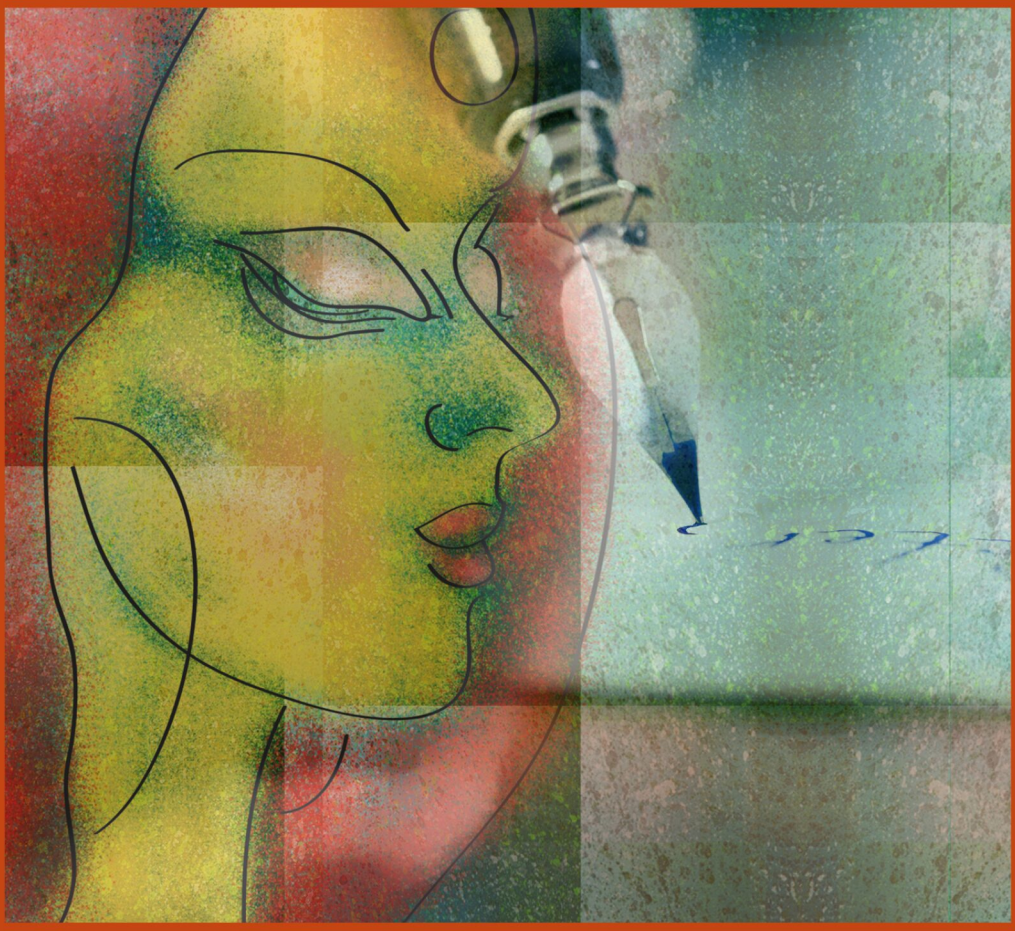
Mothering, Public Leadership, and Women's Life Writing

Explorations in Spirituality Studies and Practical Theology



Claire E. Wolfteich

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For Alice Helen Clegg Wolfteich

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In studying and teaching Christian spirituality for the past two decades, I have found it difficult to locate mothering in the field of Christian spirituality, particularly within the "classic" texts of Catholic spirituality, my own heritage and spiritual home. The history of Christian spirituality is filled with extraordinary models of holiness, tantalizingly different from contemporary everyday contexts – desert fathers who sit on pillars far from civilization, medieval women who find Jesus in an anchorage, Russian pilgrims who wander endlessly to learn how to pray, young women who flee their comfortable homes to enter convents and then levitate amidst a soul-searing, heart-piercing union with God. I love to read and teach these classics, and as a practical theologian I seek to engage them in transformative and life-giving ways. But I wrestle with the gaps between these texts and everyday practices of mothering. Amidst these saints of Christian tradition, where do mothers find ourselves – those of us whose spiritual landscapes are not deserts or convents, our primary practices not pilgrimages or retreats? Noticing how few mothers fill these texts, noticing the near absence of children in these spiritual itineraries, I wonder: How can Christian spirituality speak more clearly into mothers' spiritual journeys? How can we articulate more fully the complexity of mothering as a spiritual practice? How might we better identify and critically engage maternal spiritual wisdom from Christian traditions?

Similarly, as I have taught courses on theologies of work, vocation, and Sabbath, I have found little reference to the lived realities of mothers and mothering. Few theologies of work are written by women and few give sustained attention to the particular spiritual issues and narratives of mothers. Women's domestic labor remains a marginal topic. How do we move theologically beyond a dichotomy between domestic and public work to see instead the subtle interrelationships among women's multiple spheres of vocation? How can we conceptualize vocation and discernment vis-à-vis the dynamic life of mothers and their various seasons of calling, taking into account also vocations that are denied, interrupted, overlooked, or misinterpreted? How do we account for the impact of time poverty on the shape of women's vocations and spiritual practice?

This book argues that mothering is a significant topic for spirituality studies and practical theology. I bring particular attention to mothering *as* work and to mothering *in relationship to* other spheres of women's labor. Why this

focus? First, because from the standpoint of Catholic theology, family life and work are two interrelated dimensions of lay spirituality and lay vocation in the world. By situating mothering within this larger purview of lay spirituality and vocation I can unpack interrelationships of mothering and work in women's spiritual lives. Work also is an important category and context for understanding spirituality; in sociological terms, it is a "critical site of lived religion."[1] While social scientists have studied the relationship between work and mothering extensively, because fewer theological works address this issue I bring women's narratives more squarely into the theological conversation.

This is not simply about "balancing" work and mothering. Patricia Hill Collins uses the term "motherwork" to convey a far more integrated relationship between work and family and to critique white feminist assumptions:

> Whether because of the labor exploitation of African-American women under slavery and its ensuing tenant farm system, the political conquest of Native American women during European acquisition of land, or exclusionary immigration policies applied to Asian-Americans and Hispanics, women of color have performed motherwork that challenges social constructions of work and family as separate spheres…and of the search for autonomy as the guiding human quest…I use the term 'motherwork' to soften the existing dichotomies in feminist theorizing about motherhood…[2]

Hill Collins thus underscores the significance of distinctive cultural contexts in theorizing about motherhood. I adopt the term "motherwork" at points in this book to keep in the foreground the interwoven, as well as tensive, public-domestic labors of mothers.

As cultural contexts do significantly impact practices and beliefs around mothering, work, and spirituality, it is appropriate to situate myself as an author – I am a white, middle-class American Catholic, mother of three. My engagement with this topic may well emerge from what could be considered a white problematic: the lived experience of separation, not integration, of work and family, spirituality and work, spirituality and mothering. The effort to better integrate, relate, bridge, and weave these together may itself reflect a white

1 Susan Crawford Sullivan, *Living Faith: Everyday Religion and Mothers in Poverty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 67. See also Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes: Finding Religion in Everyday Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

2 Patricia Hill Collins, "Shifting the Center: Race, Class, and Feminist Theorizing about Motherhood," in *Mothering: Ideology, Experience, and Agency* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 47.

experience of dichotomization, as Hill Collins notes. Indeed, a problematic of "separation" or "dichotomization" more broadly is often assumed in practical theology – e.g., a separation of theory and practice; Tom Beaudoin and Katherine Turpin ascribe this preoccupation with "overcoming of binaries" as a key, unexamined feature of white practical theology: "Established theologies arising from specific race-ethnic-identified communities, like Black, Latino/a, or Asian Theologies, for example, do not typically traffic in such separations that white theologians often see as so essential."[3] Thus, while this study will explore what can be learned from a practical theological reading of diverse mothering narratives, it acknowledges that the very conceptualization of the project emerges from a white cultural context and may well be framed differently in other cultural contexts.

In pointing to the necessity of considering work as a theological and spiritual issue, John Paul II's 1981 encyclical *Laborem Exercens* ("On Human Work") addresses the importance of work as a focus of ongoing, contextual analysis and action. This description resonates well with the dynamic, contextual, interpretive, and action-oriented tasks of practical theology:

> Work is one of these aspects, a perennial and fundamental one, one that is always relevant and constantly demands renewed attention and decisive witness. Because fresh *questions* and *problems* are always arising, there are always fresh hopes, but also fresh fears and threats, connected with this basic dimension of human existence: man's life is built up every day from work, from work it derives its specific dignity, but at the same time work contains the unceasing measure of human toil and suffering, and also of the harm and injustice which penetrate deeply into social life within individual nations and on the international level.[4]

Work is a critical theological issue. This study focuses particularly on the task of articulating, constructing, and guiding a spirituality of work that takes maternal labor seriously. Indeed, "On Human Work" notes that the formation of a spirituality of work is a significant ecclesial task. "[The Church] sees it as her particular duty *to form a spirituality of work* which will help all people to come

3 Tom Beaudoin and Katherine Turpin, "White Practical Theology," pp. 251-69 in *Opening the Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction*, edited by Kathleen A. Cahalan and Gordon S. Mikoski (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 263.

4 John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens* ("On Human Work"), no. 1: http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens.html, accessed February 6, 2015.

closer, through work, to God, the Creator and Redeemer."[5] This study seeks to advance a more developed conception of a "spirituality of work" through theological reflection on maternal life writing.

Mothering as Practice

This book is not a "retro" romanticization of mothering. Women's varied experiences of mothering belie the platitudes about mothering that fill greeting cards and shape social constructions of mothering; these discount women's actual lived realities and struggles. To argue that mothering is a spiritual practice does not coat mothering with a layer of sweet sanctity. Rather, it affirms that mothering makes a calling upon one's life that demands ongoing practice, deeply embodied practice that is really a lifetime process of learning and teaching, forming and being formed, growing and failing, wondering and worrying. Mothering is a kind of *askesis*, training, spiritual exercise. Practical theologian Dorothy Bass describes practices as constituting a way of life; the cultivation of a "life-giving way of life" or a "way of life abundant" is the "telos of practical theology and Christian ministry."[6] Mothering embeds one in the most vital dimensions of living through the care of a vulnerable, ever-changing new human being; it is ideally (though not always in practice) an eminently "life-giving way of life." The practical theological task is to think through how mothering is and can be more abundantly life-giving, how we can better sustain mothers in the constellation of practices that make up this way of life, and how mothers can, from the depths of their experience, share their own questions and spiritual-practical wisdom with the larger community.

Sara Ruddick conceptualizes mothering as a practice that yields distinctive kinds of thinking.[7] In seeing mothering as a theological-spiritual practice, I argue that mothering opens us to deep *theological* knowing and equally piercing *theological* questions. This knowing and these questions belong in the broader theological conversation and canon. Spirituality and theology are integrally interrelated and mutually informing, despite their unfortunate division in academia. Mark McIntosh, a scholar of mysticism, expresses this point well:

5 John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens* ("On Human Work"), no. 24.

6 Dorothy C. Bass, "Ways of Life Abundant" in *For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education, and Christian Ministry*, edited by Dorothy C. Bass and Craig Dykstra, 27.

7 Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989).

> So while it is very true that theology provides an indispensable critical function for spirituality, it is no less true that spirituality affords a radically critical perspective equally necessary for the health of theology.... The critical function which spirituality serves for theology is not a matter simply of adding one more source for theology to consider; it is not a matter of judiciously taking people's experiences seriously along with supposedly more 'rational' thought, but a matter of exposing theology to the profound questioning that animates the very heart of the community's struggle to be faithful.[8]

The study of maternal spiritual narratives exposes theology to just this profound questioning.

In writing on this topic, I note that mothers are not monolithic, of course; diversity in maternal experience is vast and cannot be covered comprehensively in any text. A related point: mothering as experience and practice is shaped by social institutions, economics, and cultural ideas about "good mothering" (as scholarship on the "social construction of mothering" aptly demonstrates).[9] Spirituality does not exist in a vacuum; it is best studied contextually. Second, I do not seek to re-inscribe mothering in an essentialized way as women's calling in a way that takes significance away from the multiple paths that women may choose or find themselves in. Mothering is not necessarily a better spiritual path, or the only spiritual path. But it *is* one spiritual path and practice. This is what I want to explore.

Mother Studies, Spirituality, and Practical Theology

Mother studies as an interdisciplinary field of research has grown in recent decades to include an array of scholarship in psychology, sociology, history, anthropology, political science, and law.[10] Across these fields, feminist contri-

8 Mark McIntosh, *Mystical Theology* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 17.

9 For an overview of this topic, see Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "Social Constructions of Mothering: A Thematic Overview," pp. 1-29 in *Mothering: Ideology, Experience, and Agency*, edited by Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Grace Chang, and Linda Rennie Forcey (New York: Routledge, 1994).

10 See, for example, Jodi Vandenberg-Daves, *Modern Motherhood: An American History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2014); Amber E. Kinser et al., eds., *Performing Motherhood: Artistic, Activist and Everyday Enactments* (Bradford, ON: Demeter Press, 2014); Julia E. Hanisberg and Sara Ruddick, eds., *Mother Troubles: Rethinking Contempo-*

butions have been significant.[11] And yet, research on *spirituality* and mothering is still quite underdeveloped. For example, Aurélie Athan and Lisa Miller point to the lack of research on spirituality in mothering within the field of clinical psychology.[12] They note that when the transition to motherhood occurs against a "cultural backdrop" that does not "honor[s] mothering as a critical window for spiritual crisis and transformation, women navigate unassisted, conflict is exacerbated, and mothers are at higher risk for dysfunction."[13] Psychological study of women's maternal health and spirituality is only nascent.[14] Sociological research has begun to yield important data on religion in everyday

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rary Maternal Dilemma (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999); Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Grace Chang, and Linda Rennie Forcey, eds., *Mothering: Ideology, Experience, and Agency* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1994); and Sharon Hays, *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

11 See, for example, Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1995); Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989); Penelope Dixon, *Mothers & Mothering: An Annotated Feminist Bibliography* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1991); Andrea O'Reilly, ed., *Feminist Mothering* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008); Andrea O'Reilly, ed., *From Motherhood to Mothering: The Legacy of Adrienne Rich's of Woman Born* (Albany: State University of New York, 2004); Sally Purvis, "Mothers, Neighbors, and Strangers: Another Look at Agape," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 7 (Spring 1991): 19-34.

12 Aurélie M. Athan and Lisa Miller, "Motherhood as Opportunity to Learn Spiritual Values: Experiences and Insights of New Mothers," *Journal of Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Health* 27, no. 4 (Summer 2013): 221. Noting the lack of research in this area, Athan and Miller have begun to conduct qualitative research on spirituality and mothering. In a meta-analysis of interviews with 22 new mothers, primarily middle-to-upper class, heterosexual, white women in the eastern region of the United States, they show that mothering can be a positive spiritual awakening for women, reflecting spiritual values such as unconditional love and interdependence, transcending ego, growth in empathy, mindfulness, and a sense of meaning and purpose. Such research lays a groundwork for further studies, although it is a limited sample that lacks racial/ethnic, socio-economic, or regional diversity. The authors also note that most of their interviewees did not use explicit spiritual language in describing their experience; the authors rather brought a spiritual interpretive framework to the data.

13 Aurélie M. Athan and Lisa Miller, "Spiritual Awakening Through the Motherhood Journey," *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering* 7, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2005): 18.

14 Aurelie Athan, Sara Chung, and Jeanette Sawyer Cohen, "Spiritual Beliefs of Mothers with Potentially Distressing Pregnancies," *Spirituality in Clinical Practice* 2, no. 3 (2015): 230.

life, including work and family.[15] Yet, there is still a gap in sociological scholarship about spirituality and mothering; this is not a focus of most qualitative research.[16]

While mothering is not at the forefront of practical theological research, several practical theologians have made related contributions. Supported by a major grant from the Lilly Endowment, Don S. Browning developed the Family, Religion, and Culture project, which yielded a series of book publications, including volumes on the family in early Christianity; economics and the family, law; feminism; congregations and the family; and the American family debate.[17] In other works, Pamela Couture analyzes child poverty, public policy, and single parents.[18] Joyce Mercer draws upon Reformed traditions to articulate a theology of hospitality for children in the church.[19] Annemie Dillen advances the study of children and spirituality.[20] Elaine Graham's understanding of the "kitchen table" as a locus of practical theology lays a groundwork for attending to women's everyday practices and landscapes.[21] Bonnie Miller-McLemore has made particularly important contributions in two related books, *Also a Mother: Work and Family as Theological Dilemma*

15 See, for example, Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes: Finding Religion in Everyday Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). Regarding motherhood, two texts to note are Tina Miller, *Making Sense of Motherhood: A Narrative Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) and Martha McMahon, *Engendering Motherhood: Identity and Self-Transformation in Women's Lives* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1995). Yet these texts do not address spirituality in relationship to mothering.

16 Susan Crawford Sullivan's *Living Faith: Everyday Religion and Mothers in Poverty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011) is one contribution here.

17 See Don S. Browning et al., *From Culture Wars to Common Ground: Religion and the American Family Debate* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997). For a volume celebrating and evaluating Browning's contributions to family studies, see John Witte, Jr., M. Christian Green, and Amy Wheeler, *The Equal-Regard Family and Its Friendly Critics: Don Browning and the Practical Theological Ethics of the Family* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007).

18 Pamela Couture, *Child Poverty: Love, Justice, and Social Responsibility* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2007).

19 Joyce Mercer, *Welcoming Children: A Practical Theology of Childhood* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2005).

20 See Annemie Dillen and Didier Pollefeyt, eds., *Children's Voices: Children's Perspectives in Ethics, Theology and Religious Education* (Leuven: Peeters Publishing, 2010).

21 Elaine Graham, "A View from a Room: Feminist Practical Theology from Academy, Kitchen or Sanctuary?" pp. 129-52 in *Liberating Faith Practices: Feminist Practical Theologies in Context*, edited by Denise M. Ackerman and Riet Bons-Storm (Leuven: Peeters, 1998).

and *In the Midst of Chaos: Caring for Children as Spiritual Practice*.[22] My work builds upon such rich contributions, most of which arise from Protestant practical theologians, while staking out a different approach. I bring a Catholic theological emphasis, notably in giving theological readings to Catholic mothering narratives from the tradition; critically engaging Catholic social teaching on work and family; addressing the ecclesial task of spiritual formation; and exploring Catholic traditions and practices of spiritual direction. I also foreground the study of Christian spirituality as an essential piece of this work in practical theology.

Study of Christian Spirituality

The history of Christian spirituality is indeed rather muted on the subject of mothering. Few recognized saints are mothers – with some notable exceptions, such as Saint Anne, Saint Elizabeth, Saint Monica, Saint Birgitta of Sweden, Saint Louise de Marillac, and the American Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton. While historians such as Carolyn Walker Bynum have uncovered significant maternal imagery in medieval piety[23] and scholars such as Wendy M. Wright have brought attention more generally to family and spirituality,[24] mothers' own writing is poorly represented among "classic" texts in Christian spirituality. Even spiritual autobiographies by mothers too often hide or silence the author's mothering life. This is not to diminish the importance of monastic traditions and the many saints of the church whose contemplative and active lives give witness to their faith. Yet, the omissions, marginalization, and silences regarding mothering reflect and yield a highly ambiguous conception of the spiritual worth of mothering – both undervalued and highly romanticized – and a dearth of spiritual resources by and for Christian mothers. As

22 Bonnie Miller McLemore, *Also a Mother: Work and Family as Theological Dilemma* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994) and *In the Midst of Chaos: Caring for Children as Spiritual Practice* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2006).

23 See, for example, Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

24 Wendy M. Wright, *Sacred Dwelling: Everyday Family Spirituality* (Boston: Pauline Books, 2007) and *Seasons of a Family's Life: Cultivating the Contemplative Spirit at Home* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2003). On the specific topic of breastfeeding, see the recent article by Elizabeth Gandolfo, "Mary Kept These Things, Pondering Them in Her Heart: Breastfeeding as Contemplative Practice and Source of Theology," *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 13, no. 2 (Fall 2013): 163-86.

Margaret Hebblethwaite wrote: "So few of our major Christian exemplars in history have been mothers.... For the mother, it has to be a matter of personal experiment in a largely uncharted ground, and it is easy to lose heart and lose interest."[25] The critical retrieval and reconstruction of mothering practices, experiences, struggles, and spiritual knowing is a significant task for Christian theology, spirituality studies, and the church.

The effort to locate mothers in the history of Christian spirituality requires broadening the canon of Christian spiritual classics so as to include more texts written or dictated by women. In this book, I probe the value of women's life writing as a generative source for Christian spirituality studies and practical theology. While practical theology typically takes contemporary contexts as primary focus, I include several historical case studies of mothers' life writing as well as more contemporary sources. In studying and teaching Christian spiritual traditions, I remain committed to engaging these traditions with critical rigor, love, and openness to wisdom. Hence, while it is frustrating to encounter silences around a practice like mothering, so vital to human development and such a key aspect of many women's daily lives, I do not advocate a turn only to the study of contemporary spiritual texts and contexts. My approach in the study of Christian spirituality affirms the import of all of these moves: study of "classic" spiritual texts and traditions; expansion of the "canon" of Christian spirituality through retrieval of maternal narratives and other texts by more marginalized voices from within Christian traditions; and interdisciplinary study of contemporary spiritualities employing every relevant discipline, including the social sciences. Practical theological study of spirituality is most robust when it brings learning about contemporary contexts, popular religion, and everyday practice into critical dialogue with Christian spiritual traditions.

In naming gaps in connecting spirituality and mothering, one qualification is important to make: of course Mary is a primary maternal figure in Christian spirituality, most notably in Catholic and Orthodox traditions. The Council of Ephesus (431) affirmed the Greek patristic name for Mary as Theotokos, or Mother of God. For many, Mary is a revered "maternal face of God,"[26] in the words of Leonardo Boff, the primary saintly model for mothers and a supportive intercessor. The 1988 apostolic letter *Mulieris dignitatem* (*"On the Dignity and Vocation of Women"*) finds in Mary the true mystical union for which each

25 Margaret Hebblethwaite, *Motherhood and God* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1984), 97.

26 Leonardo Boff, O.F.M., *The Maternal Face of God: The Feminine and Its Religious Expressions* (New York: HarperCollins, 1987).

human being is predestined as a "gift of the Spirit." In Mary's "fiat," her free embrace of the incarnational reality in her own motherhood, she expresses her own authentic subjectivity and becomes a key exemplar of human dignity and vocation: "The dignity of every human being and the vocation corresponding to that dignity find their definitive measure in *union with God*. Mary, the woman of the Bible, is the most complete expression of this dignity and vocation."[27]

Others have critiqued the dominance of Marian theology and piety as reinforcing patriarchy with submissive images of women, essentialist understandings of women's nature, and restriction of women to the domestic sphere. Feminist theologian Mary Daly described Mary as "a remnant of the ancient image of the Mother Goddess, enchained and subordinated in Christianity, as the 'Mother of God.'"[28] Elizabeth Johnson seeks to reclaim the human Miriam from the oversanctified hagiographical portraits of the Virgin Mary.[29] Such critiques are not limited to white feminism; according to James Empereur and Eduardo Fernandez, contemporary Latino/a spirituality includes both strong devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe as "a symbol of justice and freedom" and, unfortunately, a "marianisma" that reinforces machismo and perpetuates abuse of women.[30] Gloria Anzaldúa writes that Guadalupe "has been used by the Church to mete out institutionalized oppression…to make us docile and enduring…."[31] On the other hand, Jeannette Rodriguez' research among second-generation Mexican American Catholic women found devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe to be empowering; the interviewees identified with her "as woman, mestiza, mother" and turned to her as a powerful intercessor.[32]

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27 John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem* [Apostolic Letter on the Dignity and Vocation of Women], August 15, 1988, sec. 4-5: https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1988/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19880815_mulieris-dignitatem.html, accessed February 27, 2017.

28 Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973).

29 Elizabeth Johnson, *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints* (New York: Continuum, 2006).

30 James Empereur and Eduardo Fernandez, *La Vida Sacra: Contemporary Hispanic Sacramental Theology* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 230.

31 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 4th edition (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2012), 53.

32 Jeanette Rodriguez, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment among Mexican American Women* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 134. See also Socorro Casteñada-Liles, "Our Lady of Guadalupe and the Politics of Cultural Interpretation," pp. 153-79 in *Mexican American Religions: Spirituality, Activism, and Culture*, edited by Gastón Espinosa and Mario T. Garcia (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

The impact of Marian devotion on women's self-understandings, sense of vocation, and mothering practice needs further research; yet, this is beyond the scope of the current book. Because there has been substantial research on Marian devotion and theology and far less on other mother figures in Christian spirituality, this book explores Marian piety not as a central topic in itself but rather as refracted in women's life writing. Thus, Marian devotion will be addressed as it arises in the life writing of the figures selected for this study, however, I seek a broader approach that will open up questions of spirituality and mothering beyond debates about Mary and patriarchy.

One might ask whether it is worth doing these intellectual gymnastics to reclaim a spirituality of mothering and work from within a decidedly patriarchal tradition. Why not put religious traditions aside and simply build a spirituality of motherwork, freed from the misogynistic constraints of religion? Wouldn't it be simpler – and more relevant to societies that are rapidly shedding religious affiliations and deconverting?[33] Many today do embrace "spirituality" while rejecting religion, and spirituality can be defined quite broadly, as in Sandra Schneider's often-cited description of spirituality as "the project of life-integration through self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives."[34] I fully understand the import and potentially healing capacity of spirituality outside of religious structures, particularly for those who have been alienated from or harmed by religious institutions. Yet the approach in this book focuses on spirituality within religious traditions and communities, understood as life in the Spirit as a follower of Christ in the community of the church. I situate my project within the study of Christian spirituality, with particular attention to Catholicism. I also welcome dialogue with those from other traditions who may struggle with parallel questions and with those who embrace "spirituality" but eschew religion. This is a work of dialogical practical theology – deeply rooted in a tradition, curiously conversant with others, and open to the practical wisdom that emerges in the in-between spaces of our conversation.

33 For a recent study of the "nones," see Elizabeth Drescher, *Choosing Our Religion: The Spiritual Lives of America's Nones* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

34 Sandra Schneiders, "A Hermeneutical Approach to Christian Spirituality," pp. 49-60 in *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality*, edited by Elizabeth A. Dreyer and Mark S. Burrows (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 6.

Voice and Self: Life Writing, Spirituality, and Practical Theology

While the primary contribution of this book is to practical theology and spirituality studies, this work also intersects with autobiography studies. Scholarship in autobiography theory and life writing has expanded dramatically and internationally since 1980. One recent volume included an appendix that listed sixty genres of life narratives, including autobiography, letters, diaries, memoirs, blogs, oral histories, and travel narratives.[35] The expansion of autobiographical studies prompted the Modern Language Association to reorganize categories of literary study and to publish a volume specifically about teaching life writing texts.[36] Estelle Jelinek noted in 1980 that scholarship on autobiography has been overwhelmingly focused on male authors and most of the "objective theories" of autobiography critics "are not applicable to women's life studies."[37] There has been a rise in research on women's autobiography since Jelinek's observation, including several key volumes on women and autobiography theory.[38] In its attention to women's life writing from the perspective of spirituality, it is my hope that this book contributes to this exciting area of work.

I am interested in maternal voice and specifically *the practice of voicing, struggling to claim voice*, understood within the framework of spirituality. Ruddick notes how maternal voices have been silenced, "drowned by professional theory, ideologies of motherhood, sexist arrogance, and childhood fantasy." Thus, writes Ruddick, listening to maternal voices that are themselves in process of becoming, in process of seizing language to articulate experience and thinking, this listening is "an act of resistance."[39] Life writing is very much a practice of becoming, a naming of a self that is always still emerging. And

35 Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

36 Miriam Fuchs and Craig Howes, eds., *Teaching Life Writing Texts* (Modern Language Association, 2008), 1.

37 Estelle Jelinek, *Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 5.

38 See, for example, Joanne Braxton, *Black Women Writing Autobiography: A Tradition Within a Tradition* (Temple University Press, 1989); Estelle C. Jelinek, *The Tradition of Women's Autobiography: From Antiquity to the Present* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986); Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998).

39 Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 40.

so life writing texts reveal much about the practice of voicing. I understand voicing not simply as an assertion of the self but, from the perspective of spirituality, as a way to surface and claim the self as a work of God. This entails situating one's own experiences within a larger narrative of meaning; naming authentic questions and hopes; lamenting grief and suffering; and seeking to discern glimpses of God within the particularities of one's unfolding life in community. My approach in working with women's life writing is to turn a deep listening ear to women's own maternal narratives – to practice listening and re-listening and telling and re-telling as ways into deeper understanding of mothering, work, and spirituality. Studying the process of voicing is itself a significant task of practical theology, as Elaine Graham notes: "The halting, stumbling passage from silence into speech is not smooth or direct; but more recent pastoral and practical theology from a feminist perspective has come to focus more and more on such processes, both as personal pilgrimages of spiritual or therapeutic discovery and as journeys toward a deeper form of knowledge about the world – a new validation of what it means to experience, to know, and to be in the world."[40]

Life writing provides a window into women's spiritualities. As Ellen M. Ross notes, "the genre of autobiography provides access to themes, images, and categories by which individual women understand their religious experiences."[41] Such access is essential for scholarship in spirituality and theology. Moreover, women's life writing queries the boundaries of the classical theological tradition implicitly assumed by the largely white Protestant field of practical theology. Reading the "normative classics"[42] of the Christian tradition, as Browning proposes in his fundamental practical theological method, inevitably overemphasizes male voices.[43] Given that women often have written theology in autobiographical form, the study of women's life writing has particular import in expanding the canon of theology: "bereft of other forms of authority, women have often appealed to their own experience of God in justifying their

40 Elaine Graham, "Feminist Theory," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, edited by Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 198.

41 Ellen M. Ross, "Spiritual Experience and Women's Autobiography," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* LIX, no. 3 (1991): 532.

42 Don S. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

43 On this point, see Elaine Graham, *Transforming Practice: Pastoral Theology in an Age of Uncertainty* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002).

entrance into the theological tradition."[44] As autobiography studies expand, the field provides a route for practical theologians and spirituality scholars to study non-elites; indeed, "tensions between canonical and emergent texts, between the Great Man and the formerly unrepresented person, are making the study of biography a far more nuanced and wide-ranging activity."[45] This book seeks to bring to visibility several authors who are not elites, who are rather at the margins of their social contexts and the purview of theologians. At the same time, it must be noted that several authors discussed here benefitted from economic and racial/ethnic privilege and achieved public leadership in ways many women never could. By listening intently to their voices, I do not want to minimize the many other women's narratives that are not included here. Rather, this study makes a case for the relevance of women's life writing to practical theology and the study of spirituality. By extension, it aims to stimulate further research into the narratives of women who are even less well known and recorded than those discussed herein.

I also advance a distinctively Catholic theological rationale for the study of women's life writing. The recovery and investigation of the faith of the whole People of God, and not only male elites, is a key task of theology. "This witness belongs to the entire People of God, who are a People of prophets," notes Pope Francis. "Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, the members of the Church possess the "*sense of the faith*"…a kind of "spiritual instinct."[46] The *sensus fidelium* (sense of the faithful) is a significant theological source and locus.[47] Turning to women's life writing allows us to access one neglected part of the *sensus fidelium*.

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44 Emily A. Holmes, "Introduction: Mending a Broken Lineage," in *Women, Writing, Theology: Transforming a Tradition of Exclusion*, edited by Emily A. Holmes and Wendy Farley (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), 9.

45 Miriam Fuchs and Craig Howes, eds., *Teaching Life Writing Texts* (Modern Language Association, 2008), 3.

46 Note debate regarding the criteria for discerning the "authentic" *sensus fidelium*. In his December 2013 address to the International Theological Commission, Pope Francis both affirms and qualifies the turn to the *sensus fidelium*: "Of course, it is clear that the *sensus fidelium* must not be confused with the sociological reality of majority opinion. It is something else. It is therefore important – and it is your task – to develop criteria for discerning authentic expressions of the *sensus fidelium*. For its part, the Magisterium has the duty to be attentive to what the Spirit says to the Churches through the authentic manifestations of the *sensus fidelium*." https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/december/documents/papa-francesco_20131206_commissione-teologica.html, accessed January 12, 2015.

47 See *Lumen Gentium* ("Dogmatic Constitution on the Church"), no. 12.

This book thus contends that life writing is an underutilized though potentially quite fruitful source for practical theology. Practical theology has drawn heavily from social scientific methods, including ethnography and other forms of qualitative research. The study of communities and their practices have been important to the discipline. So too, practical theologians have drawn upon narrative theology.[48] The study of life writing is a natural extension of these interests in descriptive, contextual, and narrative theologies, yet remains a rather untapped resource for practical theology. Life writing also expands the range of communicative styles and sources for practical theology, leaving more space for poetic, mystical, and other forms of writing. Here I build upon the work of practical theologian Heather Walton, whose recent book *Writing Methods in Theological Reflection* opens up journaling, poetry, and life writing as forms of theological reflection.[49]

And yet, the hermeneutical task of reading life writing from a practical theological perspective is complicated. One should avoid a naïve reading of life writing texts as simply empirical "data." Life writing is itself a practice – a practice of memory, meaning-making, self-representation, witness, testimony, discernment, and activism. Life writing both reveals and conceals. The writing of autobiography, for example, involves a selection of relevant events and aspects of the self and the omission of other events and aspects of the self. For many authors, it involves an attempt to weave life fragments together into a coherent narrative, often portraying a higher degree of coherence than was experienced by the author at any given time. James Olney describes the relationship between memory, narrative, and the construction of the self: "memory spreads out the text of our lives for us to read again and again, but I would recall and reemphasize the etymological origin of *text* in *texere*, 'to weave,' for the text is never fixed or single: it is ever rewoven, constantly renewed or reconstructed, constantly evolving, a story and a work in progress."[50] The American writer Annie Dillard provocatively describes how writing a memoir entails "cannibalizing your own life for parts." Writing is not about preserving memories, for Dillard, but rather about "fashioning a text."[51] With this reality in mind, I frame

48 See R. Ruard Ganzevoort, "Narrative Approaches," pp. 214-23 in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, edited by Bonnie Miller-McLemore (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

49 Heather Walton, *Writing Methods in Theological Reflection* (London: SCM Press, 2014).

50 James Olney, *Memory & Narrative: The Weave of Life-Writing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 344.

51 Annie Dillard, "To Fashion a Text," in *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir*, edited by William Zinsser (New York: Mariner, 1998), 171.

life writing not only as a source of lived theologies but also as a dynamic and intentional practice or performance of the self.

Moreover, as a practical theologian I am attentive to the transformative potential of spiritual autobiography. Spiritual autobiography narrates the self while also witnessing to a transcendent reality that has transformed one's life. The author often seeks to effect a parallel transformation in the reader. Augustine's *Confessions* provide a paradigmatic example. While addressing his writing to God, he acknowledges his intention for the human reader: "I tell it so that I and all who read my words may realize the depths from which we are to cry to you."[52] Spiritual autobiography functions or aims to function as a practice of spiritual formation for the author and the reader. Traditions of spiritual autobiography provide narrative patterns and language through which others read and re-tell their own experiences, as Ted Campbell notes in his analysis of the role of autobiography in Methodism: "The principal purpose of disseminating spiritual autobiographies and biographies was for the encouragement of believers, but they also gave believers a kind of roadmap to the spiritual life and a vocabulary by which their own experiences could be understood."[53] The transformative dynamic of spiritual autobiographies as performances of spiritual formation should make them highly relevant to practical theologians.

To summarize: I approach life writing texts as a window into women's lived religion and ongoing processes of naming, interpreting, and discerning their spiritual lives. I do not see these texts simply as data, but also as a performance of the self and, in some cases, as a performance of testimony, confession, and self-gift intended to form readers. The formative and transformative aims of life writing should make these texts particularly relevant for practical theologians. I read spiritual autobiography critically and constructively as a potential, though sometimes misguided, source of practical wisdom. I also am conscious of the hermeneutical silences that arise in an encounter with these texts; the texts both say and remain silent, sometimes frustratingly silent on matters that the reader hopes to hear about. Attending to the hermeneutical silences in encounter with maternal life writing presses practical theological questions: What happens when spiritual autobiographies do *not* provide a fund of language and narrative structure through which to make sense of experience? How to deal theologically with a dearth of spiritual "scripts" for mothers? The

52 Augustine, *Confessions*, 45.

53 Ted A. Campbell, "Spiritual Biography and Autobiography-Methodist Traditions," in *The Cambridge Companion to American Methodism*, edited by Jason E. Vickers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 243-44.

complexity of reading life writing adds to its richness, its multi-layered interpretive possibilities, while also raising important issues for practical theology and spirituality studies.

Flow of the Book

The first part of the book presents a series of case studies – explorations of Christian spirituality within the life writing of six figures: Margery Kempe, Jarena Lee, Jane de Chantal, Dorothy Day, Dolores Huerta, and Lena Frances Edwards. I have selected these particular authors as generative theological case studies; they are mothers in the Christian tradition who have produced some form of life writing which invites theological reflection on issues of spirituality, mothering, work, public voice and leadership. I also chose figures who could be fruitfully juxtaposed so as to bring out themes with more complexity than would be the case looking at each author separately. I approach these figures as a practical theologian, not as a historian. In working with the texts as theological case studies, I mine the texts and related secondary scholarship to inform a practical theological study of Christian spirituality and motherwork. In engaging theological/spiritual case studies, particularly in a reflective community that widens and checks interpretive lenses, we can grow in our abilities to read situations well, to discern wisdom, and to bring the resources of our spiritual traditions to guide practice. I do not intend necessarily to elevate the women selected as spiritual models or exemplars, though they may well prove inspiring to some readers. There are other authors who could be approached in a similar way, and I hope that this book will stimulate such further research and theological work in diverse contexts and religious traditions. In Part 2 of the book, I draw out selected theological/spiritual issues raised by the case studies and engage with them in dialogue with Catholic social teaching, literature in spirituality studies, social science research, and additional life writing texts.

Part 1 – Case Studies in Spirituality

Chapter 2 – Mothering, Mysticism, and Public Voice: Margery Kempe and Jarena Lee

Chapter 2 begins with analysis of two significant autobiographies in the history of Christian spirituality. Dictated by Margery Kempe (c. 1373-c. 1440), the *Book of Margery Kempe* is the earliest extant autobiography in the English language. "The Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee" (1836) is the first known published autobiography by an African American woman. While from

different social contexts – one a white middle-class medieval Englishwoman, the other a Black Protestant freewoman in antebellum America – the authors share in common transformative religious experience, mothering, and a struggle to claim public voice. Indeed, Sue E. Houchins compares early black women's self-writing and that of medieval mystic women's, seeing in both a mystical claim for authority and social space.[54] These two autobiographies shed light on the critical function of mysticism in women's public voice and their negotiation of family roles; attention to mysticism is lacking in most practical theological studies of gender and family. These women's mystical experiences are central in their vocational development and claiming of public voice. Yet the relationship between their mystical experiences, their public vocations, and their mothering selves is quite complicated. In their narratives, what Joy Bostic calls "mystical subjectification"[55] both expands and eclipses their motherhood.

Kempe, the mother of fourteen children, rarely mentions them in her *Book*. Yet despite the lack of explicit discussion of her own children, the narrative is filled with domestic imagery. Some scholars argue that Kempe's public practices of preaching and pilgrimage eventually represent an expansion – not an abandonment of – her motherly identity.[56] At the same time, her mystical-vocational narrative undeniably marginalizes the everyday mothering work that consumed decades of her life. Jarena Lee (b. 1783) describes receiving a compelling call to preach through a profoundly mystical experience, although the Methodist church discipline at the time did not allow women preachers. Her spiritual autobiography narrates her movement between voice and silence as she enacts her calling in a social and ecclesial context of gender and racial oppression. Lee's itinerant preaching meant separations from her two small children, one of whom is prone to illness. Her spiritual autobiography includes few mentions of her children, though those brief references express conviction that God assures their care during her absences. Lee's narrative confirms

54 Sue E. Houchins, "Introduction," pp. xxix-xliv in *Spiritual Narratives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), xxxi.

55 See Joy R. Bostic, "The Religious Traditions of African American Women," in *Mysticism & Social Transformation*, edited by Janet Ruffing (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2001), 145-49.

56 Relevant secondary scholarship includes Liz Herbert McAvoy, *Authority and the Female Body in the Writings of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004) and Janel M. Mueller, "Autobiography of a New 'Creatur': Female Spirituality, Selfhood, and Authorship in 'The Book of Margery Kempe,'" pp. 57-69 in *The Female Autograph*, edited by Donna C. Stanton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

the importance of "communal motherwork," or "othermothers,"[57] a theme that will resurface in my subsequent chapters.

This chapter thus explores the relationships between mysticism, mothering, and public voice in the spiritual autobiographies of Kempe and Lee, using the two texts to surface the complexity of reading mothering in spiritual classics. While the relationship between mystical experience and women's public voice is powerful in these texts, everyday practices of mothering remain largely invisible, for reasons understandable within the gendered and raced realities that women encountered in those contexts. After identifying practical theological issues arising from these important autobiographies, the following chapter turns to a more "ordinary" spiritual theology in which everyday mothering takes a more primary place in women's life writing.

Chapter 3 – Mothering, Lay Devotion, and an Ordinary Spiritual Theology: Jane de Chantal and Francis de Sales

Chapter 3 looks closely at Jane de Chantal (1572-1641), widow, mother of four children, and co-founder of the Visitation order, seen in the context of her dynamic spiritual friendship with Francis de Sales, who was Bishop of Geneva, de Chantal's spiritual director, and co-founder with her of the Visitation order. De Chantal and de Sales were among the first Catholic writers to attend seriously to the dilemmas and possibilities of lay spirituality, including women's spiritual anxieties.[58] Indeed, de Sales' more well-known published theological tracts were shaped by his spiritual friendship with de Chantal and other laywomen. The early letters show de Chantal, a recent widow, drawn to religious life but struggling to live devoutly in the midst of her worldly occupations, which included care of her four children and administration of her family estate. This is a vocational crisis best understood in the Tridentine context; women's options were circumscribed and Catholicism assumed a hierarchy of vocations. The letters suggest a progression in her ability to embrace mothering not as

57 For discussion of the significance of communal motherwork or "othermothers" in African American contexts, see Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2000); Stanlie M. James, "Mothering: A Possible Black Feminist Link to Social Transformation," pp. 45-56 in *Theorizing Black Feminisms: The Visionary Pragmatism of Black Women*, edited by Stanlie M. James and Abena P.A. Busia (London: Routledge, 1993). See also Mari Boor Tonn, "Militant Motherhood: Labor's Mary Harris 'Mother' Jones," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 82 (1996): 1-21.

58 Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal, *Letters of Spiritual Direction* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988). See also Wendy M. Wright, *Heart Speaks to Heart: The Salesian Tradition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004).

obstacle to a calling but as integral to her devotional life and eventual spiritual leadership of the Visitation order.

The chapter characterizes letters of spiritual direction as both a form of life writing and as a narrative form of practical theology.[59] Through ongoing relationships of spiritual companionship, de Chantal and de Sales facilitate the narration of laypersons' unfolding spiritual lives. In the process, they contribute to an ordinary spiritual theology that encompasses lay vocation and holiness, establishes love as the ground of devotion, attends to the relational context of devotional practice, addresses time poverty and busyness as spiritual challenges, and names mothering as a paradigm of lay devotion and source of practical wisdom for leadership. Their writing includes intimate breastfeeding imagery, descriptions of a motherly-fatherly God, depictions of mothers as teachers of souls, and images of leadership as playful, nurturing, and gentle maternal care.

Reading Jane de Chantal enables us to explore the intersection of spiritual and physical mothering – how one informs and arises from the other, where they interact tensively, how the praxis of mothering unfolds into significant religious leadership. Still, the study raises some troubling notes as well. Her movement to build a religious community suited to women like herself meets ecclesial resistance: the Visitation order eventually is enclosed; de Chantal moves from lay mother to cloistered nun; and her voice vis-à-vis the bishop de Sales is finally not fully accessible.[60] The chapter mines the letters of Jane de Chantal and Francis de Sales for contributions and questions regarding a spirituality of motherwork.

Chapter 4 – Motherwork, Public Leadership, and Vocational Tensions: Dorothy Day, Dolores Huerta, and Lena Frances Edwards

Chapter 4 explores issues of mothering, public leadership, and spirituality through the life writing of three twentieth-century lay Catholic public leaders: Dorothy Day (1897-1980), Dolores Huerta (1930-), and Lena Frances Edwards (1900-1986). Day, a convert to Catholicism, is well known as the co-founder of

59 Here I build on the work of Janet K. Ruffing, "The Practice of Spiritual Direction: A Theologically Complex Process," in *Invitation to Practical Theology: Catholic Voices and Visions*, edited by Claire E. Wolfteich (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2014) and Janet K. Ruffing, *To Tell the Sacred Tale: Spiritual Direction and Narrative* (New York: Paulist Press, 2011).

60 Note that de Chantal burned her letters to de Sales following his death. Thus, part of their correspondence is unavailable. On ambiguities regarding de Sales and clericalism, see also Edward P. Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation: A Theology of Christian Call* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), 33.

the Catholic Worker Movement, building houses of hospitality for the poor in urban and rural areas across the United States. Her public action included protests against the Second World War and the Vietnam War, support for the civil rights movement in the 1960s, and defense of Cesar Chavez' farm workers' movement in the 1970s. She wrote regularly for *The Catholic Worker* and other publications, traveled widely, and was jailed on several occasions.[61] Huerta co-founded the United Farm Worker movement with César Chavez in 1965 and continued in labor organizing leadership roles for more than three decades. While earlier accounts of the farm worker movement rendered a "patriarchal interpretation" of the origins of the movement, focusing predominantly on Chavez' contributions while minimizing Huerta's leadership, Huerta's importance now is becoming more widely recognized.[62] In the 1990s, she also assumed public leadership roles in feminist causes. Edwards was an African American Catholic, obstetrician-gynecologist, mother of six, lay Franciscan, and faculty member at Howard University School of Medicine. She also was an advocate for improving maternal care of migrant workers, for interracial justice, and for children and senior citizens. She was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1964 and the Poverello Medal in 1967, recognizing her charitable work in the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi. This work includes the building of a maternity hospital in a migrant labor camp in Texas. Edwards did not leave behind a spiritual autobiography; however, she did narrate her life story in oral histories and interviews.[63] I draw also upon primary sources materials – letters and short interviews given for local newspapers and magazines – collected at Howard University. Scholarly attention to Edwards has been quite slim, and so this chapter aims to bring her to greater visibility for practical theology, spirituality studies, and American Catholic studies.

To narrate these leaders' "public" work without exploring their maternal practices reduces the complexity of their vocational and spiritual lives. Day's life writing reveals the vocational conflicts she encounters as she seeks to balance care of her daughter and her leadership of the Catholic Worker movement. Huerta had eleven children whose care she constantly negotiated (with-

61 Robert Ellsberg, "Introduction," in *Dorothy Day: Selected Writings*, edited by Robert Ellsberg (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books), xxxii-xxxviii.

62 See Margaret Rose, "Traditional and Nontraditional Patterns of Female Activism in the United Farm Workers of America, 1962-1980," *Frontiers* XI, no. 1 (1990): 26.

63 Black Women Oral History Project. Interviews, 1976-1981. Lena Frances Edwards-Madison. OH-31. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, written transcript. Scholarly attention to Edwards has been quite slim; this chapter brings her to greater visibility for practical theology, spirituality, and American Catholic studies.

out apology) as she assumed public leadership roles in the union unconventional for women. She draws upon her mothering experience and authority in arguing for the rights of migrant workers, even as she resists ecclesial attempts to undermine her public role and relegate her to the home.[64] Edwards presents a fairly seamless integration of a medical vocation, mothering philosophy, and Franciscan spirituality – though she too faced racism and sexism in her efforts to live into her multi-dimensional vocation. Reading Day, Huerta, and Edwards surfaces important issues that need attention in spirituality studies and theologies of work and vocation: mothers' complicated negotiations with ideals of female spirituality; the role of prayer, Marian piety, and traditions of Christian spirituality (e.g., Franciscan) in grounding and sustaining women's public leadership; spiritual guidance as a practice of mothering; maternal suffering, loss, and exhaustion; women's narrative strategies to gain voice and authority; and the ambivalent role of the church in women's spiritual and vocational formation and guidance.

Part 2 – Theological Analysis

Chapter 5 – Motherwork and Vocation

In bringing theologies of work and vocation into dialogue with women's life writing, I seek a more contextual theology and spirituality that takes seriously women's labors, vocational questions, and experiences. I make a case for narrative approaches to theologies of work and vocation and situate such approaches in a Catholic practical theological framework. Noting a need for more developed theological scholarship on work and vocation from women's perspectives, the chapter draws upon women's life writing to explore relevant themes, such as work and suffering; the impact of theologies of work and vocation on vulnerable mothers; vocational tensions between public and domestic callings; and ordinary spiritual theology. I build upon Catholic understandings of lay spirituality as a framework for locating spirituality in every life and exploring the complex interrelationships between work and family. I also critically retrieve the ancient theology of the "domestic church" as way of moving toward a spirituality of everyday life and affirming the ecclesial-public significance of motherwork. To ensure that a theology of the domestic church does not domesticate women, I critique a reliance on notions of complementarity and gender essentialism that undercut Catholic teachings on the public

64 "Keynote Address before the Annual Convention of the American Public Health Association" (Oct. 21, 1974), in *A Dolores Huerta Reader*, edited by Mario T. García (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 233.

import of mothering; work as a universal calling reflective of human dignity; and the public reach of the lay vocation.[65] I work with the case studies of Part 1 to illustrate ecclesial resistance to women's full vocations and argue for more constructive ecclesial responses to women seeking to discern and live out maternal-public callings.

Chapter 6 – Time Poverty, Sabbath, and Spiritual Renewal

One cannot ignore the experience of time poverty alluded to in many of the maternal life writing texts analyzed in Part 1. Jane de Chantal wrestles with how to practice traditional devotions amidst the busyness required of her vocational state. Dorothy Day longingly experiments with a more "hidden" and "contemplative" way of life away from the multiplicity of her public occupations. Dolores Huerta barely has time for major surgery. Time poverty impacts spiritual practice and women's ability to exercise public voice and leadership. A theology of good work understands time as a spiritual issue, shaping spiritual practice and vocational possibilities. Time also is a justice issue with implications for mothers' economic status, political capital, and spiritual well-being. This chapter considers the relationships between time poverty and women's labor from a theological and spiritual perspective, drawing upon women's life writing, social science research, and recent Jewish and Christian theological literature.[66]

In analyzing "time poverty" as a theological and spiritual issue, I turn to Sabbath as a transformative and counter-cultural practice deeply rooted in

65 See Christine Firer Hinze, "U.S. Catholic Social Thought, Gender, and Economic Livelihood," *Theological Studies* 66 (2005): 568-91 and "Women, Families, and the Legacy of *Laborem Exercens*: An Unfinished Agenda," *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* 6, no. 1 (2009): 63-92. See also Barbara Hilkert Andolsen, "A Woman's Work is Never Done: Unpaid Household Labor as a Social Justice Issue," in *Women's Consciousness, Women's Conscience: A Reader in Feminist Ethics*, edited by Barbara H. Andolsen, Christine E. Gudorf, and Marry D. Pellauer (Minneapolis: Winston, 1985), 3-18.

66 See Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1951); Marva Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989); Dorothy C. Bass, *Receiving the Day: Christian Practices for Opening the Gift of Time* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2000); Norman Wirzba, *Living the Sabbath: Discovering the Rhythms of Rest and Delight* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 1996). See apostolic letter *Dies Domini*: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_05071998_dies-domini_en.html. One text that does offer fascinating first-person reflections on Sabbath practice from an Orthodox Jewish woman's perspective is Blu Greenberg, *How to Run a Traditional Jewish Household* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983).

Jewish and Christian traditions. In his classic book *The Sabbath*, Jewish theologian Abraham Joshua Heschel writes poetically of Sabbath as "the exodus from tension, the liberation of man from his own muddiness" and an "island of stillness" wherein a person can "reclaim his dignity."[67] So too, a growing body of Christian literature on Sabbath seeks to articulate a Christian theology and reclaim this practice for contemporary communities. I affirm such moves yet aim to address more concretely the challenges of Sabbath keeping for women, broadly, and mothers, more specifically. How might Sabbath become liberative rather than an impossible spiritual ideal? What forms might Sabbath take in the context of life with children, whose needs do not cease one day a week? The growing Christian practical theological literature on Sabbath gives little attention to gendered dimensions of Sabbath practice. I aim to develop a practical theology of Sabbath that more adequately addresses women's labor, including mothering, and women's varied experiences of time poverty. This chapter works with maternal life writing from the above chapters, particularly noting themes of self-sacrifice, labor and embodiment, and time poverty. I also extend the conversation by incorporating recent autobiographical writing by Jewish mothers on the topic of Sabbath. I propose a Christian practical theology of Sabbath as liberating spiritual and ethical practice for women, one that affirms the dignity of labor, maternal creativity and care, and the importance of rest and contemplative delight, while resisting oppressive work structures, workaholism, and maternal exhaustion.

Chapter 7 – Spiritual Travail and Sacred Tales

Retrieving and critically engaging the narratives of mothers is an important task for the study of spirituality. Maternal narratives make visible some of the spiritual challenges and insights embedded in practices of mothering. Practical theologians have noted the use of life writing in fields such as pastoral care and counselling, religious education, social work, and vocational discernment. This chapter extends such research by examining the relevance of life writing to spirituality studies, spiritual formation, and spiritual direction.

Here we examine mothering as locus of spiritual practice, a deeply embodied way of life that yields complex knowledge and language around suffering, transformation, calling, and spirituality in the ordinary. I bring women's narratives into dialogue with scholarship on women and spiritual direction, including Kathleen Fisher's feminist model of spiritual direction;[68] attempts

67 Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1951), 29.

68 Kathleen Fischer, *Women at the Well: Feminist Perspectives on Spiritual Direction* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1991).

to recover the "forgotten" history of women spiritual directors;[69] Robert Kelleman and Karole Edwards' discussion of "mentoring mothers" and "mother wit" in African American traditions of spiritual direction and soul care;[70] efforts to "reclaim" liberative possibilities for women in the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises*;[71] and Margaret Guenther's use of "maternal conversation" and "midwife"[72] as images for spiritual direction. Reading mothers' life writing in dialogue with literature in spiritual direction opens up more adequate understanding of Christian spirituality and more creative images and practices of spiritual guidance. By way of conclusion, the chapter summarizes contributions of women's life writing to creative trajectories in practical theological research and teaching.

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69 Patricia Ranft, *A Woman's Way: History of Women Spiritual Directors* (New York: Palgrave, 2000).

70 Robert Kellemen and Karole Edwards, *Beyond the Suffering: Embracing the Legacy of African American Soul Care and Spiritual Direction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007). See especially Ch. 9, "Sisters of the Spirit: Mentoring Mothers," 193-209.

71 Katherine Dyckman, Mary Garvin, and Elizabeth Liebert, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed: Uncovering Liberating Possibilities for Women* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2001).

72 Margaret Guenther, *Holy Listening: The Art of Spiritual Direction* (Boston: Cowley Publications, 1992).

PART 1

Case Studies in Spirituality

CHAPTER 2

Mothering, Mysticism, and Public Voice: Margery Kempe and Jarena Lee

Reading Margery Kempe and Jarena Lee

Two significant "firsts" in the history of autobiography provide a natural starting place for exploring mothering and women's life writing: the *Book of Margery Kempe*, authored by Margery Kempe (c. 1373-c. 1440) and the earliest known autobiography in the English language, and *The Religious Experience of Jarena Lee*, the first autobiography published by an African American woman, Jarena Lee (1783-c. 1850). Both texts were written or dictated by women who were mothers and who describe transformative mystical experiences. In treating both autobiographies as mystical texts, I follow Bernard McGinn's broad definition of mysticism: "that part, or element, of Christian belief and practice that concerns the preparation for, the consciousness of, and the effect of what the mystics themselves have described as a direct and transformative presence of God."[1] Such direct and transformative experiences of the presence of God permeate the writings of Kempe and Lee, proving central to the authors' vocational conviction and the growth of their public voice. Yet the relationship between their mystical experiences, their public voices, and their mothering selves is complicated as mystical experience both supports and displaces their motherhood. In many ways, mothering is eclipsed by a new relationship to the Lord and a newly confirmed vocation and voice. These autobiographies reveal the relevance of mysticism to women's public practice, even as they are not easily retrieved for the purposes of constructing or reconstructing a spirituality of motherwork. They resist simple attempts to find spiritual wisdom or inspiration for contemporary mothers, but rather open up the complexity of mothering, mysticism, and public voice in ways generative for practical theological reflection.

Houchins compares early black women's autobiographical writing to that of medieval mystic women such as Margery of Kempe and Julian of Norwich: "a literary genealogist can trace the lineage of early black women's self-writing

1 Bernard McGinn, "Introduction," in *The Essential Mystical Writings*, Modern Library Classics (New York, NY: Modern Library, 2006), xv.

to the writings of their visionary sister autobiographers who wrote during the Middle Ages and the Counter-Reformation."[2] Women's autobiographies from these contexts make related claims for social and ecclesial legitimacy. Mystical experience provides a basis for authority and for an alternative identity/practice that pushes beyond the bounds of acceptable gender roles. Medieval authors such as Kempe "sought to document in their self-writing their quests for perfection through mystical union and the concomitant rise to a sense of empowerment to claim a space in medieval society where, like the black women revivalists of subsequent centuries, they…could resist the pressures of family and society…and could achieve legal and structural support from the church for their work as spiritual advisors, teachers, and occasional preachers."[3] The autobiographies of Kempe and Lee, then, raise interesting questions for practical theology about the relationship between mystical experience, gender roles, and ecclesial practice in different contexts.

There are important historical-contextual differences between Kempe and Lee. Kempe was white and her family had far more social/political/economic status than did Lee; her father was mayor and she had the economic means to run a brewery. Lee was African-American in an era prior to Emancipation; out of economic necessity, her parents sent her out to work at age seven. While born to free parents, Lee's race, gender, and class intersect to place her in a highly marginalized and vulnerable position. Thus, while the autobiographies of Kempe and Lee can be fruitfully juxtaposed, the authors' situations should not be equated.

Another difference, of course, is that Kempe lived two centuries prior to the Protestant Reformation; her spiritual autobiography is shaped by English medieval Catholicism. Jarena Lee's autobiography is shaped by nineteenth century American Protestantism, especially Holiness movements, the development of the African Methodist Episcopal church, and evangelical conversion narratives. As Bruce Hindmarsh notes in his study of early modern English evangelical conversion narratives, the conversion narratives of medieval authors such as Kempe "are conversion narratives of a very different kind from those that emerged in the later Protestant tradition. Like the later spiritual autobiographies these late-medieval examples were occasioned variously by concerns confessional, apologetic, hortatory, and doxological, but in narra-

2 Sue E. Houchins, "Introduction," pp. xxix-xliv in *Spiritual Narratives*, edited by Sue E. Houchins, The Schomburg Library of Nineteenth-Century Black Women Writers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), xxxi.

3 Ibid.

tive terms they were shaped most profoundly by the desire for final conversion rather than the experience of initial conversion."[4] Without minimizing these historical-contextual, literary, and theological differences, this chapter probes intersections and tensive disruptions between these authors' mystical accounts, their emergent public voices, and their mothering practices.

Margery Kempe: Mystic and Mother

The Book of Margery Kempe went undiscovered for nearly six hundred years before a manuscript was found in an English home library and brought to light by medievalist Hope Allen in 1934. Kempe increasingly has been the subject of scholarly research but remains a controversial figure in Christian spirituality, both lauded and dismissed as mentally unstable. For example, while recent scholarship has given serious attention to Margery Kempe, the prominent historian David Knowles made this sweeping judgment: "If the Book of Margery Kempe has little in it of deep spiritual wisdom, and nothing of true mystical experience, it is a document of the highest value for the religious historian of the age."[5] In introducing *The Book of Margery Kempe* here, I contest Knowles' dismissal of Kempe's mystical experience and leave open the possibility of transformative reading of the text. As I have taught this text in courses oriented around spirituality studies and practical theology, I have seen that while some students find the *Book* disturbing, others encounter Margery as a fascinating dialogue partner in their explorations of their own religious experience, which similarly defies neat characterization, easy vocational slotting, and socio-cultural boundaries.

Kempe (c. 1373-c. 1440) came from a prominent family of means in Lynn, England. Her father, John Brunham, a merchant, was mayor of Lynn and a member of Parliament. She married a well-respected burgess (town official) at about the age of twenty. At one point she ran a brewery. Together, she and her husband had fourteen children. The *Book* describes Margery's religious visions and locutions,[6] which began shortly after her first pregnancy during a period

4 D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 25.

5 David Knowles, *The English Mystical Tradition* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), 148.

6 Bernard McGinn points out that locutions, or interior speech from God, appear in the writings of many late medieval holy women. The "locutionary genre was an accepted way of channeling what was seen as God's will for many purposes: to warn, to instruct, to assure,

of illness and psychological/spiritual disturbance, and details her daring pilgrimages to the Holy Land, Rome, Santiago de Compostela, and Germany. The text is a self-justifying apology, filled with accounts of her eccentric piety, her struggle against those who accuse her of heresy and impropriety, and affirmations of her special relationship with God.

The *Book* presents a complicated picture of sexuality and the body. Clarissa Atkinson raises an apt note of historical caution: "Modern judgments about 'normal' and healthy sexuality are not applicable to medieval Christians, whose values, socialization, and world view were so unlike our own."[7] Margery and her husband enjoy "using one another" but she feels that their "inordinate love" displeases God.[8] When she discerns that she is called to renounce sex with her husband and live chastely with him after twenty years of marriage, she minces no words: "the debt of matrimony was so abominable to her that she had rather, she thought, eat or drink the ooze, the muck in the channel, than to consent to any fleshly commoning, save for obedience."[9] By Margery's account, Christ counsels her in how to negotiate successfully with her husband to procure release from the marital debt. Incidentally, she also credits divine grace with saving her from committing adultery when she is consumed by lecherous thoughts and propositioned in church. The *Book* is significant for its open discussions of such matters and for the very physical nature of Margery's spirituality, even as she renounces marital sexuality after decades of childbearing. As will be seen, Margery's physical spirituality comes to be embodied in highly public practices such as pilgrimage, weeping, and preaching.

Before moving to further discussion of her maternal-public vocation, several issues should be noted here regarding her writing of the *Book*. First, Kempe dictated the book to two different scribes. The first scribe produced a poorly written manuscript, according to Margery, and so four years later, in 1436, a second scribe reworked the book with Kempe's additional dictation. The text thus inevitably blurs her voice and that of the scribe who records and rearranges Kempe's dictation. However, the fact that the *Book* was dictated does not reduce its relevance to our study of women's life writing. Lynn Staley and Jennifer Summit argue that Kempe's use of scribes increases, rather than decreases, her authorial authority by locating her in a stream of preceding

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to vindicate and defend." See McGinn, *The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism, 1350-1550* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2012), 474.

7 Clarissa Atkinson, *Mystic and Pilgrim: The* Book *and the World of Margery Kempe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 211.

8 Staley, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, 10.

9 Ibid.

tradition, specifically medieval concepts of authorship and women's diverse forms of textual production.[10] Studying women's life writing in different historical contexts expands contemporary assumptions about authorship. Medievalist Amy Hollywood explains: "Women did write what we think of as original works with their own hands, but they also dictated, compiled, translated, and commissioned spiritual texts, and all of these diverse forms of writing must be attended to in any attempt to describe women's contributions to Christian spirituality and the possible contours of a specifically women's spirituality."[11]

Second, Kempe writes in the third person form, referring to herself, for example, as "this creature." In discussing the *Book*, scholars distinguish "Kempe" as the author of the text and "Margery" as the narrator. As Staley notes, Kempe's use of third person may have been designed to protect her against accusations of heresy: "By distancing herself from her subject, Kempe thus screened herself from such charges, as well as from charges that she, as a woman, had dared to set herself up as a figure of spiritual authority."[12] I follow this convention in referring to Kempe as the author of the *Book* and Margery as the narrator/main character.

The third complexity is one common to spiritual autobiography: the selective process of writing and the unreliability of memory. Margery waits until about twenty years have passed since the beginnings of her revelations before agreeing to have them written down. Despite the fact that several anchorites encouraged her to make her revelations known, Margery states that it was too soon to write. She alerts the reader that her account is partial, her memory incomplete, and that they should not expect a strict chronological history: "This book is not written in order, everything after the other as it was done, but as the matter came to the creature in mind when it was written, for it was so long before it was written that she had forgotten the time and the order when things befell."[13] Given the time that elapses between the events and their recording,

10 Lynn Staley, "The Trope of the Scribe and the Question of Literary Authority in the Works of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe," *Speculum* 66 (1991): 820-38 and Jennifer Summit, "Women and Authorship," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Women's Writing*, edited by C. Dinshaw and D. Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

11 Amy Hollywood, "Feminist Studies," in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, edited by Arthur Holder (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 375.

12 Lynn Staley, "Introduction," in *The Book of Margery Kempe: A New Translation, Contexts, Criticism*, edited and translated by Lynn Staley, A Norton Critical Edition (New York: Norton, 2001), xi.

13 Lynn Staley, ed. and trans., *The Book of Margery Kempe: A New Translation, Contexts, Criticism*, A Norton Critical Edition (New York: Norton, 2001), 5.

McGinn concludes that it surely contains "many fictionalized elements" and notes the "constructed character" of much of the *Book*.[14] While the *Book* is not a history, Margery makes a strong claim that it is nevertheless true. She writes only what she knows "right well for very truth."[15]

The book, then, is not a full treatment of Margery's life, but rather an explicitly piecemeal and constructed account of how she was drawn through God's great mercy, through sicknesses, temptations, and all kinds of adversities, to follow the perfect way of Christ. It is intended as testimony and spiritual instruction, directed to "sinful wretches, wherein they may have great solace and comfort for themselves and understand the high and unspeakable mercy of our sovereign Savior Christ Jesus."[16] Margery portrays the writing of her *Book* as a kind of cooperative divine-human praxis; God commands her and allows her to write about her revelations "so that his goodness might be known to all the world."[17] She frames her writing, then, as a religious practice to proclaim the mercy and the glory of God; this telling of God's work in her life will profit those who read with charity.[18]

Margery Kempe's motherhood sets her apart from many other medieval mystics. As Janel Mueller writes of the "utter incongruity" of Margery's situation: "Certainly it was anomalous, not to say scandalous, that she experienced her calling to become a bride of God when she had a living husband and had recently borne a child."[19] Kempe was born in or around the same year that Birgitta of Sweden (1303-1373) died; Birgitta was a mystic and mother who was canonized in Kempe's lifetime. Kempe also was a contemporary of the English mystic Julian of Norwich, whom she visited for spiritual guidance. Julian is well known for her extensive discussions of Jesus as mother.[20] Kempe stands out from women mystics such as Julian and Birgitta because her mystical calling comes in the midst of her married life and very active mothering years; Julian was an anchoress and Birgitta a widow. And yet, the *Book* says little directly about her fourteen children or her experiences in mothering them. In

14 McGinn, *The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism, 1350-1550*, 474.

15 Staley, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, 5.

16 Ibid., 3.

17 Ibid., 4.

18 Ibid., 3.

19 Janel M. Mueller, "Autobiography of a New 'Creatur': Female Spirituality, Selfhood, and Authorship in 'The Book of Margery Kempe,'" pp. 57-69 in *The Female Autograph*, edited by Donna C. Stanton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 60.

20 See, for example, Brant Pelphrey, *Christ Our Mother: Julian of Norwich* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1989) and Patricia Donohue-White, "Reading Divine Maternity in Julian of Norwich," *Spiritus* 5, no 1. (2005): 19-36.

puzzling over the near-excising of Kempe's maternal experience in *The Book of Margery Kempe*, considering that this was a woman who spent the better part of twenty years pregnant, Laura Howes posits that Kempe portrays a far sharper delineation of physical and familial experience from spiritual experience in her narrative than was actually the case in her life.[21]

Early in the book, Margery describes a tumultuous first pregnancy, labor, and postpartum experience. She conceived very soon after her marriage and was so sick throughout her pregnancy that as she went into labor she thought she would die. After calling for a priest to make a full general confession, she "went out of her mind" for more than six months.[22] This disturbed state, which included menacing visits by devils and suicidal thoughts, lifts when she experiences Jesus Christ appearing to her, sitting on her bed with a joyful expression and assuring her of his continued presence with her. The room brightens, Margery grows calm and comes to her senses. She asks for the keys to the buttery and eats and drinks. She returns to her daily occupations. Thus, the narrative begins with an account of pregnancy as a life-threatening experience through which, however, she experiences a mystical vision and the mercy and consolation of Christ. Some modern commentators have interpreted her experience as post-partum depression or psychosis.[23]

While she rarely mentions her children, in at least one instance Margery portrays the Lord as comforting and supporting her in her maternal needs and anxiety, even partnering with her to care for her child. Shortly after her visions begin, the Lord tells her that she will have a child. She questions the Lord, asking how she will care for the child. In her account, the Lord promises to provide: "Daughter, dread you not, I shall ordain for a keeper."[24] As will be the case with Jarena Lee, the Lord in effect acts as "othermother" to an overwhelmed mother in need of support and called to a larger mission. By Margery's brief account, then, the Lord is involved in her mothering life in

21 Laura L. Howes, "On the Birth of Margery Kempe's Last Child," *Modern Philology* 90, no. 2 (1992): 220-25.

22 Staley, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, 7.

23 See, for example, Sheila Delaney, "Sexual Economics, Chaucer's Wife of Bath and *The Book of Margery Kempe*," in *Feminist Readings in Middle English Literature: The Wife of Bath and All her Sect*, edited by Ruth Evans and Lesley Johnson (New York: Routledge, 1994), 79.

24 Lynn Staley, ed. and trans., *The Book of Margery Kempe: A New Translation, Contexts, Criticism*, A Norton Critical Edition (New York: Norton, 2001), 36. Note that my quotations from *The Book of Margery Kempe* appear in modern English translation, rather than Middle English, for greater accessibility for practical theological study.

these ways: the Lord announces her maternity, comforts her in the wake of post-partum disturbance; assures care for her children, pronounces the end of her birthing; and sends her to journey out from domestic space to give voice to her experience of the Lord.

While Margery relates few other details of her own daily mothering experience, she does insert herself in the maternal experiences of biblical figures. For example, she describes a vision of the pregnant Saint Anne, in which she begs permission to become the maidservant of the baby Mary when she is born. Margery becomes the herald of Mary's divine motherhood. As her vision continues, Margery takes on a critical role in the nativity story, traveling with Mary to Bethlehem where she procures lodging, food, and white linen for her. Upon the birth of Jesus, it is Margery who swaddles the blessed infant. Margery has become nurse and midwife to Mary. Margery's visionary narrative lingers over the maternal lives of Anne, Mary, and Elizabeth even as it offers little discussion of her own everyday life as a mother.

Despite the lack of quotidian detail, the *Book* includes ample mothering imagery, with fluid gender and familial roles, which was not uncommon in medieval religious texts.[25] For example, like other medieval texts, it portrays Christ as a nursing mother.[26] When Margery tells an anchorite at the Dominican priory at Lynn of her revelations, he remarks: "Daughter, you suck even on Christ's breast."[27] When Margery is scolded by others for condemning sin or repeating gospel texts she hears, the Lord assures her of his love with a string of familial terms: "I prove that you are a very daughter to me and a mother also, a sister, a wife, and a spouse."[28] Margery and the Lord shift mothering roles back and forth – the Lord mothers her and she mothers him. Jesus tells her: "When you weep and mourn for my pain and for my passion, then are you a true mother to have compassion of her child."[29] While others revile her for her loud weeping, Jesus thus affirms her maternal heart, even elevating her to the status of Mary as his mother. Margery's spiritual mothering seems to expand while the details of her everyday physical mothering life retract.

Margery's mystical mothering life accompanies and supports her unconventional public piety, which includes transgressive and risky pilgrimage through spaces deemed inappropriate for women; loud weeping; and preaching. I will

25 See Carolyn Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

26 Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages*.

27 Staley, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, 14.

28 Ibid., 24.

29 Ibid.

examine each of these public practices in turn. According to the narrative, shortly after childbirth the Lord bids her to go to Norwich, England, some forty miles from Lynn, to tell the vicar of St. Stephen's about the experiences of her soul. The post-partum mother protests mildly that she is too faint and weak to make the trip. The Lord promises help and strength, and she ventures out. This is the beginning of her pilgrimages. Margery tells the vicar about her life, including her visions. He believes her account and becomes her supporter and confessor.[30] Margery goes on to travel widely – to Rome, Jerusalem, and different cities in Germany. Margery's pilgrimages are public acts that transgress customary boundaries for married mothers and for anchoresses (an accepted spiritual vocation of enclosure for women).[31] Her travels entail bodily risk. Many nights when sleeping alone she fears rape. Staley notes that this fear was realistic for a woman traveling alone, without communal protection and clear familial status, in late medieval society.[32] Another scholar finds it likely that Kempe actually delivers her youngest child while on pilgrimage to Jerusalem; if this were the case, surely her pregnancy would have rendered her even more vulnerable. Howes underscores the embodied nature of her piety: "The congruence of pilgrimage and pregnancy delineated here figures as another example of the intermingling of what are usually spoken of as Margery's two lives – the physical and the spiritual."[33]

Margery's public voice is expressed also in practices of weeping. For many years, prior to and during her pilgrimages, she is known for loud sobbing as part of her religious devotion. When the Lord or a saint appears to her, sweet and holy, she at times "could not bear it but fell down and twisted with her body…with violent sobbings and great plenty of tears."[34] She weeps for hours at a time, sobbing in meditation on Christ's Passion. She weeps for her sins and the sins of the world. She weeps in desire for heaven. Her tears are a public voice, and they are irritating to fellow pilgrims and even her husband: "she was greatly despised and reproved because she wept so hard, both by the monks and the priests and by secular men…also in so much that her husband went away from her as if he had not known her and left her alone among them."[35]

30 Ibid., 29-31.

31 On expectations for anchoresses, see *Ancrene Riwle* ("Rule for Anchoresses"), c. 1225: http://www.bsswebsite.me.uk/History/AncreneRiwle/AncreneRiwle2.html, accessed February 9, 2017.

32 Lynn Staley, *Margery Kempe's Dissenting Fiction* (University Park, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 66-7.

33 Howes, "On the Birth of Margery Kempe's Last Child," 224.

34 Staley, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, 30.

35 Ibid., 21.

Her weeping draws condemnation from others in her narrative – and from twentieth-century critics who dismiss Margery Kempe's behavior as an example of "hysteria."[36] Medievalist Karma Lochrie points out that while "holy tears are supported by a long and respectable tradition in private meditational practice," Margery offends because she "removes tears from the domain of private devotion."[37] Her public weeping "claims a privileged reading of the Christic text" and thus "her tears intrude upon the clerical prerogatives of reading and interpreting the word of God."[38]

As in her pilgrimages and weeping, Margery transgresses gender norms in her public preaching. Here also she draws condemnation and threats. When asked by a powerful old monk what she has to say about God, Margery responds that she likes to speak about God and relates a scripture story to the monk. He challenges her public voice and bodily presence, which he says, disrupt the acceptable models for female piety. The old monk wants her enclosed and silent: "I wish you were enclosed in a house of stone so no man could speak with you."[39] Margery is not deterred; she offers a quick retort: "you should maintain God's servants, and you are the first who holds against them. Our Lord amend you."[40] Her insistence on preaching and talking back brings her close to danger; as she leaves the monastery she is called a lying Lollard (a follower of John Wycliffe, who had been declared a heretic) and threatened with burning and death. Margery's mystical experience and religious vocation do not lead her to a cloister but rather from home to public spaces. In practices of pilgrimage, weeping, and preaching, her spirituality is highly physical, embodied, public, and transgressive.

Kempe's *Book* confounds simplistic critiques of mysticism as otherworldly or privatized, for Margery's revelatory world spills into public space and empowers female voice. This is a significant point for practical theology. Mysticism is embodied and has definite public implications; it leads her to transgress boundaries, to speak despite attempts to silence her, possibly even to carry her pregnant body into dangerous spaces deemed inappropriate for women. The narrative clearly portrays mystical experience as vital to the growth of Margery's public practice. At the same time, *The Book of Margery Kempe* is ambiguous and multivalent in its implications for constructing a

36 Atkinson, *Mystic and Pilgrim: The* Book *and the World of Margery Kempe*, 201.

37 Karma Lochrie, *Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 196.

38 Ibid.

39 Staley, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, 22.

40 Ibid.

spirituality of mothering. On the one hand, the movement from domestic to public space can be read as a widening or spiritualizing of her maternal role, which becomes more expansive, more implicated in biblical narratives. Ellen Ross points to the prominence of familial categories in the *Book of Margery Kempe*, arguing that Margery's domestic identities do not hamper but rather provide grounding for her public roles: "While some have suggested a division between the private realm of women and the public realm of men, the example of Margery Kempe provides an alternative model in which one's private identification as a literal mother, sister, daughter, and spouse enables one to act in the public realm, where the same categories, albeit now in a nonliteral, or spiritual, sense locate and name one's activities."[41] Janel Mueller similarly sees a continuity between Margery's wifely and maternal selves and her larger public vocation: "Margery signals the fulfillment of her spirituality and selfhood through an expansion of her wifely and maternal concerns to encompass the souls of all Christendom in homely love."[42] Yet, the text remains almost silent about Margery's fourteen children as she claims her mystical-prophetic voice; this leaves spare material for those seeking a spirituality in the midst of everyday mothering work. The *Book* thus testifies to the power of mystical experience in the narrator's movement to public voice, while the lack of detail about quotidian mothering practice complicates any practical theological attempt at retrieval or appropriation for the purposes of conceptualizing and constructing a spirituality of mothering.

Jarena Lee

Like the *Book of Margery Kempe*, *The Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee* (1836) is a significant work of spiritual autobiography that has eluded practical theological study. Lee wrote her autobiography while she was active in ministry and seeking a preaching license. The self-published book is both a mystical conversion narrative and an attempt to legitimate her preaching call. Lee is not typically described as a mystic, although the experiences she recounts fit McGinn's aforementioned definition. In reading African American women's autobiographies as mystical texts, Joy Bostic frames mysticism in terms of

41 Ross, "Spiritual Experience and Women's Autobiography: The Rhetoric of Selfhood in The Book of Margery Kempe," 532.

42 Mueller, "Autobiography of a New 'Creatur': Female Spirituality, Selfhood, and Authorship in 'The Book of Margery Kempe,'" 67. Note that scholars of Kempe point out that Margery returns to domestic space at the end of her narrative to care for her injured husband.

"subjectification" rather than the more traditional mystical telos of deification or *theosis*: "by way of their religious experiences [they] were transformed into radical subjects despite attempts by others to control, define, and subjugate them as the 'Other'…these women's mystical experiences informed their religious, social, and political activism."[43] Indeed, like the *Book of Margery Kempe*, Lee's autobiography can be considered an account of mystical-public voicing. Lee's mystical experience appears to propel and legitimate her unconventional public speech and practice. Lee's voice is both received through grace and asserted boldly in preaching and writing, emerging in an interplay of words and silence. My analysis of *The Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee* traces these themes as I also inquire into the place of mothering in this process of "mystical subjectification."

The first section of Lee's autobiography sketches her early years, with periods of conviction alternating with despair and suicidal thoughts. Lee then tells of her conversion, followed by still more intense despair, and finally a mystical experience of sanctification. Joanne Braxton and William L. Andrews note that the text reflects a typical pattern in Holiness narratives – an account of trials, deliverance, and a quest for sanctification.[44] She narrates her call to preach, which is swiftly met with resistance from church leaders. Lee mentions her marriage, her isolation in domestic life, and the death of her husband. Her children enter the narrative here, though only briefly, as Lee emphasizes her dedication to her preaching call, demonstrated by her single-minded focus and her decision to leave her children in the care of others. I will unpack this summary of the text now in more detail.

Lee was born to free parents in Cape May, New Jersey, in 1783. Raised without religious instruction from her parents, she describes her first experience of the spirit of God as a child; this was an experience of her sinfulness. Due to financial need, her parents sent her at the age of seven to work as a maid sixty miles from home. She tells a lie about a job she had been tasked to do; this

43 Joy R. Bostic, "The Religious Traditions of African American Women," pp. 143-60 in *Mysticism & Social Transformation*, edited by Janet K. Ruffing (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2001), 144-45. On union with God as the end of mystical life, see, for example, Orthodox theologian Vladimir Lossky: "Christian theory should have an eminently practical significance; and…the more mystical it is, the more directly it aspires to the supreme end of union with God." Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 9.

44 See Joanne M. Braxton, *Black Women Writing Autobiography: A Tradition Within a Tradition* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989) and William L. Andrews, "Introduction," pp. 1-22 in *Sisters of the Spirit: Three Black Women's Autobiographies of the Nineteenth Century*, edited by William L. Andrews (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

incident prompts her first realization of her sinfulness. Lee describes how the spirit of God moved in her conscience such that she understands herself to be a terrible sinner and resolves not to tell another lie. Yet, her heart hardens and she vacillates for years between experiences of conviction and despair. She describes being poised on the brink of suicide and credits God with saving her from taking her own life. Upon hearing Rev. Richard Allen preach in an African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church in Philadelphia, she begins to identify with the AME community. Three weeks later she experiences a conversion during a sermon in the church when she resolves to forgive every creature: "That instant, it appeared to me, as if a garment, which had entirely enveloped my whole person, even to my fingers' ends, split at the crown of my head, and was stripped away from me, passing like a shadow, from my sight – when the glory of God seemed to cover me in its stead."[45]

For four years following her conversion, Lee continues to wrestle with despair and Satan, coming again to the brink of suicide. When she is instructed about the Wesleyan doctrine of sanctification, she comes to understand that God offers more than just pardon for sin. This theological insight shapes and is reinforced by her mystical experience. As Lee prays one evening, she perceives that words are given to her, whispering in her heart, "Pray for sanctification." Yet this word is swiftly challenged by the voice of Satan, which asserts that sanctification would be too great a work to be done. The initial voice persists: "*thou art sanctified*!" At this point, Lee is overcome with ecstasy beyond words. She narrates this "indescribable" experience: "So great was the joy, that it is past description. There is no language that can describe it, except that which was heard by St. Paul, when he was caught up to the third heaven, and heard words which it was not lawful to utter."[46] Like many mystics, Lee negotiates voice and silence, testimony and experience that is beyond words. As McGinn writes:

> One thing that all Christian mystics have agreed on is that the experience in itself defies conceptualization and verbalization…Hence, it can only be presented indirectly, partially, by a series of verbal strategies in which language is used not so much informationally as transformationally…Even those mystics who have paradoxically insisted on 'strong' in-

45 Jarena Lee, "The Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee, a Coloured Lady: Giving an Account of Her Call to Preach the Gospel (1836)," in *Sisters of the Spirit: Three Black Women's Autobiographies of the Nineteenth Century*, edited by William L. Andrews (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 29.

46 Ibid., 34.

> effability have tried to use all the resources of language – and often to create new ones – to assist this transformative process.[47]

Lee's voice grows from her receptivity to divine words, her mystic speech emerging from silence.

The interplay of voice and silence continues in Lee's description of her call to preach, which came four or five years following her sanctification. Here again her voice emerges in dialogue with a divine voice that calls, guides, and reassures her. Lee writes: "an impressive silence fell upon me, and I stood as if someone was about to speak to me…there seemed to sound a voice which I thought I distinctly heard, and most certainly understood, which said to me, 'Go preach the Gospel!'" Lee resists, fearing that no one would believe her. Again she hears the voice reiterate the call, this time with an assurance of divine aid: "Preach the Gospel; I will put words in your mouth, and will turn your enemies to become your friends."[48] Lee's call to preach, then, emerges reluctantly from a dialogue with God, from speaking and listening, from agency and receptivity. According to the narrative, her public preaching voice is *given*, words are put in her mouth. This conviction that she is sent, protected, and envoiced by God sustains her in a context of deep racism and sexism. As Braxton writes: "…especially in the context of a sexist, slaveholding antebellum culture…for Jarena Lee, black, female, and thus denied a public voice, the promise of a divine gift of words and friends had a powerful effect."[49]

Yet when Lee tells Rev. Richard Allen that she must preach the gospel, Allen responds that Methodist discipline does not allow for women preachers. Women are permitted only to exhort and hold prayer meetings with permission of the licensed preacher in charge. The divine voice that Lee perceived is met with ecclesial resistance. Lee senses "that holy energy which burned within me, as a fire, began to be smothered."[50] Here she interrupts her narration of events with a discourse of protest as she marshals arguments against the prohibition of women preachers. One example: "If a man may preach, because the Saviour died for him, why not the woman? seeing he died for her also."[51] She asserts her calling: "As for me, I am fully persuaded that the Lord called me

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47 Bernard McGinn, "General Introduction," in *The Foundations of Mysticism: Origins to the Fifth Century, The Presence of God 1* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), xvii.

48 Lee, *The Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee*, 35.

49 Joanne M. Braxton, *Black Women Writing Autobiography: A Tradition Within a Tradition* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 58.

50 Lee, *The Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee*, 36.

51 Ibid.

to labour according to what I have received, in his vineyard."[52] As evidence of her call, Lee cites not only her own conviction but also the testimonies of sinners awakened and converted by the preaching of this "poor coloured female instrument."[53]

At this point, Lee's autobiography moves to briefly narrate her married life. In 1811 she marries a pastor named Joseph Lee, moves to the town Snow Hill six miles outside Philadelphia, and lives a more isolated domestic life. She laments her separation from her band of spiritual companions, yet a dream persuades her that her own call must coexist with her marriage and her husband's pastoral call.[54] She yields to God's will, but continues to suffer in Snow Hill, enduring ill health and fears that her health will prevent her from preaching the gospel. Within six years, Lee suffers multiple deaths in her family, including that of her husband. Unlike Kempe, Lee does not describe any revulsion of marriage itself; the loss of her husband is "the greatest affliction of all."[55] At the death of her husband, she mentions her children for the first time in the autobiography: "I was now left alone in the world, with two infant children, one of the age of about two years, the other six months, with no other dependence than the promise of Him who hath said – 'I will be the widow's God, and a father to the fatherless' [Ps. 68:5]."[56] As Lee's call to preach earlier had been accompanied by God's promise to send her friends, so here she reiterates her belief that God "raised me up friends" to comfort and help her in widowhood.[57]

The narrative returns to her call to preach, renewed in her mind now eight years since her original request of Richard Allen. By this time, Allen had become bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in America. A critical juncture is reached when Lee attends a service and stands to exhort in the middle of another pastor's flagging sermon. She compares herself to Jonah, called by God to preach but delaying and impeded by the people of Ninevah. In her account, God again confirms her calling during this church service: "During the exhortation, God made manifest his power in a manner sufficient to show the world that I was called to labour according to my ability, and the grace given unto me, in the vineyard of the good husbandmen."[58] Bishop Allen rises

52 Ibid., 37.
53 Ibid., 37.
54 Ibid., 39.
55 Ibid., 41.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid., 44.

in the assembly and states that he now believes in her call to preach. This explicit endorsement of the bishop was exceedingly rare for women preachers in the AME church at the time,[59] and it marks a turning point in Lee's narrative. She goes on to preach at meetings, continuing to resist doubts based on her gender and race, preaching even to a man who "did not believe that coloured people had any souls."[60] Women were not ordained in the AME church and so for those women called to preach, travel was necessary. Like Kempe centuries earlier, Lee too faced the dangers of robbery and sexual assault as a woman traveling. As a black freewoman preaching to mixed congregations, including slaves, Lee's travels would have been especially arduous and dangerous, as historian Catherine Brekus notes: "Ignoring the threats of white masters, at least three black women – Jarena Lee, Zilpha Elaw, and Elizabeth – claimed that God had specially called them to minister to slaves. Fortunately, none of them were harmed, but they could have been whipped, imprisoned, or even sold into slavery."[61]

Lee's call to preach remains the focus of her autobiography, though there is the occasional mention of her children. Lee writes that she "kept house with my little son, who was very sickly."[62] When she receives a call to preach among the Methodists at a place thirty miles away, she makes no mention of how she arranged to care for her son but indicates that during the entire week she was away: "not a thought of my little son came into my mind; it was hid from me, lest I should have been diverted from the work I had to, to look after my son."[63] Lee's assurance of her calling deepens when she returns home to find that her sickly child was unharmed by her absence. She attributes her child's well-being to the Lord, who again assisted her through the caretaking work of friends: "no harm had come to my child, although I left it very sick. Friends had taken care of it which was of the Lord."[64] This experience in fact leads Lee to a more long-term separation from her child, as she "now began to

59 Catherine Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 134. Brekus notes that Bishop Allen became a strong supporter of Lee, even caring for her son while Lee preached in the Philadelphia area. The bishop, initially an instrument of ecclesial resistance to Lee's preaching call, becomes ecclesial supporter. See Catherine Brekus, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part3/3i3127.html, accessed June 8, 2016.

60 Lee, *The Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee*, 46.

61 Catherine Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America*, 248.

62 Lee, *The Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee*, 45.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid., 46.

think seriously of breaking up housekeeping, and foresaking all to preach the everlasting Gospel." She returns to her birthplace, where her mother resides, and leaves her child with her mother. In departing from her child to go preach, she understands herself as following God's will: "With her I left my sickly boy, while I departed to do my Master's will."[65] The autobiography does not again mention her children.

As Brekus explains, Lee's decision to leave her children would have met strong criticism in a nineteenth-century context that valorized the "cult of True Womanhood": "As a Mother in Israel, Lee believed she had been called to nurture the entire family of God, not just her own family, but in the eyes of her critics, she had virtually abandoned her child. In every possible way, she failed to meet the middle-class ideal of domesticity. Not only did she lack a stable home, but she did not even choose the joys of motherhood over preaching the gospel."[66] Reading Lee's autobiography through the lens of social theory lends another perspective: Lee's negotiation of her family and preaching call reflected African American traditions of communal motherwork, which took on particular importance within contexts of racial and gender oppression. Patricia Hill Collins writes:

> In African-American communities, the boundaries distinguishing biological mothers of children from other women who care for children are often fluid and changing. Biological or bloodmothers are expected to care for their children. But African and African-American communities have also recognized that vesting one person with full responsibility for mothering a child may not be wise or possible. As a result, 'othermothers,' women who assist bloodmothers by sharing mothering responsibilities, traditionally have been central to the institution of Black motherhood.[67]

Othermothers included grandmothers, aunts, and other kin but also extended beyond family networks. Certainly Lee's autobiography points to the importance of shared motherwork in enabling and sustaining her public/ecclesial vocation in a context of intersecting gender, racial, and class oppression. Lee's

65 Ibid.

66 Catherine Brekus, *Strangers & Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America, 1740-1845*, 222.

67 Patricia Hill Collins, "The Meaning of Motherhood in Black Culture and Black Mother-Daughter Relationships," in *Double Stitch: Black Women Write About Mothers & Daughters*, edited by Patricia Bell-Scott et al. (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 46-7. See discussion of communal motherwork also in Mari Boor Tonn, "Militant Motherhood: Labor's Mary Harris 'Mother' Jones," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 82 (1996): 1-21.

placement of her children in the care of her own mother fit within what Hill Collins calls an "Afrocentric ideology of motherhood," in contrast to the more dominant, privatized, Eurocentric cult of true womanhood.[68]

Like *The Book of Margery Kempe*, Lee's autobiography suggests public implications of women's mystical experience. So too, Lee's life writing presents a complex picture of mothering in relationship to women's mystical experiences and public callings. Was Lee leaving aside her mothering for the sake of a preaching vocation? Was she negotiating God-given alternative ways for her children to be mothered as she responds to her preaching call? Lee does not position mothering as central to her vocation or her experience of sanctification. The text in fact characterizes mothering as a distraction from the Lord's call, and her ability to detach from motherly concerns is further evidence of divine support for her preaching vocation. At the same time, when Lee's children do enter the narrative, the text repeatedly points to communal motherwork as a gift from God necessary to sustaining women's vocations. The understanding of God as provider, even as "othermother," softens but does not resolve the tension between Lee's mystical-prophetic call to preach and her maternal life.

Reading Mystical-Maternal Autobiography

The autobiographical texts of Kempe and Lee foreground for practical theology the importance of critical study of mysticism. Mysticism is not often analyzed in practical theology.[69] Yet, as the spiritual autobiographies of Kempe and Lee suggest, mystical experience can be highly significant to public practice and to women's unfolding sense of self, voice, and vocation. Attention to mysticism can enhance, rather than undermine, practical theology's strong focus on public life and public theology. Research on mysticism also complements efforts to develop feminist and womanist practical theologies, "a type of practical theological scholarship, teaching, and action that explores the intersections of gender, diverse women's experiences, and lived religious practices

68 See Hill Collins' discussion of competing perspectives on motherhood in "The Meaning of Motherhood in Black Culture and Black Mother-Daughter Relationships," 43-52.

69 See Claire E. Wolfteich, "Practices of 'Unsaying': Michel de Certeau, Spirituality Studies, and Practical Theology," *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 12, no. 2 (2012): 161-71 and Wolfteich, "Spiritual Traditions, Mystical Theology, and Practical Theology," in *Catholic Approaches in Practical Theology: International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, edited by Claire E. Wolfteich and Annemie Dillen (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters Publishers, BETL [Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium] Series, 2016).

as it seeks the flourishing of women."[70] More broadly, given the emphasis on "transformation" in practical theological literature,[71] the study of mysticism, which by definition relates to transformative religious experience, is essential. Mysticism carries implications for both personal and social transformation. Mystical texts and theologies – critically retrieved and examined – may serve as sources of renewal and deep transformation in contemporary contexts.[72]

At the same time, reading Kempe and Lee illustrates the hermeneutical complexity of working with historical texts, generally, and spiritual autobiographies, more specifically, as practical theological source. While practical theological methodologies often incorporate mutually critical conversation with classic texts of a tradition,[73] the hermeneutical task involves rather complicated historical-contextual and literary understanding. Practical theological reading requires considerable historical-contextual research in order for "conversation" to happen responsibly. Even then, historical distance may produce vast silences in the conversation as one attempts to read a work from a different context for insights into contemporary questions and, in some cases, to interpret the mystic at the edge of language's capacity.

Locating women's voices in historical texts, even autobiographical texts, is no easy task; women's voices either simply have not been recorded or have been muted, silenced, censored, or self-represented in ways that both reveal and conceal. Autobiographies are selective self-representations influenced by the power structures that shape the contexts of writing. Set in the context of the gendered and raced realities of their social contexts, inclusion of domestic

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70 Joyce Ann Mercer, "Feminist and Womanist Practical Theology," pp. 97-114 in *Opening the Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction*, edited by Kathleen A. Cahalan and Gordon S. Mikoski (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 97.

71 For examples here, one can look to Elaine Graham's book title *Transforming Practice* or to Don S. Browning's *A Fundamental Practical Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress [1991], 1996), which asserts that the hermeneutical dialogue between contemporary situation and historical tradition aims to guide action "toward social and individual transformation" (p. 36).

72 Along these lines, see the volume Edward Howells and Peter Tyler, eds., *Sources of Transformation: Revitalising Christian Spirituality* (London and New York: Continuum, 2010) and Janet K. Ruffing, ed., *Mysticism & Social Transformation* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2001).

73 See, for example, Don S. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991). In addition, according to David Tracy, the practical theologian projects "the *future* possibilities of meaning and truth on the basis of present constructive and past historical resources." See David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1975), 240.

detail may undermine women's authorial authority. More generally, the conventions of autobiography do not lend themselves to extensive discussion of the mundane aspects of child care. As Estelle Jelinek notes, the absence of children is quite common in autobiography; few autobiographers – male or female – write about their children, either because they do not have children or because they do not write their children/parenting into the narrative.[74] Thus, the conventions of a literary/spiritual genre influence the depiction of experience.

Practical theological reading of these texts, then, should avoid a simple application model, whereby historical texts are seen as having an immediate message for contemporary practice. Rather, practical theological reading can be framed as a curious investigation to surface practical theological questions as well as potential spiritual wisdom, to find spiritual companions as much as exemplars, to stimulate alternative imaginations, and to expand the canon of theological voices to whom we listen. Reading Kempe and Lee bring questions to practical theology that often are overlooked, such as: How does mystical experience impact women's identity, voice, and navigating of domestic and public roles? How does communal motherwork support women's public vocations, particularly in contexts of oppression? How write the maternal self? The autobiographies of Kempe and Lee thus are generative for practical theological reflection about spirituality and motherwork, even as they leave gaps and silences on everyday mothering in the conversation.

74 Estelle C. Jelinek, *The Tradition of Women's Autobiography: From Antiquity to the Present* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986), 11-2.

CHAPTER 3

Maternal Wisdom and an Ordinary Spiritual Theology: Jane de Chantal and Francis de Sales

While mystical experience is prominent in the autobiographies of Margery Kempe and Jarena Lee, the writing of spiritual leader Jane de Chantal (1572-1641) is far more imbedded in the ordinary circumstances of family life and religious community.[1] De Chantal's writing provides a useful lens for examining mothering in early modern Catholic spirituality and exploring women's domestic lives as context for the practice of devotion. As her own situation evolved from conventional, aristocratic wife to widowed mother and eventually to enclosed nun, her life writing points to the seasonality, multiplicity, dynamism, and conflict of vocations.

H. Outram Evenett describes Counter-Reformation Catholic spirituality as "practical" and highly oriented to action, reflecting the "practical urge of the day toward active works."[2] The attention to practice, action, and cultivation of virtue in Catholic spirituality of this era makes it particularly relevant for practical theological study. Yet, in his discussion of the many vibrant figures of sixteenth and seventeenth century Catholic spirituality, including Francis de Sales and others such as Ignatius of Loyola and Vincent de Paul, Evenett cites only male sources. Attention to Jane de Chantal amplifies understanding of this practical era of spirituality and offers angles of vision into mothering and spiritual direction in early modern Catholicism.

In exploring de Chantal's maternal life writing, I intentionally read her in conversation with her close spiritual guide and companion Francis de Sales (1567-1622). Both have been declared saints; de Sales was canonized in 1665, de Chantal in 1767. De Sales, a Catholic bishop in Annecy and Geneva, has

1 This does not discount the possibility that Jane de Chantal also had mystical experiences. Wright and Power note that Jane describes an experience of "ravishment" during Mass in 1610; she told few people about her experience. See Wendy M. Wright and Joseph F. Power, "Introduction," in *Francis de Sales, Jane de Chantal: Letters of Spiritual Direction*, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 79.

2 H. Outram Evenett, "Counter-Reformation Spirituality," in *The Counter-Reformation: The Essential Readings*, edited by David Martin Luebke, Blackwell Essential Readings in History (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 63, 55.

been singled out in the history of Christian spirituality as one of the first major writers to give sustained attention to the spiritual life of the laity. He makes this claim in his highly influential classic book *Introduction to the Devout Life*: "almost all those who have hitherto written about devotion have been concerned with instructing persons wholly withdrawn from the world or have at least taught a kind of devotion that leads to such complete retirement."[3] While less prominent in the history of Christian spirituality, Jane de Chantal brings her lived experience of marriage and mothering and her leadership of a new religious foundation to shape early modern Salesian theology and spirituality.[4] Informed by Jane's evolving vocational struggles and creative vision, Salesian spirituality affirms motherhood as a paradigm of devotion, a model of governance in religious life, and a rich source of spiritual learning that can be applied in a variety of contexts and relationships. Yet while Jane's life writing incorporates more everyday maternal detail and reflection than is the case in the spiritual autobiographies of Kempe and Lee, her narrative also leaves considerable ambiguity about mothering as vocation and spiritual path.

Spiritual Direction, Women's Leadership, and Practical Theology

The previous chapter explored spiritual autobiography as a specific form of life writing. This chapter examines letters, and particularly letters of spiritual direction, as another form of life writing that sheds light on maternal experience and represents a narrative form of practical theology. De Chantal and de Sales wrote volumes of letters, both to each other and to others, including many women. Jane wrote extensively to the Visitation sisters in her care, as well as to her own grown children and extended family. Francis' popular books, the *Introduction to the Devout Life* (1609) and the *Treatise on the Love of God* (1616) are shaped by his prolific spiritual direction correspondence with laity. Their letters of spiritual direction are a form of practical theology – a reading of a person's lives in all their particularity in light of a religious tradition for the sake of transformed practice. The letters include self-narration, a sharing of

3 Saint Francis de Sales, *Invitation to the Devout Life*, translated by John K. Ryan (New York: Image Books, 1989), 33.

4 Note that I follow Wendy M. Wright and Joseph F. Power in seeing "Salesian spirituality" to be jointly formed by Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal, despite the fact that the term implies only de Sales' influence. The long spiritual friendship of de Sales and de Chantal and de Chantal's leadership of the Visitation community for two decades after de Sales' death shaped what came to be known as "Salesian spirituality."

parts of their own lives, as they interpret and respond to a specific individual at one moment in time. They are highly contextualized forms of theological reflection, imbedded in informal exchanges of news, counsel, and affection. Spiritual direction here is a kind of practical theology: a loving attention to and tending of a person in her totality, a mutual, dialogical reflection about how to live out the faith in the concrete circumstances of one's life. Indeed, spiritual direction is a significant form of practical theology particularly in Catholic and Orthodox traditions and merits more scholarly attention by practical theologians.[5]

Janet Ruffing notes that post-Tridentine spiritual direction was situated primarily within the confessor-penitent relationship and followed a deductive method, applying principles to particular cases. Ruffing describes the confessional model of spiritual direction as highly authoritarian, clerical, and sexist: "The literature of the period betrays an extreme distrust and devaluation of women in the rules and admonitions developed for common use by clerical directors. They implied that women were untrustworthy, susceptible to illusions, and incapable of mature development in the spiritual life."[6] The letters of spiritual direction of de Sales and de Chantal, however, show another face of post-Tridentine spiritual direction, one far more attentive to experience, deeply immersed in women's life contexts and spiritual issues, and tending to use maternal imagery as a paradigm of devotion and spiritual guidance. Practical theology in a Salesian context is an eminently relational practice rooted ultimately in the love of God. De Sales describes his deep spiritual friendship with Jane as a "bond of perfection."[7] He refers to Jane as his "daughter" but also as his "mother" in Christ.[8] The affective, relational context of spiritual direction permeates their letters and shapes this mode of practical theology.

Jane de Chantal's vocational discernment and her emerging, creative vision for a new form of religious community are molded by her ongoing, increasingly mutual relationship with de Sales; this relationship is empowering and yet still imbedded in hierarchical, gendered assumptions. De Sales does not

5 See too Janet K. Ruffing, "The Practice of Spiritual Direction: A Theologically Complex Process," in *Invitation to Practical Theology: Catholic Voices and Visions*, edited by Claire E. Wolfteich (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2014).

6 Janet K. Ruffing, *To Tell the Sacred Tale: Spiritual Direction and Narrative* (New York: Paulist Press, 2011), 15.

7 Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal, *Francis de Sales, Jane de Chantal: Letters of Spiritual Direction*, translated by Péronne-Marie Thibert, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 127.

8 Ibid., 155.

escape from the dominant clericalism of his day, despite his efforts to affirm lay devotion.[9] He is steeped in traditional assumptions about women's roles though simultaneously progressive with regard to women's spiritual and leadership capacities– a "hinge figure" between late medieval and early modern culture.[10] Patricia Ranft shows how the confessor-spiritual director role reinforced patriarchal, hierarchical ecclesiastical structures and simultaneously created pathways to leadership for an increasingly eager female laity:

> The successful female religious leaders of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – Jane Frances de Chantal, Louise de Marillac (1591-1660), Ana de San Bartolomé, Angela Merici, Teresa of Avila, Madame Acarie (d. 1618), and Angélique Arnauld – accomplished their ground-breaking work in society while very openly under obedience to their confessor-spiritual directors. When they submitted themselves completely and irrevocably to their confessor-spiritual directors, they participated in a penitential system that allowed the hierarchy to preserve external social order and rectify interior moral order, and gave women unusual freedom of action and speech…Jane submits totally to Francis, her confessor-spiritual director, and together they found a new religious order for her. He writes a rule which in turn gives her freedom of action from him as confessor-spiritual director.[11]

It is within the practice and context of spiritual direction that many women of this time period negotiated an intricate balance of obedience and liberty, creative leadership and adherence to tradition. Spiritual direction thus is vital for understanding relationships between women's leadership and spirituality in the early modern period – certainly apparent in the case of Francis and Jane. Jane vowed obedience to de Sales in 1604 when they formalized an agreement that he would serve as her spiritual director;[12] obedience to this male clerical

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9 Robert W. Richgels, "François de Sales, Holiness in the Lay Life, and Counter-Reformation Clericalism," *Journal of Religious Studies* 12 (1985): 65-75.

10 See Linda Timmermans, *L'accès des femmes à la culture sous l'ancien régime* (Paris: Champion Classiques: Honoré Champion), cited in Wendy M. Wright, "The Ambiguously Gendered Ideal of a Seventeenth Century Community of Women Religious: The Visitation of Holy Mary," *Journal of Religion & Society* 5 (2009): 107.

11 Patricia Ranft, "A Key to Counter Reformation Women's Activism: The Confessor-Spiritual Director," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 10, no. 2 (1994): 21.

12 Elisabeth Stopp, *Madame de Chantal: Portrait of a Saint*, 2nd edition. (Stella Niagara, NY: DeSales Resource Center, 2002), 62.

figure paradoxically accompanied her growth in "liberty of spirit," a key phrase in their letters. Francis tended to Jane's spiritual life and affirmed her maternity when she had difficulty doing so. His glowing interpretations of mothering are layered on her own; in fact, as will be seen below, her writing tends to a more sober, less intimate portrayal of mothering than does his. Through her relationship with de Sales, de Chantal came to see her everyday domestic context as a spiritual site for the cultivation of virtue and holiness. She also developed her vision for religious community, departed from the family home, and emerged as leader of the new Visitation order.

Named for Mary's visitation of her pregnant cousin Elizabeth, the Visitation of Holy Mary congregation was an innovative approach to religious life. It was envisioned as a more open and moderate form of women's religious community than the enclosed cloister, thus making religious life accessible to women whose worldly responsibilities or physical limitations otherwise would exclude.[13] The Visitation allowed women to visit the poor and sick and attend to their affairs (hence, to move in and out of public spaces rather than remaining in the cloister). For example, after becoming a Visitandine Jane was able to arrange for the education and marriages of her children and settle the estates of her father and father-in-law.[14] The Visitation congregation from its beginnings was distinctly shaped by female leadership: "Other women's communities were offshoots or under the jurisdiction of male orders and their practices and spiritualities derived from these masculine origins. The Visitation was created for women and the spiritual vision which it eventually embodied came into being through the experience of women living together and attempting to give articulation to the way they experienced and lived for God. Jane is at the core of this attempt."[15] However, ecclesial resistance restricted the original vision for the Visitation order, as clerical authorities (particularly the Archbishop of Lyons) exerted pressure on the community to adopt the more traditional enclosure for women's religious communities. Jane navigated this transition to enclosure and continued to lead the growing order well past the death of Francis de Sales; there were thirteen Visitation communities at the time of Francis' death in 1622 and eighty-six at the time of Jane's death. As she grows the Visitation order, her vocation as "spiritual mother" is superimposed onto her ongoing calling as mother to her biological children. Those dual vocations of spiritual and biological mother in de Chantal's life are mutually informing and interact tensively at points.

13 Wright and Power, "Introduction," 26.

14 Ibid., 27.

15 Ibid., 71.

Birth Work: Jane de Chantal as Young Widow and Mother

Baronne Jeanne-Francoise Frémoyot de Chantal was born in 1572 in Dijon, France, a time of great religious strife between Catholics and Huguenots. Her father was president of the Parliament of Burgundy; her mother died in childbirth when Jane was a toddler. At age 21 she married a baron and the couple had six children, two of whom died in infancy. Jane appears to have embraced marriage with little conflict. When her husband died in a hunting accident, however, she was left with four young children, care of her temperamental father-in-law, who insisted that she come live with him, and responsibility for administering the estate. In 1604 she heard Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva, preach. He became her spiritual director, and they began their voluminous correspondence. While numerous letters from Francis to Jane have been preserved and translated, Jane burned her letters to him following his death. Thus, her voice in this spiritual friendship is largely reconstructed through Francis' extant letters, from Jane's many letters to others, and other sources such as her testimony about de Sales in his canonization proceedings.

By all accounts, de Sales and de Chantal enjoyed a dynamic spiritual friendship. In the early period of their relationship, Jane was torn between a perceived call to vowed religious life and her extensive family responsibilities. De Chantal's spiritual dilemma – how to live devoutly in the midst of her worldly occupations – is a vocational crisis best understood in Tridentine context; women's options were circumscribed and Catholicism assumed a hierarchy of vocations. The Council of Trent (1545-1563), a key event of the Catholic Counter-Reformation, underscored this hierarchy of vocations:

> If anyone saith that the marriage state is to be placed above the state of virginity or celibacy, and that it is not better and more blessed to remain in virginity or in celibacy than to be in matrimony; let him be anathema.[16]

Jane de Chantal was shaped by the dominant monastic and contemplative ideals prevalent in seventeenth-century Catholicism: "It was taken for granted in the early seventeenth century, as it had been in much of the medieval world, that the celibate life and especially the monastic contemplative life was the queen of lifestyles and a special kind of intimacy with and dedication to God was offered to persons responding to such a calling."[17] Recently widowed and

16 *Dogmatic Canons and Decrees* (Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1977), 164.

17 Wright and Power, "Introduction," 71.

a mother of four, she was influenced by Carmelite contemplative spirituality, yet at this stage in her life was not at liberty to respond to what she perceived as a call to contemplative religious life. In his letters, Francis gently points her to the holiness possible in her current situation, in her mothering and active life in the world, understanding that God's will is not absent from any situation. His practical theological impulse here is to encourage Jane to live into her immediate circumstances, to embrace God's will as present in those circumstances, to see that no place or vocation is removed from God's grace. In other words, he urges her to cultivate the devotion possible in her own situation rather than an imagined sanctity of cloistered nuns. He encourages in her a "spirit of liberty,"[18] which brings a certain detachment from the particular means of perfection and freedom from the anxiety and scruples that seem to plague Jane. It should be noted that this spirit of liberty is not incompatible with obedience and does not mean leaving one's obligations.[19] Francis offers Jane encouraging exemplars from Christian tradition, including Saint Monica, who is, like Jane, a widow and mother devoted to the spiritual rescue of her son (Augustine); Saint Louis, King of France who had nine children; Saint Paula; Saint Elizabeth; and Mary, whom he calls "your glorious Abbess."[20]

While children are relatively absent in many spiritual classics, including the spiritual autobiographies of Kempe and Lee, Francis and Jane introduce the children and other family relationships frequently in their letters of spiritual direction. Francis conveys his affection for Jane's children, discusses their temporal and spiritual needs, and gives advice on parenting strategies.[21] He genuinely seems to like children. He relates his own delighted experience of "playing the comedian" while teaching the catechism to children: "I was in high spirits, and a big audience encouraged me with its applause to continue to play with the children. They said the role suited me well, and I believe it!"[22] He tells Jane that he likes to visit the poor, women, and young children, a charitable practice he recommends to her.[23] Francis then seeks to integrate Jane's mothering (indeed, her whole extended family relationships) fully into her devotional life and their spiritual friendship. As he counsels Jane to live in-

18 Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal, *Francis de Sales, Jane de Chantal: Letters of Spiritual Direction*, translated by Péronne-Marie Thibert, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 134.

19 Ibid., 140.

20 Ibid., 136, 142, 146.

21 See, for example, ibid., 137.

22 Ibid., 149.

23 Ibid., 136.

to her vocation of widowhood and motherhood, he appeals to her experience as a mother, noting that "the contractions and pangs of spiritual childbirth are not less than those on the physical order. You have experienced both…It is Jesus whom we must form and bring to birth in ourselves; you are pregnant with Him, my dear sister, and praised be God who is His Father."[24] Francis thus frames mothering as a paradigm of lay devotion; it is birthing work that entails love and suffering, yields Christ within, and is accomplished with God as co-parent.

An Ordinary Spiritual Theology

In order to understand more fully the relationship between mothering and Salesian spirituality, I expand upon several key aspects of Salesian spirituality: the development of an "ordinary" spiritual theology for laity, the centrality of love as the ground and measure of devout practice, the spiritual challenge of work and busyness, and the relational context of devotional practice.

De Sales and de Chantal attempt to develop an "ordinary" spiritual theology responsive to the particular situations and dilemmas of laypersons. This is a spiritual theology centered not around withdrawal or heroic asceticism but rather around the everyday demands of family and work, intended for "those who live in town, within families, or at court, and by their state of life are obliged to live an ordinary life as to outward appearances."[25] Francis addresses the *Introduction to the Devout Life* to Philothea, literally, to a woman who loves God, a "name that can refer to all who aspire to devotion."[26] The book distills the spiritual insights that have emerged through his spiritual guidance relationship with many laity, including his correspondence with women immersed in issues of marriage, widowhood, motherhood, and multiple occupations. *Introduction to the Devout Life* represents, then, a practical theology that emerges out of the ministry of spiritual direction.

In situating this practical theology in its ecclesial and social context, I would underscore that Francis and Jane would not conceive of theology – or its articulation in spiritual direction – apart from doctrine. Francis serves as bishop in exile in Annecy, charged with overseeing the diocese of Geneva, a Calvinist stronghold. In the context of Tridentine Catholicism, he and Jane would have

24 Ibid., 129.

25 Saint Francis de Sales, *Invitation to the Devout Life*, 33.

26 Ibid., 35.

assumed Catholic teaching as the groundwork for spiritual direction. They do not question, for example, the authority of the magisterium, the centrality of the Church, or traditional teachings reinforced by the Council of Trent regarding celibacy as a more perfect calling than marriage. Within that framework, they bring fresh attention to the "ordinary" in relationship to devotion "in the world," to links between vocation and devotional practice, and to women's anxieties and distinctive dilemmas of practice. Their practical theology, then, brings new emphasis to lay spirituality but does not represent a doctrinal shift.

Furthermore, it should be noted that their practical theology is imbedded in a rather aristocratic social milieu. Francis de Sales has been critiqued for his unquestioning embrace of aristocratic values and habits; his writing is peppered with references to court, hunting, estates, sport, and gentlemen.[27] So too Jane's social position is privileged; her work burdens, for example, include the running of an estate. The "ordinary" spiritual theology that they contribute, then, emerges from and is limited by their privileged social location. Though the enduring popularity of Francis' writing attests to its relevance beyond his own context, some critical reading of their social assumptions is warranted.

Salesian spirituality roots practice fundamentally in divine love. Francis' practical theology is grounded in divine love as the fundamental source of action and as the distinctive quality that marks practice as devout: "Genuine, living devotion, Philothée, presupposes love of God, and hence it is simply true love of God."[28] Devotion bears fruit in practice but really it is distinguished by a certain "ardor" that Francis compares to fire.[29] Devotion is divine love enflamed, an outburst of charity.[30] This heart-centered spirituality focused on love connects interior and exterior practice, devotion, and vocation. Francis and Jane are keenly interested in practice. For example, as Francis writes to Madame Brûlart: "What is the use of building castles in Spain when we have to live in France? This is my old lesson, and you grasp it well; but tell me, my dear, whether you are putting it into practice."[31] To put love into practice is to embody the terms "live Jesus" ("Vive Jésus"). This is the trademark phrase in

27 Edward Hahnenberg writes: "While Francis explicitly stated that the devout life is open to all ranks and stations of life, the elegance of the Introduction is a far cry from Luther's earthy call to the Christian day laborer, the peasant mother, and the milkmaid." Edward P. Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation: A Theology of Christian Call* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), 32.

28 Saint Francis de Sales, *Invitation to the Devout Life*, 40.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid., 41.

31 Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal, *Letters of Spiritual Direction*, 112.

the letters between de Sales and de Chantal and a central motif in Salesian spirituality. Yet what devout practice *manifests* is an interior union of hearts, a loving embrace of God's will. Salesian spirituality contributes to practical theology this explicit theological grounding of practice.

Practices must align with the particular demands and forms of different vocations. Francis counsels Madame Brûlart, for example, to serve God "just as you are…by practices that are suited to your state in life."[32] Perfection consists not in a heroic rejection of ordinary life, with its domestic and public responsibilities, but through what Francis Clooney calls "loving surrender to God"[33] in the particular contours of one's vocation. Francis places his experience as a bishop alongside the experience of his female correspondents:

> Bishops, for instance, are commanded to visit their flock, to teach, correct and console: if I were to spend the whole week praying and all my life fasting while yet neglecting my own duty towards my people, then I should be lost. A married person may work miracles and yet refuse the marriage debt to her partner, or neglect the children; in that case she is being worse than unfaithful.[34]

Francis thus underscores the particularity of vocational context in evaluating and guiding practice. His reading of life "in the world" is not unambiguously positive. In certain passages he assumes that the practice of devotion and the attainment of perfection is more difficult in the world, even portraying the world as a place of temptation or danger for the soul.[35] Yet while he does not question the hierarchy of vocations reaffirmed at the Council of Trent, his spiritual theology moves toward a flexible practical theology of devotion that affirms the ordinary contexts of women's lives as primary loci for the love of God. This is core to a Salesian practical theology of devotion: devotion is the ardor of love; all can practice devotion; the practices of devotion will reflect the diversity of creation and context – with practices adapted to vocation and personal temperament. True devotion cannot run contrary to one's lawful vocation.[36]

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32 Ibid., 113.

33 Francis X. Clooney, *Beyond Compare: St. Francis de Sales and Śrī Vedanta Desika on Loving Surrender to God* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2008).

34 Francis de Sales, *St Francis de Sales: Selected Letters*, translated by Elizabeth Stopp (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), 56-7. Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal, *Letters of Spiritual Direction*, 109.

35 Saint Francis de Sales, *Invitation to the Devout Life*, 34.

36 Ibid., 44.

Work, Leisure, and the Martyrdom of Busyness

The issues of busyness, time pressures, anxiety, and fragmentation surface repeatedly in Francis' letters to women. He encourages those who are overwhelmed, assures them of God's love, and invites women to practice devotion in the midst of these experiences. For example, he consoles his younger sister Gasparde de Cornillon, a married woman and mother of many children: "Don't be so upset by these little attacks of anxiety and sadness that are brought on by the multiplicity of your household cares.... Let us belong to God, my daughter, in the midst of so much busyness brought on by the diversity of worldly things.... Take my word for it, true virtue is not produced by outward repose, any more than healthy fish are raised in the stagnant waters of swamps."[37] He thus affirms women's domestic lives as a potential locus for devotion and the cultivation of virtue. Similarly, he reassures Madame Madeleine de la Fléchère, who like Jane was a widow and mother, that the occupation with many tasks is "a real and solid way of acquiring virtue" and a "continual martyrdom."[38] Characteristically moderate, Francis suggests though that work not overtake the spirit; he proposes a gentle and humane spirituality of work. He applauds Madame de la Fléchère's growing tranquility, as it will enable her to serve God "in the rush and variety of business forced on us by our vocation."[39] He recommends "diligent" work but cautions against "violent effort":

> Do not trust in your industry to carry you successfully through all your affairs but only in God's help; and then rest securely in his care of you, believing that he will do what is best for you, providing that you for your part work diligently and yet without straining. Without straining and gently, I say, for violent effort spoils both your heart and the business in hand, and is not really diligence but rather over-eagerness and agitation.[40]

He encourages, then, a prayerful stance towards one's work, so that work is done with an inner rest in God, with calm diligence but not over-attachment or distress.

37 Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal, *Letters of Spiritual Direction*, 163.

38 Ibid., 158-59.

39 Ibid., 150.

40 Francis de Sales, *St Francis de Sales: Selected Letters*, 150.

Relational Context for Devotional Practice

As Francis responds to women's spiritual dilemmas and anxieties, he pays close attention to their relational contexts. Wright notes that Salesian spirituality embraces the "little, relational virtues," those that "all persons, in every walk of life, could practice: humility, gentleness, simplicity, patience, cordiality, and charity."[41] Salesian understandings of spiritual practice prioritize harmonious relationships. Devotional practice should be joyful, inviting, and adaptable; it should enhance the relationships integral to one's vocation: "Care of one's family is rendered more peaceable, love of husband and wife more sincere, service of one's prince more faithful, and every type of employment more pleasant."[42]

The relational context for practice responds to and reinforces social expectations of women at the same time that it carves a pathway for affirming the domestic as a site of spiritual formation and holiness. For example, Francis humanely encourages Madame Brûlart, who is married to the president of the Burgundian parliament, to moderate her spiritual exercises during her pregnancy.[43] He also advises that family and household servants should not be inconvenienced by overly long visits to church or lengthy withdrawals for prayer, to the neglect of household responsibilities.[44] Devotion should be "pleasing" and "attractive," not irritating, to close relations.[45] Francis' emphasis on attractive devotion contrasts with the unabashedly irritating piety of Margery Kempe, whose behavior "would have horrified him."[46]

Francis' spiritual direction reinforces women's traditional domestic roles and subservience to husbands; at the same time, he is recognizing the relational/domestic contexts in which laywomen operate. His insistence on the possibility of devotion in *every* calling expands a vocational theology to encompass women's everyday relationships. Such spiritual direction was undoubtedly powerful for Jane de Chantal, imbedded in the immediate needs

41 Wright, "The Ambiguously Gendered Ideal of a Seventeenth-Century Community of Women Religious," 104.

42 Saint Francis de Sales, *Invitation to the Devout Life*, 44.

43 Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal, *Letters of Spiritual Direction*, 115.

44 Ibid., 104.

45 Ibid. He similarly counsels Madame de Limojon: "make your devotion pleasing, especially to your husband, and live in the joy of having chosen this kind of life." See ibid., 156-57.

46 Clarissa W. Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 224.

of her family. Over time, she both embodies and partially resists a people-pleasing, domestic spirituality as she moves towards her new vocation in leading the Visitation congregation.

A New Season of Birth Work: Domestic Departure and the Founding of the Visitation

Encouraged by Francis de Sales, Jane attempts to "live Jesus" in the everyday context of her familial responsibilities. Yet her sense of calling to religious life persists. She begins to envision a religious community that would be more accommodating to the needs of women with similar responsibilities in the world or who simply were not able to enter the more austere, cloistered orders. She develops the vision in conversation with Francis, finally convincing him that this is indeed an authentic call.

De Chantal left the family estate in Dijon in 1610 to travel to Annecy to found the first monastery. Her youngest daughter Charlotte had died suddenly of a fever earlier that year, and her eldest daughter had married. De Chantal planned to take her daughter Françoise with her to reside at the Visitation. In Elisabeth Stopp's assessment, this convent boarding school experience would not have been unusual for aristocratic French girls, yet it did represent a certain degree of loss of her mother.[47] The departure from Dijon was a domestic rending; she left her father, her father-in-law, and her fourteen-year-old son Celse-Bénigne, who famously threw himself down on the threshold of the door and pled with her not to leave. By a biographer's account, a tutor suggested that she should not let a boy's tears deter her from her purpose. She responded, "Nullement, mais que voulez-vous? Je suis mère!" (Not at all, but what do you want? I am a mother!)[48] Still, Jane steeled herself and stepped over her son to leave. The account is repeated in canonization proceedings for de Chantal as a testament to her intense religious commitment.

Jane's leadership of the Visitation community surely meant a changed relationship with her children. Yet, despite the dramatic scene with the teenaged Celse-Bénigne when Jane left Dijon, she remained quite involved with her

47 Stopp writes: "She lived with a mother who was no longer exclusively her mother, and in a home that was not a home in the ordinary sense…though the child's mother was there with her, she knew that she was no longer entitled to this mother's whole or chief attention." Elisabeth Stopp, *Madame de Chantal: Portrait of a Saint* (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1963), 196.

48 Stopp, *Madame de Chantal*, 112.

children throughout their adult lives. Her letters show her constant concern for them in the details of their lives – and her spiritual guidance intermingles with quite ordinary counsel about choice of spouse, dress and decorum, use of time, sibling jealousy, and financial matters. Her spiritual care of her adult children is characterized by affection, anxiety, and a kind of travail or continuing labor pains. Jane tries to break her independent-minded daughter Françoise of vanity and encourages her to marry an older gentlemen of whom she approves. She continually seeks to guide her unruly son Celse-Bénigne and fears for his salvation. Francis de Sales draws a parallel between Jane's ongoing worry for her adult children and the labor of childbirth. Trying to comfort Jane in 1619 when Celse-Bénigne got into serious trouble in Paris, he describes her maternal suffering for her son as ongoing "pangs of childbirth" and as crucifixion: "what better chance is there of making great acts of our heart's union with God's will than when our own love is mortified, and we learn to love our own abjection, indeed, our crucifixion?"[49] When Jane holds back a display of affection for her son, Francis affirms her mothering heart and encourages her to show her "natural passion"[50] for her son during visits. When Celse-Bénigne eventually marries, she deems it appropriate that she stay within the enclosure of the Visitation rather than travel to the wedding.[51] When Celse-Bénigne dies in battle, she appears surprisingly stoic to her brother. Wright aptly summarizes the tension embodied in the spirituality of Jane de Chantal, who "lived her quest for perfection within the ambiguous context of a spiritual language that held up…detachment as an ideal and of a temperament and life experience that suited her to the cherishing of relational attachments."[52]

A Motherly-Fatherly God, Maternal Wisdom, and Governance of Souls

The relational emphasis of Salesian spirituality is reflected in the images of God that Jane and Francis employ. Images of a maternal God interweave with

49 Ibid., 199.

50 For further discussion of this question of Jane's "natural passion" see Stopp, *Madame de Chantal: Portrait of a Saint*. Stopp argues that Jane "had learnt better than to imagine that 'all natural passion had died within her mother's heart'" (p. 198).

51 For discussion of competing early modern ideals of spirituality within which de Chantal is stretched – renunciation of family ties as a marker of sanctity vs. a new ideology of maternal devotion – see Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*, 228-29.

52 Wright and Power, "Introduction," 83.

fatherly divine imagery in their letters. When Jane seeks to comfort Françoise after the death of her husband, which occurred at the same time as the birth of their son, Jane encourages loving surrender to God the Father, who can become mother, husband, child: "like obedient children, let's surrender ourselves lovingly to the will of our heavenly Father and cooperate with His plan to unite us intimately to Himself through suffering. If we do that, He will become all for us: our brother, son, husband, mother, our all in all. Courage!"[53] So years earlier, Francis had encouraged the reformer Angélique Arnauld in similar language, encouraging her trust in God who "carries you imprinted on his fatherly breast in such a motherly way."[54] For Jane and Francis, the motherly-fatherly-God comforts in suffering and can fill all relational voids in this life.

As mothering functions as a paradigm of lay devotion, so mothering also represents the paradigmatic symbol of how God embodies the divine love toward human beings. Michael Buckley notes that Francis' relationship with Jane is reflected in the "startling development" of his conception of God, which becomes "profoundly maternal" in his last work, the *Treatise on the Love of God*, published 1616.[55] The maternal imagery in the *Treatise* is striking, and seeds of it can be found much earlier in Francis' letters to Jane and other female correspondents. In the *Treatise*, Francis describes "maternal love, the most pressing, the most active and the most ardent of all."[56] He compares "God the Father" to a nursing mother in intimate detail.[57] He draws repeatedly on breastfeeding as an image of abundant divine love and divine-human intimacy.[58] Francis describes Jesus' "maternal breast"[59] and God's "maternal bosom,"[60] swollen with love and mercy: "thy maternal bosom, with its sacred swelling breasts of an incomparable love, abounds in the milk of mercy…Ah! why do not we

53 Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal de Chantal, *Letters of Spiritual Direction*, 216.

54 Ibid., 172.

55 Michael J. Buckley, "Seventeenth-Century French Spirituality: Three Figures," in *Christian Spirituality: Post-Reformation and Modern*, edited by Louis K. Dupré and Don E. Saliers, World Spirituality 18 (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1989), 39.

56 Francis de Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God*, Book III, Ch. VIII, p. 164: http://www.ccel.org/ccel/desales/love.pdf/.

57 Francis de Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God*, Book III, Ch. XI, pp. 170-71: http://www.ccel.org/ccel/desales/love.pdf/.

58 Francis de Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God*, Book I, Ch. XV, p. 83: http://www.ccel.org/ccel/desales/love.pdf/.

59 Francis de Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God*, Book XII, Ch. XII, p. 521: http://www.ccel.org/ccel/desales/love.pdf/.

60 Francis de Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God*, Book VIII, Ch. IV, p. 330: http://www.ccel.org/ccel/desales/love.pdf/.

then fasten our wills to thine, as children fasten themselves on to their mother's breast, to draw the milk of thy eternal benedictions!"[61] Obedience thus is framed in terms of a mother-child relationship, one of intimacy and nurture rather than judgment; it is a baby's latching on, drawn eagerly to what feeds, and the mother's equal need to hold the child close and let the milk flow.

A maternal practical theology can be seen in Jane's letters of spiritual direction to her daughter Françoise and the Visitation mothers-superior in the years following Francis' death in 1622 – though her writing lacks the highly physical, intimate maternal imagery found in the *Treatise*. Jane does use the image of breast to depict God as source of rest and comfort: "I know you are drawn to this happiness, so pursue it, and rest quietly on the breast of divine Providence."[62] Yet she does not wax on about the details of breastfeeding. Jane's writing on mothering tends to be less romantic and physical than is Francis,' more tinged with awareness of the suffering of mothering and emphasizing the practical wisdom of the mother as teacher of souls.

Teaching and spiritual guidance are practices central to Jane's understanding of mothering. The truths most important to teach are those related to God and eternal happiness, a source of hope and consolation and rest in the inevitable suffering of human life. In writing to her adult daughter Françoise, who had just lost her infant son, she implores her: "Raise your mind often to the thought of eternity, and aspire to and long for this happiness. You will see that there is no real rest anywhere else…Teach this lesson early to your little Gabrielle."[63] Seven years later, Jane sends a similar message to Françoise: "Take care to impress these truths on your daughter's heart…Teach her to fear offending God and to value the happiness of living in love and fear of Him."[64] Jane shares her maternal wisdom with her daughter here, noting that this "imprinting" has been her own work as a mother: "You know, darling, that ever since you were little I have tried to imprint this love of God on your heart."[65] Jane continues to advise Françoise about behavior fitting of a Christian woman and wife, underscoring her own role as mother seeking her daughter's spiritual perfection: "Receive this advice as coming from your mother who loves you dearly and who wants you always perfect in your state in life."[66] Jane draws ex-

61 Ibid.

62 Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal, *Letters of Spiritual Direction*, 250.

63 Ibid., 215.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid.

plicitly then upon her maternal authority, which rests primarily in her love for her daughter and her desire for her children's spiritual growth and perfection.

The image of "spiritual mothering" appears repeatedly in her letters to Visitation sisters. Jane regards herself as a mother figure to the Visitation sisters; her letters are filled with maternal words of affection, correction, and guidance. She frequently addresses Visitation sisters as "daughter," as when she tells her close co-worker Mother Marie-Jacqueline Favre, her "*grande fille*": "The love God has given me for you is most special, faithful, and tenderly maternal."[67] As the Visitation community expands to multiple foundations, Jane communicates her vision of good governance to the mothers-superior. Clearly, she values maternal governance that is firm but gentle and encouraging, that proceeds from a developmental understanding of human growth, and that keeps in view the larger aims of soul care. It is her role to form the mothers superior; employing her own maternal wisdom, she seeks to form them in maternal practices of love, care, and guidance. She counsels Mother Marie-Madeleine de Mouxy, superior of the Visitation community at Belley, to seek "the spirit proper to spiritual mothers who, with a tender and cordial love, see to the advancement of souls."[68] To Mother Marie-Adrienne Fichet, Superior at Rumilly, Jane writes: "In the end, *gentleness plays a large part in the way we govern*. Every day I notice that kindness, gentleness, and support, as well as generosity, can do so much for souls."[69] She implores a Superior at Digne to abandon her "harshness" and "severity," which Jane deems unsuitable to the Salesian charism: "I beg you, and urge you, to govern according to His Spirit and that of our vocation, which is a humble, gentle spirit, supportive and considerate of all."[70] The aim of this gentleness is to "win souls"[71] – and Jane encourages the mothers-Superior to respond to the particular needs of sisters with maternal wisdom and patience. For example, she advises the novice mistress at Dijon that Sister Anne Jacqueline has to be "handled playfully": "She is still very much a child and wouldn't have the stomach for eating solid meat, so to speak, and whoever would give her some would ruin her. She has to be led slowly and tenderly…You see, my dear, we have to cultivate in these young, delicate souls lots of vigor, cheerfulness, and joy."[72] Punishment should not be severe. If the sisters fail to obey, the mother-superior must "reprimand them

67 Ibid., 256-57.
68 Ibid., 245.
69 Ibid., 253.
70 Ibid., 248-49.
71 Ibid., 247.
72 Ibid., 248.

and correct them in a maternal manner, and support and love them."[73] Jane is well aware of the internal impediments that get in a mother's way; becoming a good mother requires one's own transformation. She often counsels the mothers-superior to rid themselves of self-preoccupation and scrupulosity so as to live into their maternal vocation more fully and freely. She advises the mother-superior at Turin in 1639: "You are their Mother and you should rid yourself of all those petty, narrow-minded impressions and govern with an expansive heart, in freedom and good faith, living with them in great and sincere liberty."[74] These letters to her spiritual daughter show her powerful maternal framing of religious leadership. Mothers ideally lead from the heart, seeking to guide their children with gentleness, discernment, playfulness, freedom, and the wisdom that keeps in mind the end goal, the advancement of souls.

Maternal Fatigue

All this maternal labor, though, is tiring. Wright and Power note that Jane's letters show more fatigue over time.[75] As Francis did in his letters of spiritual direction, so Jane also must address the challenges of work and busyness in her own life and in ministry with others. Like Francis, she accepts the reality of busyness and counsels practice that aligns with one's particular vocation. In a 1626 letter to her brother, the Archbishop of Bourges, she writes: "Do not think that by this I mean for us to retire into solitude, or to flee those occupations and legitimate contacts necessary to our vocations; oh no, for I very much like each one to stay in his state of life and not throw himself into the excesses of a hermit's devotion, especially you, my dearest Lord, for whom this would be most inappropriate."[76] She emphasizes the heart as the source and measure of devout practice; as she counsels her brother, we should seek "that secret, intimate union of our hearts with God…."[77]

Both Francis and Jane refer to their own lack of leisure and their difficulties in finding time for prayer and letter writing. As a bishop in the highly charged environment of Calvinist Geneva, Francis notes that at times he yearns to live like a desert hermit, yet must live instead his own active vocation. He tells

73 Ibid., 259-60.

74 Ibid., 260.

75 Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal, *Letters of Spiritual Direction*, 247.

76 Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal, *Letters of Spiritual Direction*, 205.

77 Ibid.

Jane that he must answer her letter "in haste for I have very little leisure."[78] He echoes the same thought in a letter to Madame de Limojon: "I've already written too much for this time, considering the little leisure that I have."[79] In 1616, Jane indicates that Francis is "overwhelmed with business" and notes that she herself has "so little leisure."[80] Her work is consuming, and she sounds hurried and overburdened. In a 1617 letter to the Visitation Mother-Superior at Moulins, Jane writes: "I must run, for I have little leisure and my arm and hand are starting to tire and hurt, even though I've just begun to write. I'm not able to do as much as I used to."[81] Writing from Paris in 1620, she tells the mother-superior of Moulins that she is "writing in breathless haste. We are always overwhelmed with work here."[82] In the midst of a turbulent time working to found the Paris Visitation community, she writes to the Mother-Superior at Grenoble: "there is such terrible turmoil here…All this has kept us quite busy, to say nothing of the continual, daily affairs and inconveniences which around here are endless."[83]

Life writing of Jane and Francis, then, surfaces issues of work, leisure, and time poverty as spiritual/theological issues. Any "ordinary" spiritual theology must address these dilemmas, and indeed I will argue for a fuller practical theological treatment of them in Part 2. Here I note that while the letters powerfully show Jane and Francis themselves struggling with the demands of their public ministry, they also point to some seeds of a Salesian practical theology of labor and leisure, well expressed in Jane de Chantal's letter about Francis de Sales in 1624, two years following his death. She writes: "For several years before his decease there was left him little leisure for prayer, as business overwhelmed him, and one day when I asked him if he had any time for prayer, he said, 'No, but I do what is the same.' In such wise, he held himself always united to God, saying that in this life work and labour are prayer. And most

78 Ibid., 153.

79 Ibid., 156.

80 Letter to Mother Marie Jacqueline Favre, January 4, 1616 and Letter to Sisters Péronne Marie de Chantal and Marie Aimée de Blonay, 1616, in *Selected Letters of Saint Jane Frances de Chantal*, translated by The Sisters of the Visitation (London: R. & T. Washbourne, LTD, 1918), 31, 34.

81 Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal, *Letters of Spiritual Direction*, 234.

82 Letter to Mother Jeanne Charlotte de Bréchard, Superior at Moulins, March 12, 1620, in *Selected Letters of Saint Jane Frances de Chantal*, trans. The Sisters of the Visitation (London: R. & T. Washbourne, LTD, 1918), 89.

83 Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal de Chantal, *Letters of Spiritual Direction*, 238.

certainly his life was a continual prayer."[84] Jane carries forward here the Salesian emphasis on love, a union of the heart, as central to devotion and links this to a spirituality of work. Work can be a spiritual practice, it can be prayer, if it flows from that enflamed love of God that is at the heart of devotion.

Conclusion

Jane de Chantal's life encompassed multiple vocations; she progressed through three states of life, as they were understood in her Catholic context: wife; widow; and nun. Woven throughout all three states of life: de Chantal is a mother, with varying levels of intensity of care, continuing worries, efforts to guide and support her adult children, and widening circles of "daughters" as she assumes the role of spiritual mother of the growing Visitation community. Her eventual transition from widowed young mother to enclosed nun is both a fulfillment of her lifelong discernment, a flowering of her mothering vocation, and a somewhat discordant note as regards the ordinary spiritual theology she and Francis together contributed to Catholic spirituality.

As Elisabeth Stopp points out, we know far less about the first two states of her life than we do about her later religious vocation and leadership.[85] Saint de Chantal is celebrated as the Visitation foundress, the nun, who in some sense transcended her natural passions and familial ties to embrace the higher calling of religious life. Her earlier life as widowed young mother, undoubtedly a vulnerable time, is less visible, her voice less accessible, particularly because she burned her letters to Francis. Thus, as in Kempe and Lee, one encounters hermeneutical silences in her maternal narrative, which is incomplete and partial, reflected to some extent in her many letters of spiritual direction to others, and refracted indirectly through the voice of her male clerical director. The voice of the young mother is heard not in its raw spiritual struggle but through the voice of the later, more mature mother and abbess.

The spiritual direction relationship is a key locus of Salesian practical theology, which emerges most vividly in letters of spiritual direction. It is here that Jane and Francis engage the particularities of individuals' lives and shape responses that are contextualized, personal, affective, and intersubjective. Their

84 Jane de Chantal, letter to Rev. Father Dom John de Saint François, General of the Order of Feuillants, 1624, in *Selected Letters of Saint Jane Frances de Chantal*, translated by The Sisters of the Visitation (London: R. & T. Washbourne, LTD, 1918), 131-32.

85 See Stopp, *Madame de Chantal: Portrait of a Saint*, 252.

letters are a form of life writing, entailing self-disclosure and self-narration, a vulnerability to introspection as they accompany others. Their practical theology is forged in ongoing relationships, animated by love and friendship that aims at spiritual perfection. Through wrestling with the concrete dilemmas, suffering, and insights of their correspondents over time, they begin to develop an ordinary spiritual theology that widens conceptions of vocation to encompass life in the world; roots devotion fundamentally in love; considers practice in a relational context; names work, leisure, and time pressure as spiritual issues; and frames mothering as a paradigm of lay devotion, a source of practical wisdom for leadership, and an image of a deeply relational God.

CHAPTER 4

Motherwork, Public Leadership, and Vocational Tensions: Dorothy Day, Dolores Huerta, and Lena Frances Edwards

Dorothy Day (1897-1980) is well known as the co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement and as a prominent Catholic lay leader in worker justice, pacifist, and civil rights causes. Dolores Huerta (1930-) played a major organizing role in the 1965 Delano, California grape strike and co-founded the United Farm Workers Union (UFW) with Cesar Chavez. She continued in leadership roles in labor and immigrant organizing for more than three decades. Lena Frances Edwards (1900-1986) was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1964 for her work as an obstetrician-gynecologist who established a maternity hospital in a migrant camp in Texas. These women are highly accomplished public leaders who fought for the dignity and rights of workers.

At the same time, there is a more complex picture that has yet to be painted of them. Day's spiritual autobiography and letters reveal the constant vocational tensions and intersections between her mothering – so integral to her religious conversion and identity – and her public leadership. Huerta's work also involved intense maternal care; she had eleven children whose care she constantly negotiated in order to create time and material sufficiency for union activity. Edwards had six children. Maternal labor was a dominant theme in her domestic life, medical practice, and volunteer work – all spheres which she did not compartmentalize but rather saw as deeply interconnected.

To narrate these women's 'public' work without exploring their maternal lives reduces the complexity of their vocational and spiritual narratives – and truncates the spiritual and theological reflection that could be generated from a more careful teasing out of the intersections and tensions of various forms of motherwork in their stories. Their life writing sheds light on the complicated interrelationships of public leadership, mothering, and spiritual practice. So too their stories suggest the importance and the limitations of community and communal motherwork. By juxtaposing the narratives of Day, Huerta, and Edwards, moreover, we see in relief the intersectionality of gender, race, and class in women's navigations of ecclesial and social structures, as well as the ambivalent role of the church in women's vocational formation and enactment.

Dorothy Day: From Nearing Heaven to the Long Loneliness

Day lived from 1897 to 1980, a lifespan that encompassed two World Wars, the Great Depression, the civil rights and the feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and the Vietnam War. This was a time of tremendous change in American Catholicism. Day saw the defeat of Alfred E. Smith, the first Catholic candidate for the U.S. presidency in 1928, the 1960 election of John F. Kennedy as the first Catholic president, and Kennedy's assassination in 1963. She was energized by the vibrant lay Catholic movements of the twentieth century – and became one of their inspirations. This analysis of Day's negotiation of spirituality, mothering, and public leadership should be seen in the context of those burgeoning lay movements of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, which in addition to the Catholic Worker included Young Christian Workers, Christian Family Movement, and the Grail. Strong European influence can be seen in the founding stories of many of these movements – the influence of Peter Maurin for the Catholic Worker, Jacques van Ginnekin for Grail, Joseph Cardijn for Young Christian Workers and Christian Family Movement. The intellectual Catholic Revival, the development of Catholic Action, and liturgical renewal inspired European Catholicism, and these influences spread to the United States. Lay Catholic movements of these pre-conciliar decades connected spirituality, the family, and public life; some saw the family as a primary agent of social transformation.

In 1933, in the midst of the Great Depression, Day co-founded the Catholic Worker movement with Peter Maurin (1877-1949), a French peasant and former member of the Christian Brothers religious order. The Catholic Worker was to be a spiritually-rooted response to the human indignities brought on by the capitalist system. While Franklin D. Roosevelt was outlining the New Deal, the Catholic Worker promoted a personalist philosophy and practice. Day and Maurin argued that social renewal would occur not through the modern state but through individual acts of love, service, and non-violence that uphold human dignity. They began publishing *The Catholic Worker* newspaper and later strove to embody their ideals in houses of hospitality and farming communes for the poor, unemployed, and homeless. Their movement drew followers from across the United States throughout the 1930s, and by 1942 Catholic Workers were running thirty-two houses of hospitality and twelve farms in the East and the Midwest.[1]

1 Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience* (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 411.

Day's public leadership traversed decades. Consistently pacifist, her opposition to the Second World War brought her into conflict with the prevailing anti-Communist, patriotic Catholic mentality. Throughout World War II, the movement maintained its pacifist stance (a move that cost the Catholic Worker public support and resulted in internal dissension and closure of many houses of hospitality). In the 1960s and 1970s, Day supported the civil rights movement, protested against the Vietnam War, and advocated for the farm worker movement. She admired Cesar Chavez deeply for his nonviolent, spiritual campaign on behalf of the farm workers. She corresponded with Chavez, visited UFW headquarters, and was jailed for the final time in 1973 after picketing for striking workers. During her time in jail, she wrote a letter to the California Catholic bishops calling them to task, demanding that they support the farm worker cause, sell holdings to benefit the poor, and embrace "holy poverty" as did Chavez.[2] The Catholic Worker movement stood on the fringes of American society, critiquing from a radical social and spiritual perspective. As Mel Piehl notes, the Catholic Worker had its strongest effect as a movement of spiritual renewal that combined a keen social conscience, intellectual power, and a contemplative impulse.[3]

My analysis of Day focuses primarily on the roughly two decades of Day's life when the tensions of her active mothering responsibilities and the demands of her public leadership were most intense, prior to Tamar's launching into adulthood. I draw primarily upon her autobiographical book *The Long Loneliness*, published in 1952, supplemented by selected letters, diary entries, and a widely circulated essay on childbirth that she published in the *Catholic Worker* newspaper.[4] Like others in the tradition of spiritual autobiography, such as Augustine and Tolstoy, Day understood her writing as a kind of confession, a baring of the soul in trust of God's mercy.[5] She also described writing

2 Dorothy Day, letter to the bishops of California, August 7, 1973, in *All the Way to Heaven: The Selected Letters of Dorothy Day*, edited by Robert Ellsberg (New York: Image Books, 2010), 515-19. Ellsberg notes that it is not clear whether Day actually mailed the letter.

3 Mel Piehl, *Breaking Bread: The Catholic Worker and the Origin of Catholic Radicalism in America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982). In particular, see chapter seven.

4 See Day's widely read essay on the birth of Tamar, "Having a Baby – A Christmas Story," *The Catholic Worker*, published 1928. Reprinted: December 1977, 8, 7. *The Catholic Worker Movement*. Accessed: May 16, 2016, http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/articles/583.html. See also Robert Ellsberg, ed., *All the Way to Heaven: The Selected Letters of Dorothy Day* (New York: Image Books, 2010) and Robert Ellsberg, ed., *The Duty of Delight: The Diaries of Dorothy Day* (New York: Image Books, 2011).

5 Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 10.

as an act of love and self-giving: "Going to confession is hard. Writing a book is hard, because you are 'giving yourself away.' But if you love, you want to give yourself."[6] Self-sacrificial love then could be practiced not only through mothering one's child but through public acts such as writing.

Indeed, Day described her public leadership in terms of maternal love. She extended her maternal identity and role to encompass the Catholic Worker community; as she wrote in *The Long Loneliness*: "I am a mother, and the mother of a very large family at that. Being a mother is fulfillment, it is surrender to others, it is Love and therefore of course it is suffering."[7] Day insisted on the interconnections between love and public witness. Love was the force that integrated faith, family, and work. Her vision for Christian community was radically open to and in solidarity with the poor, grounded in prayer, critically prophetic with regard to public issues, communicated through the practice of writing, and shared in personal acts of love.

How seamless was Day's integration of mothering and public leadership? Though June O'Connor suggests that "she never seemed to cast the mother in her and the worker in her in any opposition,"[8] Day's life writing in fact shows a persistent undercurrent of struggle to raise Tamar in the Catholic Worker Movement, to be apart from her daughter during her extensive travels, and to reconcile her public leadership with what she describes as woman's hidden, contemplative vocation. In short, Day did not easily resolve the vocational tensions of her highly public work and her mothering; rather, she wrestled mightily with how to enact the vocational integration suggested by her communal maternal self-understanding.

Day did not propose a romanticized or privatized vision of love. Love involved suffering: "Love is indeed a 'harsh and dreadful thing' to ask of us, of each one of us, but it is the only answer."[9] Love is the only "solution" to "the long loneliness" that besets all of us, "and that love comes with community."[10] For Day and Maurin, guided by personalist philosophy, individual acts of love and service and a practice of non-violence were key practices of public leadership.

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6 Ibid.

7 Ibid., 236.

8 June O'Conner, *The Moral Vision of Dorothy Day: A Feminist Perspective* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 31.

9 Robert Ellsberg, ed., *Dorothy Day: Selected Writings* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1982), 339.

10 Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 10.

While Day understood love as a public act, she also highly valued the family as a locus of love and transformative spiritual site. It was the love of an intimate relationship that drew her to God. Her relationship with Forster Batterham, whom she called her common-law husband, was critical to her subsequent conversion: "I have always felt that it was life with him that brought me natural happiness, that brought me to God."[11] The two lived in a fisherman's shack on Staten Island, and she delighted in her love, her friends, and the beauty of the bay, the fields, and the woods. Her spirituality here is sensual, embodied: "It was because through a whole love, both physical and spiritual, I came to know God."[12] When she conceived a child with Forster, her experience of the integration of physical and spiritual love deepened. She described her sense of connection to God as Creator and her own emerging insight into parenting as co-creation: "I could not see that love between man and woman was incompatible with love of God. God is the Creator, and the very fact that we were begetting a child made me have a sense that we were made in the image and likeness of God, co-creators with him."[13]

Day valued the community of the family even as she repeatedly experienced its loss. Forster, an atheist, did not share her growing spiritual sense; this difference ultimately would divide them. Day wanted to have Tamar baptized; she could not have Tamar "floundering through many years as I had done, doubting and hesitating, undisciplined and amoral."[14] Day came to see that this decision would mean an agonizing separation from Forster. As she described this rending in *The Long Loneliness*, she noted the value she attached to family life and to the creative act of bearing a child: "A woman does not want to be alone at such a time. Even the most hardened, the most irreverent, is awed by the stupendous fact of creation. Becoming a Catholic would mean facing life alone and I clung to family life.... I had known enough of love to know that a good healthy family life was as near to heaven as one could get in this life."[15] Here she named a recurrent paradox in her life – community and loneliness, love and loss. Note Day's epistemic claims imbedded here within her colloquial and autobiographical language; what she knows of love somehow yields knowledge of heaven, what she knows of pregnancy carries a spiritual "sense" or knowledge of the human relationship to God.

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11 Ibid., 134.

12 Ibid., 136.

13 Ibid., 135.

14 Ibid., 136.

15 Ibid., 136-37, 140.

Day's keen sense of the body as site of spiritual and practical wisdom is perhaps most poignantly revealed in an essay she wrote about her experience of childbirth, published in *The Catholic Worker*. The essay affirms the epistemological value of bodily experience; Day wrote about what her body came to know. In vivid detail, she described the physical experience of childbirth and breastfeeding. Her writing of the essay seemed an act of resistance to male-dominated accounts of childbirth; in the haze of labor she recounted all the literary scenes of childbirth she has read, noting: "All but one of these descriptions had been written by men, and, with the antagonism natural toward men at such a time, I resented their presumption. 'What do they know about it, the idiots,' I thought. And it gave me pleasure to imagine one of them in the throes of childbirth."[16] Day went on to describe her early breastfeeding experience with Tamar, again in concrete physical detail, the baby "mouthing around my nice full breast and too lazy to tug for food…Occasionally she pretends to lose me and with a loud wail of protest grabs hold once more to start feeding furiously. It is fun to see her little jaw working and the hollow that appears in her baby throat as she swallows."[17] Day's essay concludes contentedly with images of her stomach, the gulls and sky over the East River, and sounds of Tamar feeding noisily. As *The Long Loneliness* describes how she comes to know God through a "natural," "physical" love, so this essay insists on bodily knowing, told by women in their own words. It also conveys a time of expansive joy in mothering, delight in the new child merging with heightened awareness of the beauty of all creation.

Yet, the easy contentment of the breastfeeding mother yields to more complicated motherwork. *The Long Loneliness* shows glimpses of vocational strains and time poverty as Day tried to balance the care of her daughter Tamar with the demands of the Catholic Worker community. Day recalled: "With the beginnings of The Catholic Worker, my working day began at early Mass with the Opus Dei, and ended often at midnight. She [Tamar] was no longer my only one…At night when visitors came, workers, scholars, priests, laymen, I left her in the bath and all but forgot her in the heat of the discussion…. There were plenty who laid claim to my sympathy and loving care to the extent of forgetting I had personal family obligations."[18] As Day's communal caretak-

16 Dorothy Day, "Having a Baby – A Christmas Story," *The Catholic Worker*, December 1977, 8, 7, accessed: May 16, 2016, http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/articles/583.html.

17 Dorothy Day, "Having a Baby – A Christmas Story," *The Catholic Worker*, December 1977, 8, 7, accessed: May 16, 2016, http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/articles/583.html.

18 Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 135, 136-37, 140, 239, and 237.

ing expands, so she increasingly finds it difficult to balance that with care of Tamar.

In a diary entry in 1936, when Tamar was eight years old and the Catholic Worker still in its early years, Day expressed intense discouragement and a feeling that she was failing her daughter. She felt "bitterly oppressed" and spoke of the "price of bitter suffering for myself." Facing criticism and debts in the Worker movement, she wrote: "Nothing but the grace of God can help me but I feel utterly lacking, ineffective, my strength failing." Day described feeling completely alone, with a heavy heart and a dull mind. She lamented her lack of time with Tamar and her need to put her daughter in the care of others: "Tonight Tamar had a nose bleed, a headache, and a stomachache…to think of the little time I have with her, constantly to be on the go, leaving her to the care of others, sending her away so that she can lead a regular life and not be subject to the moods and vagaries of the crowd of us, this is probably the cruelest hardship of all." Day was torn by competing obligations and besieged by guilt, constantly failing to measure up to expectations with obligations in multiple places at the same time:

> She is happy, she does not feel torn constantly as I do, and then the doubt arises, probably she too feels that I am failing her just as the crowd on Mott St. and the crowd down here feel it. "You are always away." "You are never down here." And then when I get to Boston – "This is your work, why are you not up here more often?" Never before have I had such a complete sense of failure, of utter misery.[19]

As an adult, Tamar would acknowledge her experience of this tension. Intensely private, she offered a comment in a rare interview in 2003: "A lot of other children did have a difficult time being in the Worker. I think Dorothy was very aware of the fact that you can't do both well [parenting and Catholic Worker], and she was right…I was only 8 years old when it started. She was traveling a lot, and I was left to be taken care of by various people, and I got very ill. It was hard for both of us. She had her work, and yet at the same time she had me. She was very devoted. She was torn."[20]

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19 Dorothy Day, diary entry August 18. Marquette University, Department of Special Collections and University Archives.

20 Margot Patterson, "An Extraordinary, Difficult Childhood," *National Catholic Reporter* (March 7, 2003), accessed December 4, 2014, http://www.natcath.org/NCR_Online/archives/030703/030703k.htm.

Day's letters reveal her frequent separations from Tamar as she traveled across the United States for the Catholic Worker movement. In a letter dated 1940, when Tamar was twelve, she wrote: "I miss Tamar terribly, it's like a toothache."[21] Day drew upon "othermothers" to provide care for Tamar. For example, she placed Tamar in the home of family friend and liturgical artist Ade Bethune for a year when Tamar was sixteen. Bethune designed the masthead for the Catholic Worker newspaper and contributed other artwork to the movement. She took in girls as apprentices to her studio; Tamar spent the year learning the household arts.[22] Tamar later attended a high school in Montreal, where Day sent her to learn the crafts of spinning and weaving. During these periods of living apart, Day wrote very frequently, often daily to Tamar – handwritten letters, typed letters, and sometimes short notes sent on the back of postcards from Catholic Worker, bearing images of "Christ the Workman" with headings such as "Pray and Work." Shortly after Day left her at school in Montreal, she implored her daughter: "You must write or I will be anxious about you."[23] Day mingled spiritual advice with counsel about everyday concerns such as sleeping and homesickness, commending traditional Catholic devotions such as the rosary and the Stations of the Cross as well as offering to send Tamar her missal or Francis de Sales' *Introduction to the Devout Life*.[24]

Day did not easily relinquish control of her daughter to othermothers; she was at times conflicted. When Tamar lived with Ade Bethune, Day disagreed with Bethune about plans for Tamar's future education. She made it clear that she was Tamar's mother: "I know you are happy at Ade's but you cannot be a child all your life, and I disagree with her idea that high school will help you…I have seen you for seventeen years to their one, and I do think that no matter how mistaken mothers may be, they do know their daughters a little better than others."[25] When Day reflected in a diary entry about having Tamar in New York, with a plan for her to attend school on Mott Street near the Catholic Worker house, the conflict between her public work and the everyday demands of maternal care surfaced: "The only reason I ever sent her away was because with all my speaking trips I could not take proper care of her."[26]

21 Robert Ellsberg, ed., *All the Way to Heaven: The Selected Letters of Dorothy Day* (New York: Image Books, 2010), 146.

22 Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 191.

23 Robert Ellsberg, ed., *All the Way to Heaven: The Selected Letters of Dorothy Day* (New York: Image Books, 2010), 165.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid., 189.

26 Dorothy Day, diary entry, Sunday Sept. 11 6:30 PM. Marquette University, Department of Special Collections and University Archives.

In 1943, after years of public leadership – writing, organizing, speaking, building community – Day went on a retreat and there discerned that she would take a year's leave from the Catholic Worker movement. In a letter to Father Egan, she described her leave as a move to regain the spiritual grounding essential to the public work of the Catholic Worker movement: "My resolution was confirmed and strengthened that this retreat is the foundation for all our activity. Without it we do not know what the Folly of the Cross means."[27] Yet she also framed her decision in gendered terms as a turn away from publicness and multiplicity of occupation to woman's "hidden" and "contemplative" vocation. Her retreat would not be modeled on the Desert Fathers, the earliest Christian monastics, but rather would necessarily be shaped by family caretaking responsibilities, including the care of her mother who was seventy-three. As she wrote to Father Egan: "My being a hermit will not be very luxurious in the way of silence and solitude. There are family responsibilities of course which I cannot side-step, nor do I wish to."[28] Day equated "hiddenness" with sainthood and with women, particularly in the model of Mary.

It was during prayer to Mary that she experienced a call to leave public leadership: "But this move will mean getting out of public life, getting away from leadership, stepping down and being the least, serving, praying, being subject, rather than wielding authority. It was as I knelt in front of the statue of the Blessed Mother that the message came to me to leave the work. She lived a hidden life. That's what women ought to do."[29] Day seemed to despair of her "multiplying occupations" – which she saw mirrored more broadly in women's expanding public roles at this time. In her letter to Fr. Egan, she praised the value of the family and called for women to turn to a more prayerful, hidden vocation: "It is about time that women chose the better part, and lived the Mary life, and by that I mean the Blessed Mother life, which must have been a combination of Mary-Martha in the quietest way imaginable. Isn't it beautiful to think of?…I have come also to the conclusion, these last years, that we must ever put the family first…I had long since given up my family and my father used to reproach me, saying that charity began at home. Now I see my mother, my sister, and my two brothers more often, remembering that the family is the unit of society."[30] In effect, Day positions Mary as the alternate model to the

27 Robert Ellsberg, ed., *All the Way to Heaven: The Selected Letters of Dorothy Day* (New York: Image Books, 2010), 191.

28 Ibid., 194.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid., 195.

monastic elders; Mary's 'withdrawal' was not a flight to the desert but a hidden life of prayer and devotion within a familial vocation.

Day's leave lasted only six months.[31] She spent the first month of it at the Grail center in Illinois and the remainder in a convent in Farmingdale, New York, near Tamar, who attended school nearby. During the retreat time, she tried to catch up on missed time with family; she met regularly with Tamar and also visited her mother. At the same time, she tried to cultivate practices of silence, prayer, and solitude. She read Teresa of Avila on prayer, followed St. Benedict's advice to pray often in short prayers, and reflected on the sayings of the Desert Fathers. She continued to rely on counsel from her spiritual director. Her life writing reveals that this leave time was not an idyllic retreat; she experienced spiritual struggle, restlessness, and internal conflict about whether she was using her time well, whether she was practicing solitude and silence enough. One hears her persistent sense of guilt and failure – wanting to make up for lost time in her familial relationships, sensing that time for this is very short, feeling like she is failing spiritually:

> Primarily I was thinking of solitude in its figurative sense, in regard to Catholic Worker and all its parts, not in a literal sense. I intended to see my brothers, sister, mother, and child. To be as close to the latter as possible, as a matter of fact, because she wishes to marry soon and this will be my last year with her. I suggested my mother living with me, to make up to her somewhat for my neglect in the past but Fr. Hugo vetoed that. I agreed but said I must visit her…with regard to Tamar, Fr. said I did have an obligation there, so we have been together pretty steadily, as much as possible…These contacts, though I have not been able to help them…give me a sense of guilt.[32]

During these months, Day concluded that the solitary life was not her vocation – indeed, that it was not a woman's vocation: "…such a hermit's life for a woman was impossible…. To cook for one's self, to eat by one's self, to sew, wash, clean for one's self is a sterile joy. Community, whether of the family, or convent, or boarding house, is absolutely necessary."[33] At the same time, she expressed new appreciation for the contemplative vocation: "From that 'year'

31 See Ellsberg's useful notes in Day's collected letters and diaries.

32 February 1944, Farmingdale, New York, diary entry, Robert Ellsberg, ed., *The Duty of Delight: The Diaries of Dorothy Day* (New York: Image Books, 2008), 78-9.

33 Undated diary entry, Robert Ellsberg, ed., *The Duty of Delight: The Diaries of Dorothy Day* (New York: Image Books, 2008), 90.

I spent away from my work, I began to understand the greatness of the Little Flower [St. Therese of Lisieux]. By doing nothing she did everything. She let loose powers, consolations, a stream of faith, hope and love that will never cease to flow."[34]

Day, though, rarely did nothing. Work was "the dearest thing in life to me, aside from my daughter."[35] Contemplative time, rest, and renewal seemed to elude her. As she notes in a 1951 letter to Tamar: "They are running me ragged, that's why I don't write. Had to correct my proofs, write the column on pilgrimage and speak three times a day in Cleveland and Detroit, and I'm about done in…I have felt collapsed with all the work."[36]

As for silence, here too Day seems conflicted. She wrote voluminously and spoke out vociferously on major political issues for decades. Yet at points in her life writing, she links silence with a woman's vocation. In a 1944 diary entry: "Anyway, silence: We cannot have too much of it, especially from women. We all talk too much and too often. (Just because men do it is no excuse for our doing it.) We should mollify, reconcile, pacify."[37] In a 1951 diary entry, Day alludes to criticism that she should do more publicly for women's causes; she defends her silence against demands for a more public voice: "The women do not believe I do anything. They want it public, a public upholding. And they must just suffer these public humiliations, many of which they bring on themselves and I must many times be silent."[38] In these more private self-writings, Day turns inward, eschewing her public voice, embracing a traditionalist conception of women's vocation. Yet, there are hints here too of discord lying beneath the surface of her silence: "When I flare up, it does no good. Only adds to the flame, the disorder."[39]

Mary G. Mason writes that the difficulty in reconciling the persona of Day as public leader and her self-representation as woman is common in American women's autobiography. While male autobiography typically presents a coherent or singular self, Day's autobiographical writings

34 Ibid., 90-1.

35 Robert Ellsberg, ed., *All the Way to Heaven: The Selected Letters of Dorothy Day*, 194.

36 Letter to Tamar, postmarked October 4, 1951. Marquette University, Department of Special Collections and University Archives.

37 Diary entry, February 18, 1944, Robert Ellsberg, ed., *All the Way to Heaven: The Selected Letters of Dorothy Day* (New York: Image Books, 2010), 89.

38 Diary entry June 16, 1951, Robert Ellsberg, ed., *The Duty of Delight: The Diaries of Dorothy Day* (New York: Image Books, 2008), 174.

39 Ibid.

> …reflect an inconsistent self-perception about her identity as a woman. While the story of the development of her spiritual journey (which includes her development as a radical and social activist) shows a logical progression toward a vocation which is consistently radical, the story of her journey through womanhood is more of a debate, ending in a victory for conservatism in all issues relating to womanhood. This double perspective, as we might call this disharmony in Dorothy Day's life story, does, in fact, place her life writing squarely in the tradition of women's autobiographical writing as distinguished from the representative male tradition.[40]

According to autobiography theorist Sidonie Smith, the "double voice" of women autobiographers results from "the interaction of women's marginality with the self-authorization that comes in writing their life stories."[41]

In the 1940s and early 1950s, Day's life writing made several striking links between gender, silence, contemplation, family, and hiddenness, all of which she seemed to contrast with a public vocation. In this period of her life, she linked contemplative life for women with the hidden, less public, but socially essential work of family caretaking. Day, the increasingly public leader, was conflicted, wrestling with how to make sense of received spiritual and theological traditions in the midst of her own, unconventional life. Day's writing at this time reflected an essentialist understanding of woman's vocation – though over her lifetime surely Day's practice presented a more complex enactment of or lived theology of women's public and domestic callings. Her "double voice," her spiritual conflict, her sense of guilt and failure, coexist with her clarion vision of Christian community and her bold public leadership. There is ambivalence written into her narrative – praise for family life and awe at the creative gift of mothering; a sense of loss regarding the family life she gave up; insistence on her motherly authority; acknowledgment of her maternal failings; immersion in public work, including the very practice of writing; assertions of woman's "hidden" vocation.

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40 Mary G. Mason, "Dorothy Day and Women's Spiritual Autobiography," in *American Women's Autobiography: Fea(s)ts of Memory*, edited by Margo Culley (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1992).

41 Sidonie Smith, *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), see discussion in Mason, 186.

Dolores Huerta: Lighting the Candles and Working the Committee

Dolores Clara Fernandez Huerta was born in Dawson, New Mexico, a coal mining town. Her father, a Mexican American, was a miner and farm worker. Her parents divorced when she was three and her mother moved the family to Stockton, California in 1936, in the wake of the Great Depression. Her mother worked to support the family and her grandfather assisted with child care; thus, she grew up with the model of an employed mother and a domestically-involved male figure. Huerta credits her mother as her "greatest influence"[42], describing her as "very ambitious"[43] and determined to see her daughter succeed: "My mother had to work two jobs just to keep us fed…she would never take anything from welfare."[44] Huerta's mother took her to Mexico City when she was seventeen years old, a trip that "opened my eyes to the fact that there was nothing wrong with Chicanos."[45] According to Huerta, her mother also saw that she went to church on Sundays and received the sacraments, although she herself did not go as frequently, taking Sundays to get some rest. Huerta described a New Mexican influence in the spirituality of her upbringing, recalling the strong presence of the Virgin of Guadalupe, crucifixes, and the Santo Nino de Atocha.[46]

During college Huerta married; the couple went on to have two children. After she and her first husband divorced, she married Ventura Huerta and had five more children before divorcing again. She later married Richard Chavez, brother of Cesar Chavez, and had four more children – a total of eleven. Huerta worked as a grade school teacher until she decided to leave her position because she could "do more by organizing the farm workers than by

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42 Maria Luisa Torres, "Labor Leader Dolores Huerta Credits Family and Faith," in *A Dolores Huerta Reader*, edited by Mario T. García (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 156.

43 "Dolores Huerta Talks About Republicans, Cesár Chávez, Children, and Her Home Town," in *A Dolores Huerta Reader*, edited by Mario T. García (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 163.

44 "Dolores Huerta on Spirituality," interview with Mario T. García, June 1, 2007, in *A Dolores Huerta Reader*, edited by Mario T. García (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 333.

45 "Dolores Huerta Talks About Republicans, Cesár Chávez, Children, and Her Home Town," in *A Dolores Huerta Reader*, edited by Mario T. García (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 164-65.

46 "Dolores Huerta on Spirituality," interview with Mario T. García, June 1, 2007, in *A Dolores Huerta Reader*, edited by Mario T. García (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 333.

teaching their hungry children."[47] In 1955, she began working with organizer Fred Ross to build a Stockton chapter of the Community Service Organization (CSO). As a single mother with seven children at the time, this was a big decision, trading a more secure teaching position for the low pay and long hours of organizing. Huerta describes it as a stepping out in faith. She asked God to "give me a sign, to show me if I was doing the right thing."[48] She found those signs immediately and for years later in the help that others provided to her and her family: a box of groceries left on her porch, donations of winter coats to her, extended family help with her children. She saw God working through these tangible expressions of support: "I saw all of these as little signs, and over the years, my decision has been affirmed many, many times in so many little ways."[49] Her work on behalf of Hispanics continued as she helped to found the Agricultural Workers' Association (AWA) in 1960. She met Cesar Chavez, with whom she founded the National Farm Worker Association (NFWA) in 1962. Together Chavez and Huerta founded the United Farm Workers Union (UFW) in 1965.[50] Huerta played a major organizing role in the grape strike that began in 1965 with a vote by farm workers in Delano, California. The strike lasted five years and developed into an international grape boycott. This organizing success was remarkable, given the opposition from large corporations, their governmental allies (e.g., Ronald Reagan, governor of California from 1966 to 1975, publicly ate grapes during the grape boycott), and established unions such as the Teamsters. Huerta continued in leadership roles in the UFW for more than three decades. While earlier accounts of the farm worker movement rendered a "patriarchal interpretation" of the origins of the movement,[51] focusing predominantly on Chavez' contributions while minimizing Huerta's leadership, Huerta's importance now is becoming more widely recognized. In the 1990s, she also assumed public leadership roles in feminist causes, including pro-choice lobbying.

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47 Maria Luisa Torres, "Labor Leader Dolores Huerta Credits Family and Faith," in *A Dolores Huerta Reader*, edited by Mario T. García (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 156.

48 Ibid., 157.

49 Ibid.

50 National Women's History Museum, "Dolores Clara Fernandez Huerta (1930-)," accessed: May 17, 2016, https://www.nwhm.org/education-resources/biography/biographies/dolores-fernandez-huerta/.

51 See Margaret Rose, "Traditional and Nontraditional Patterns of Female Activism in the United Farm Workers of America, 1962-1980," *Frontiers* XI, no. 1 (1990): 26.

Huerta did not write an autobiography, but she did give numerous interviews and speeches and wrote countless letters now preserved in archives. I draw upon her letters as forms of life writing, amplified by other self-representations in interviews and public speeches, in order to surface key themes of public leadership, self-sacrifice, mothering, and communal motherwork. Letter writing contributed to Huerta's identity construction and enabled her to legitimate her emerging public vocation, narrate her self-sacrifice for the union, and build networks of communal motherwork to assist with her children. As Stacey K. Sowards notes: "Huerta developed intersectional identities related to gender, ethnic, and class consciousness through her work with the UFW. The process of writing letters allowed Huerta to claim her own names, stories, and experiences, facilitating this intersectional identity constitution through affirmation of self."[52] Her letters reflect the reality of time poverty, financial poverty, illness, and the strains of child care. They also represent Huerta as self-sacrificial, as seen in this letter from Huerta to Cesar Chavez:

> Yes, I am still breathing, although I got a bad scare last week. I kept feeling worse and worse so I went to the County Hospital and they shook me up because they said I have to have an operation…I have a tumor in one of my ovaries…The only reason I hate to get operated on is because I hate to lose the time. My health, plus no bay [sic] sitter is one of the reasons things hav [sic] not been moving, so help me Cesár, without someone to watch my kids, I [sic] just can't find enough time to work, especially in the evening when it counts.… Also my finances have been terrible. I only drew $20.00 on my last U.I. check and have two weeks for my next check.[53]

She asked Chavez if she could charge $5 for some of the union membership cases to pay for some help, but she quickly added: "don't feel bad in telling

52 Stacey K. Sowards, "Rhetorical Functions of Letter Writing: Dialogic Collaboration, Affirmation, and Catharsis in Dolores Huerta's Letters," *Communication Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (2012): 307. See also Mario T. García, ed., *A Dolores Huerta Reader* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008).

53 Dolores Huerta, letter to César Chávez, "Yes, I am still breathing." (n.d.). Collection: United Farm Workers, Box 2, Folder 14. Available at: Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

me no. I will manage somehow."[54] In another letter, Huerta wrote to Cesar and Helen Chavez from the hospital following a blood transfusion; she apologized that her illness was slowing her work: "I hope this illness of mine does not foul things up too much…I can't think of anything else to say except to apologize for being under the weather."[55] Similarly, she concludes another letter: "…I am sorry for getting ill at such an inopportune time."[56] As Sowards notes, self-sacrifice is a prominent theme in Huerta's letters: "These numerous narratives of sacrifice may have been conscious or unconscious rhetorical choices, but the reader understands from these letters that she sacrificed herself for the union."[57]

Huerta understood self-sacrifice to be an essential part of leadership: "you can't help poor people and be comfortable. You know, the two things are just not compatible…you've got to be prepared to be a little bit uncomfortable and to put a little bit of sacrifice behind it."[58] Her children also sacrificed; Huerta noted, for example, that during the Delano grape strike they did not have fresh milk for two years. According to Huerta, such suffering is formative, good for children's moral and spiritual development: "It's made them understand what hardship is, and this is good because you can't really relate to suffering unless you've had a little bit of it yourself."[59] Huerta linked her commitment to self-sacrificial service with her Southwestern Catholic spirituality, noting especially devotion to St. Francis Xavier and St. Francis of Assisi: "helping others…and not expecting gratification or rewards…All those core values I did get them from religion."[60]

Marian devotion supported Huerta in navigating everyday problems, including those she encountered in her union organizing; she apparently did not

54 Dolores Huerta, letter to César Chávez, "Yes, I am still breathing." (n.d.).

55 Dolores Huerta, letter to César Chávez, July and August 1964, in Garcia, 212.

56 Dolores Huerta, letter to Cesar Chávez, "Just a few short lines." (n.d.). Collection: United Farm Workers, Box 2, Folder 13. Available at: Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

57 Stacey K. Sowards, "Rhetorical Functions of Letter Writing: Dialogic Collaboration, Affirmation, and Catharsis in Dolores Huerta's Letters," *Communication Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (2012): 306.

58 "Keynote Address before the Annual Convention of the American Public Health Association" (Oct. 21, 1974), in *A Dolores Huerta Reader*, edited by Mario T. García (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 233.

59 "Dolores Huerta Talks About Republicans, Cesár Chávez, Children, and Her Home Town," in *A Dolores Huerta Reader*, edited by Mario T. García (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 167.

60 "Dolores Huerta on Spirituality," interview with Mario T. García, June 1, 2007, in ibid., 332.

experience a dissonance between Marian piety and her "nontraditional" public leadership. Huerta described her own longstanding devotion to the Virgin Mary and her practice of carrying and saying the rosary, which she understood to protect her from harm. For example, she prayed the rosary from Yuma to Calexico when her car alternator broke and when she was seriously beaten by police: "I've had so many close calls and I always start praying the rosary right away."[61] Her reliance upon *la virgen* reflected larger cultural and political practice. Our Lady of Guadalupe was a highly visible symbol of hope and solidarity in the farm worker movement. The vote for the 1965 grape strike took place in Our Lady of Guadalupe church in Delano on September 16, Mexican Independence Day. Banners picturing Our Lady of Guadalupe led the march of striking workers from Delano to Sacramento in 1966, a pilgrimage and public demonstration meant to draw support for the farm workers. Huerta reflected that Our Lady was "a symbol of the impossible, of doing the impossible to win a victory, in humility.... I mean that's the important thing she symbolizes to the union: that with faith you can win. You know with faith you can overcome."[62] While the example of Mary pointed Dorothy Day to a "hidden," private vocation in the family, and thus intensified her sense of conflict between domestic and public callings, Huerta's devotion to Mary supported her public leadership, providing a shared communal symbol of comfort and hope in the struggle.

Huerta described prayer as a part of her spiritual life but she critiqued practices of prayer that fostered complacency when it came to social action. Prayer was important but not sufficient to correct social injustice. For Huerta, union organizing itself had to be understood as a critical practice of faith:

> you grow up in the Catholic culture and religion, going to all of the sacraments and everything, but I think you don't really grasp onto the faith until you are in situations like I have seen in organizing...I remember when I was lobbying in Sacramento to get the bills passed – we had a bill to get pensions for non-citizens...before I would go to the capitol to lobby I would go to the cathedral right there by the capitol and I would light all my candles and say my prayers. Then I would go to the legislature hearings. It's really funny because Sal Alvarez who was my assistant...would say, "Well, I lit all the candles," and I would say, "No, Sal, that's not going to

61 Ibid., 339.

62 Andres G. Guerrero, *A Chicano Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987), 105-6.

> do it, you have to light the candles and work the committee too. Lighting the candles isn't enough."[63]

Huerta did not seem to experience the ambiguities that Day described, the pull toward a more "hidden, contemplative" vocation. Hers was a thoroughly activist, public spirituality.

Working the committee, though, was not a typical role for women in the Hispanic community. According to historian Margaret Rose, Huerta's leadership in the UFW challenged traditional Hispanic values around women and the family. Rose compares Huerta to Helen Chavez, wife of Cesar Chavez and mother of eight children, who took major responsibility for the family while playing a more "invisible," volunteer role in the union activities. While she worked in the fields to help support the family at points and also managed the UFW credit union, Helen Chavez commented: "I felt that my job was at home taking care of my children. That was the most important thing to me and I felt, as a woman, [that] that's very important to a child."[64] According to Rose, Helen Chavez' approach was more typical of UFW women: "This value reflects the aspiration of many working-class Chicanas and recently immigrated Mexicanas who desired to care for their families like middle-class Anglo wives and mothers but were denied this opportunity because of economic need. Like black women, who were also forced to work, they were pushed into the labor force by the inferior wages their husbands earned in a racially segmented labor market."[65] Huerta's public leadership, then, challenged ideals of motherhood common among women in the UFW.

At the same time, Huerta used her public platform to stand up for the rights and care of poor, Mexican mothers. In her keynote address to the American Public Health Association, she detailed the huge strides made by the farm worker medical plan and union-supported farm worker health clinics. One of those benefits was the provision of non-judgmental health care to Mexican women. Huerta alludes to her own experience of racism as a mother of many children:

63 "Dolores Huerta on Spirituality," interview with Mario T. García, June 1, 2007, in *A Dolores Huerta Reader*, edited by Mario T. García (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 331.

64 Interview cited in Margaret Rose, "Traditional and Nontraditional Patterns of Female Activism in the United Farm Workers of America, 1962-1980," *Frontiers* XI, no. 1 (1990): 29.

65 Ibid.

> Now, some of you might wonder how come I have ten children, right? One of the main reasons is because I want to have my own picket line. But all kidding aside, it's really nice to be able to go to a clinic when you are pregnant with your tenth baby and not have people look at you like you are kind of crazy.
>
> Or like you don't know where they come from, or put pressure on you not to have any more children. Because after all you know, Mexicans are kind of poor people and you shouldn't have all that many kids. So that's another good thing about our clinics. Because unfortunately, that pressure not to have children translates itself in county hospitals and places where people have no power… And I guess I feel a little bit strongly about that because I've been in situations where I've seen children die, babies die, because somebody there thought they shouldn't have been born in the first place.[66]

Huerta thus defends the rights of women to have large families and to receive quality health care that is respectful of their cultural values.[67]

Given her own large family and as a single mother, Huerta relied on communal motherwork in ways that Cesar Chavez, with wife Helen at home, did not need to do. Huerta's letters show her agency in creating a network of support in child care, including the children's fathers (her ex-husbands), her extended family, Helen Chavez, and many other union members. In one letter, Huerta tells Cesar and Helen that her sister comes three times per week to assist with housework and her *aijada* (god-daughter) had come to live with her as well. Huerta hopes that she too will help around the house.[68] In another letter, Huerta describes how she is scrambling to place her children temporarily with their father and extended family and thus to reduce her living costs; she considered also the needs of her young son Vincent:

> I am now working on having my kids stay with various assorted relatives for the next month and one half until school starts. If all goes very well, I will still be left with maybe one or two kids, depending on whether Ventura [Huerta's first ex-husband] can make arrangements to keep the

66 "Keynote Address before the Annual Convention of the American Public Health Association" (Oct. 21, 1974), in *A Dolores Huerta Reader*, edited by Mario T. García (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 232-33.

67 Note that decades later, in the 1990s, Huerta assumed a public role in feminist causes, including pro-choice lobbying.

68 Dolores Huerta, letter to Cesar Chávez, "Just a few short lines." (n.d.).

> boys, anyways Vincent I would not leave anywhere as he would miss me too much…Then do you suppose I could make living arrangements with someone to put me and my one kid up for a month and one half, then I could pay room and board. That means I would not be paying rent, or a baby sitter or utilities, at least until school begins.[69]

In other correspondence, Huerta tells Chavez that she will fire her babysitter so as to cut her living expenses in order to take a lower salary from the union. She again depends on extended family for free housing and child care to help her make ends meet and to clear time for union organizing:

> I spoke to my step-father about giving me 6 months rent free. I expect to fire my babysitter, Sunday, so then my living expenses will be cut down about half. I am again going to propose my plan to CSO that they pay just for two days a week for lobbying, instead of a weekly salary. On $30 a week, I should be able to survive, if I don't have to pay a baby sitter. Maybe I can get someone to watch the kids for me just two days a week, free, then I can have the house meetings at night, for the Association.[70]

As Erin Doss and Robin Jensen note, Huerta's rejection of traditional gender roles, her reliance on others for child care, and her history of divorce led to "approbation" and "ridicule."[71] She encountered opposition from church leaders, particularly in the early years of the movement when the church was aligned with the wealthy growers. Huerta was challenging long-entrenched Catholic ideals of motherhood and domesticity, and at times she was directly admonished to stay home with her children. For example, she describes a painful falling out with her close friend Father McCullough. Interestingly, the argument plays out at her mother's house, and it is her mother who lends her support:

> We were at my mother's house – this was after we had been working together for three or four years – he says to me, "Well, you really should

69 Dolores Huerta, letter to Cesar Chávez, "Just a few short lines." (n.d.).

70 Dolores Huerta, letter to Cesar Chávez, "You Have Probably Thought," 1962. Collection: United Farm Workers. Available at: Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

71 Erin F. Doss and Robin E. Jensen, "Balancing Mystery and Identification: Dolores Huerta's Shifting Transcendent Persona," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99, no. 4 (November 2013): 487.

> stay home with your children, this is not a good place for women." Can you believe that? I remember this because I was so close to him. I lived in the housing projects, went to his church every Sunday. I even named one of my kids after him. I was shocked. But luckily my mother said to me, "Don't pay attention." She always had really good liquor for company and she pulled out a bottle of tequila and we had a shot of tequila.[72]

While the church eventually became a strong advocate for the farmworkers, its initial alignment with the growers played out with Huerta in gendered politics of resistance – directed specifically as a critique of her mothering.

Huerta asserted that criticism of her mothering was a middle-class hang-up; poor women live with childcare difficulties, either leaving their children to work or bringing the children out to the fields with them. Middle-class people are "more hung up about these things than the poor people are."[73] Huerta was unapologetic about the time she spent working for the union: "If you let it bug you when people say that you're not being a good mother because you're not with your kids 24 hours a day, well then of course it will deter you from what you're doing." Noting that union members helped to take care of one another's children, she pointed to the cultural value of communal motherwork, or extended family: "The idea of the communal family is not new and progressive…Remember when you were little you always had your uncles, your aunts, your grandmother, and your comadres around. As a child in Mexican culture you identified with a lot of people, not just your mother and father like they do in the middle class homes."[74] Her philosophy of mothering flowed from her understanding of leadership and self-sacrificial spirituality. Mothering was formation for public service, for the community. While her children had fewer material goods and less time with her: "At least my kids know why I'm not home. They know that I'm doing this for something in which we're all working."[75] She understood her children to be part of the struggle, *viva la huelga*.

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72 "Dolores Huerta on Spirituality," interview with Mario T. García, June 1, 2007, in *A Dolores Huerta Reader*, edited by Mario T. García (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 335.

73 Mario T. García, ed., *A Dolores Huerta Reader* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 168. Original article published in *La Voz del Pueblo*, January 25, 1973, pp. 3-4.

74 "Dolores Huerta Talks About Republicans, Cesár Chávez, Children, and Her Home Town," in *A Dolores Huerta Reader*, edited by Mario T. García (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 166-67.

75 Ibid.

Lena Frances Edwards: With All the Love that I Put into My Work

Lena Frances Edwards's life story also presents a rich source for theological reflection on mothering, public leadership, and spirituality. Edwards was an African American Catholic, obstetrician-gynecologist, mother of six, lay Franciscan, teacher, and a leading voice in improving maternal care for migrant workers and immigrants. In her sixties Edwards left her medical practice and teaching position and moved to Texas to build a maternity hospital in a migrant labor camp. She was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1964 and the Poverello Medal in 1967, recognizing her charitable work in the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi.

Edwards did not leave behind a spiritual autobiography; she noted: "I'm not one for writing."[76] However, she did narrate her life story in several oral histories, including one conducted by the Schlesinger Library as part of an effort to record and transcribe the autobiographical memoirs of African American women over the age of seventy.[77] Edwards also spoke of her life in interviews for several publications, including *Ebony* magazine, local newspapers, and Catholic media. Her letters, many of which are preserved in a collection at Howard University, provide another form of life writing. These autobiographical sources provide important access to a twentieth-century lay black Catholic woman whose life was devoted to maternal health and who melded mothering, public leadership, and spirituality in quite integrated ways.

Edwards grew up in a professional, well-educated family in Washington, DC, her father a dentist and professor at Howard University. She graduated second in her medical school class at Howard University in 1925 and married a fellow medical student, John Madison, shortly thereafter. Her first daughter, Marie, was born two months after Edwards began her medical practice, followed by five more children by 1939. She served on staff at the Margaret Hague Maternity Hospital in Jersey City, New Jersey. Repeatedly denied the opportunity to do a medical residency because she was an African American woman, she finally persuaded her chief to accept her application after working at the hospital for more than a decade. She began her residency at age forty-three. At that time, she had six children. As she and her husband divorced, she carried a primary caretaking role, as did Day and Huerta.

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76 Black Women Oral History Project. Interviews, 1976-1981. Lena Frances Edwards-Madison. OH-31. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, written transcript, 15.

77 Black Women Oral History Project. Interviews, 1976-1981. Lena Frances Edwards-Madison. OH-31. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

Edwards' spirituality was shaped by her experience of pregnancy and labor. She suffered from heart failure during labor with her two youngest children, nearly dying during the last child's birth; this traumatic event strengthened her resolve "to see my children grow up" and led her to promise God to "come see Him every day."[78] She attended daily Mass for more than forty years after the birth of her youngest child, faithful to her promise.

Edwards acknowledged that her family and work demands sometimes conflicted. Interviewed in 1981, at age 81, she noted: "As for combining family life with a career, sometimes there was conflict when you had to do both."[79] Yet, like Huerta, she expressed little spiritual or vocational angst about such conflicts; rather, she situated them within a larger integrated view of forming her children spiritually and modeling public service and leadership.

With no apology she described the intensive work pace that she sustained while pregnant and immediately after childbirth. She eschewed the common medical practice of remaining in bed for eight days after childbirth. Instead, noting the midwifery practices and work patterns of the many European women who lived in Jersey City, "who were out of bed the next day…hale and hearty," she too continued working much closer to childbirth:

> So I had children and ten days after my baby was born I was out climbing stairs in the tenement houses, and I worked until they were born. My membranes ruptured just before my child was coming, just before I had my office hours. And I went in the office and finished my office hours, I didn't go to the hospital. I'd been in the hospital a few weeks before because I was in heart failure, for it was the only way they could slow me down, but when I came home I got back to work and I stayed home and had that baby.[80]

Edwards took pride in her capacity to work with little pause in the midst of the most intense physical demands of mothering.

As Edwards narrates her life as a Catholic, a mother, a physician, and a public leader, there is little compartmentalization or dichotomizing of these various aspects of her identity and work. For example, according to Edwards,

78 Ibid., 7.

79 "Dr. Lena Edwards – A Sprite Senior Who Keeps Fighting," *The Monitor*, Trenton, NJ (May 7, 1981).

80 Black Women Oral History Project. Interviews, 1976-1981. Lena Frances Edwards-Madison. OH-31. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, written transcript, 31-2.

her maternal identity propelled her public speaking: "I lecture all over the country, on various aspects of career development; especially I like to lecture to mothers and children about their children. Because I feel that my most important degree is my 'MA' (Mother)."[81] In a speech she delivered on work and inter-racial justice, she incorporates various aspects of her identity without tension:

> I am a Catholic because I believe in the teachings of the Church. I am a mother because I believe that the home is the unit of American life. I…am confident that the children I bore are going to be fine citizens. I am a physician because I believe I have a vocation that I must learn to administer to the sick and do so the best of my ability. I am going to devote my life to the achievement of Inter-racial justice because I believe that all men should have equal opportunities.[82]

Her Catholic faith shaped her career and sense of vocation. As she stated above, she felt a religious and moral calling to care for the sick. She also loved teaching. In 1954, she joined the faculty of Howard University Medical School. Edwards' religiously grounded opposition to abortion was one factor in her decision not to assume the head of department position at Howard University: "I would be automatically approving sterilizations and therapeutic abortions, which was against my religion…as head of department I would be responsible for all procedures. I could not approve sterilization and therapeutic abortions."[83] Her faith also led her to leave university teaching in order to found a maternity hospital for migrant workers in 1960. Edwards had wanted to serve the poor more directly through mission work once her children were grown. When a seminarian who was studying with her son Thomas mentioned a migrant camp in Hereford, Texas, run by the Graymoor Brothers, she perceived that this was the season for her new vocation. Edwards visited the camp and decided to move there. She left her medical practice and teaching profession and moved to Hereford, far from her adult children and her ailing mother, who did not want her to leave. Edwards put her own savings toward the building of a maternity hospital for migrant workers (the hospital was named for Our Lady

81 Ibid., 30-1.

82 Lena Edwards, "Means of Contributing to Inter-Racial Justice Through Your Profession," Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

83 Black Women Oral History Project. Interviews, 1976-1981. Lena Frances Edwards-Madison. OH-31. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, written transcript, 7.

of Guadalupe). She labored there for four years with little pay, working primarily with Mexican migrants. It was not an easy time; she encountered racism and had difficulty securing local community support: "I have had almost five years of struggle here…many times I've wondered if I'd be lynched."[84] Despite such challenges, Edwards described not only a commitment to her profession, but also great joy in and love for her work.[85] Recalling the serendipitous connections between various aspects of her work – promoting natural childbirth, the migrant worker mission in Texas, invitations to work with the March of Dimes – Edwards said, "I feel that when you do your thing in all earnestness, and with all the love that I put into my work, somehow or other it gets around."[86]

Edwards battled racism both in multiple settings, including the church. She responded vociferously when it impacted her children. In 1949, she wrote a letter to the head of the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO), excoriating the "lily white" organization for denying entrance to her children because of their race. Her maternal voice is fierce as she decries the impact of such racism on her children's faith and well-being:

> The results are that now Thomas my fifteen year old son is lost [underlined] to the faith in which he has been raised…Not only this but Thomas has become reclusive and is developing a pattern of "not wanted" except at home…. I have six children and one by one their Catholic faith has been shattered by these acts of prejudice…I have had to make extra sets of penance to pray for the souls of those who reject my offspring, for courage to keep my Catholic faith strong, for words to convince these children that God is the ultimate Head of our Church but the rules are administered by humans like I who are not infallible… "As you do unto the least of my little ones you do unto me."[87]

Edwards' experience of racism was not unique. Historian Cyprian Davis describes how black Catholics in mid-twentieth century America "made their

84 "Dr. Edwards Made Mark at Camp," *The Sunday Brand*, Hereford, TX, July 18, 1965.

85 Black Women Oral History Project. Interviews, 1976-1981. Lena Frances Edwards-Madison. OH-31. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, written transcript, 7.

86 Ibid., 11.

87 Lena Edwards (Madison) M.D., letter to Rev. Fr. Murphy, Catholic Youth Organization, Jersey City, NJ, March 7, 1949, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

presence recognized in the monolithic structure of American Catholicism, even when their demands generated cracks and fissures in the solid front of what some labeled as a 'white, Euro-American church.'"[88]

Edwards took the religious formation of her children very seriously. She and her husband moved to Jersey City early in their marriage so that the children could attend Catholic schools there. As Edwards gave her oral history, she proudly recalled her children's growing moral and spiritual formation. Edwards recounted a story, for example, about her plans to take her three sons to a much-anticipated basketball game. Just as they were ready to depart, she got a call about a patient who was very sick and needed to go to the hospital. Edwards told the boys that she would get another doctor to care for the patient, as she had promised to take the boys to the game for months. Her ten-year-old son John told her to go to the hospital and take care of the patient because she was "doing corporal works of mercy." Edwards clearly took pride in her son's religious understanding and growing sense of duty to God and neighbor.[89]

Edwards' philosophy and spirituality of mothering emphasized equipping, teaching, guiding, forming, stimulating, and cooperating. She envisioned mothering as a partnership with her children and emphasized the importance of mutual communication, "which enables that child to feel that it has a partner, rather than a boss. That has been, I think, the greatest secret of the success of my six children, because we talked things over."[90] Edwards called herself a "nut about education"[91], a commitment she brought not only to raising her own children but also to volunteer work and advocacy for multiple educational organizations. She described mothering as a kind of teaching, attentive to the child's development and the goal of forming leaders who can think for themselves. "Because from the time they were knee-high to a duck, they could discuss with me something, rather than just be pushed around to do it because I said so."[92] As she told her six-year-old grandson, who questioned whether he

88 Cyprian Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 239. For a theological treatment, see too Bryan N. Massingale, *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 2010). See too Jamie T. Phelps, O.P., ed., *Black and Catholic: The Challenge and Gift of Black Folk, Contributions of African American Experience and Thought to Catholic Theology*, 2nd edition (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2002).

89 Ibid., 29-30.

90 Ibid., 34.

91 Ibid., 31.

92 Ibid., 30.

had to do what he was told: "Sometimes we give in, sometimes you give in, but whatever we do is going to be for the best of your development."[93] As she aimed to form leaders, this kind of critical thinking was essential: "I believe you don't raise your children, but you grow up together. You've got to let children grow up thinking – but with guidance. Then you've got leaders."[94]

Edwards' caring work continued long after her children were grown. She left the Texas mission in 1965 to care for her mother who now was in a nursing home in Washington. In describing her decision, she notes the sacrifices made by her own mother: "…it worried me to see a woman who had sacrificed her life for her children in a nursing home, instead of in my home."[95] Edwards took her mother into her own home in Jersey City and cared for her during the last year and a half of her life. After her mother's death, she remained in Jersey City before moving to Lakewood, New Jersey. She continued public advocacy, public speaking, and volunteer work with several community organizations, including the Model Cities Health Program, where she worked for preventative medicine; Alcoholics Anonymous, where she sought to establish a detox center for women; and Head Start, where she worked in child training and nutrition. Even into her eighties, Edwards continued to labor on behalf of senior citizen organizations.

She used her public speaking to promote dialogue and advance the cause of blacks in the Catholic Church. She was an active member of the Catholic Interracial Council.[96] She spoke to Rosary Societies in affluent communities, an "opportunity to let them know that I believe that the black man has a place in the Catholic Church."[97] Edwards chose to use her public position and voice to seek reconciliation and justice. She noted: "instead of making streams I have made bridges everywhere I go, in the Catholic church."[98]

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93 Ibid., 30-1.

94 "Dr. Lena Edwards – A Sprite Senior Who Keeps Fighting," *The Monitor*, Trenton, NJ (May 7, 1981).

95 Black Women Oral History Project. Interviews, 1976-1981. Lena Frances Edwards-Madison. OH-31. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, written transcript, 12.

96 See Sister M. Anthony Scally, *Medicine, Motherhood, and Mercy: The Story of a Black Woman Doctor* (The Associated Publishers, 1979), 53.

97 Black Women Oral History Project. Interviews, 1976-1981. Lena Frances Edwards-Madison. OH-31. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, written transcript, 48.

98 Ibid.

Conclusion

Dorothy Day is well known as one of the foremost American Catholic public figures of the twentieth century. A significant author in Christian spirituality, she is currently being considered for canonization. Less well known, less reflected upon, are the vocational and spiritual conflicts she expresses in her life writing. Here emerges her sense of tension between maternal and communal roles, hidden and public vocations. She embodied radical Christian witness. She worried about seeing her mother and daughter enough. She was a public leader, deeply immersed in the needs of the city. She read the Desert Fathers, appreciated Therese of Lisieux's contemplative vocation, and went on retreat. She traveled widely and missed Tamar like a toothache. She wondered if she should imitate Mary's hidden vocation more.

Dolores Huerta and Lena Edwards likewise were tremendous public leaders in twentieth century America. Huerta partnered with Chavez to organize farm workers– overseeing the grape strike, traveling and speaking, negotiating care for eleven children. Edwards paved a bold course as an African American female physician, professor, and missionary doctor, earning the Presidential Medal of Freedom. She managed care of six children. Day, Huerta, and Edwards all stepped out into unconventional vocations, and all were single mothers for some portion of time. Yet while Huerta and Edwards acknowledged pragmatic conflicts – difficulty finding child care, time poverty, competing demands of children and work – they described little sense of spiritual or vocational conflict. They appeared to integrate their mothering and public labors with far less angst than is the case for Day.

How does their life writing reflect different understandings and experiences of Christian spirituality? Huerta encountered ample social and ecclesial resistance to her non-traditional role as union organizer, but she did not appear to question her own spiritual grounding and practice. Marian piety and Franciscan spirituality provided a source of strength for her in navigating obstacles and asserting her role in union leadership. Her writing reflected Latino/a spirituality in its emphases on community, self-sacrifice, and *lo cotidiano* (the everyday) while at the same time she eschewed traditional gender/maternal roles. Unlike Day, she did not mention any attraction to the Desert Fathers and there is no whiff of longing for a "hidden" vocation. Edwards was deeply religious as a practicing Catholic, attending Mass daily and ensuring that her children were raised in the faith. Like Huerta, Edwards drew upon Franciscan spirituality; indeed, she was deeply committed as a third order, lay Franciscan. She also expressed little sense of spiritual conflict between her public work

and her mothering, often interweaving the two in her life narrative. Here she embodies features of black spirituality, as described by Jamie Phelps: "black spirituality is always concerned to situate itself firmly in the present, in the midst of concrete daily experience…the central focus is the preservation and strengthening of the life-force or power that dwells within each individual and in the community."[99]

Analysis of their life writing reveals the spiritual dimensions of varied cultural constructions of motherwork. As noted in Chapter 1, Patricia Hill Collins emphasizes the significance of distinctive cultural contexts in theorizing about motherhood. She uses the term "motherwork" to describe the labor of women of color and to critique the social construction of work and family as dichotomous spheres.[100] Reading Huerta, Edwards, and Day alongside one another underscores Collins' point – and extends it to theorizing about spirituality. The dichotomy experienced between mothering and public leadership is, for Day, a *spiritual* problem. A prominent lay leader, she struggles to balance two key spheres of lay spirituality and vocation – work and family. She finds it difficult to reconcile monastic and contemplative traditions of spirituality with the radical spirituality of public witness. While Catholic social teaching supports the latter, gender and race seriously complicate Day's integration of these various strands of Catholic spirituality. The ambivalence in her writing contrasts with the more confident maternal-spiritual voices of Huerta and Edwards.

The life writing of Day, Huerta, and Edwards conveys the complexity of vocation and spirituality for public leaders who also are mothers. Understanding this complexity, with attention to cultural specificity, can inform the development of theologies of work and vocation that adequately attend to women's multiple callings, conflicts, and spiritual practices. In Part 2, we explore such implications more fully in dialogue with Catholic social teaching, spirituality literature, and additional sources in mothers' life writing.

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99 Jamie T. Phelps, O.P., "Black Spirituality," pp. 179-98 in *Taking Down Our Harps: Black Catholics in the United States*, edited by Diana L. Hayes and Cyprian Davis, O.S.B. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 190, 192.

100 Patricia Hill Collins, "Shifting the Center: Race, Class, and Feminist Theorizing about Motherhood," in *Mothering: Ideology, Experience, and Agency* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 47.

PART 2

Theological Analysis

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CHAPTER 5

Motherwork and Vocation

> "[T]he thing is to stalk your calling in a certain skilled and supple way, to locate the most tender and live spot and plug into that pulse…yielding at every moment to the perfect freedom of a single necessity." – Annie Dillard[1]

•••

> "…the overwhelming reality of suffering, evil, and toil cannot be overlooked." – Joan Martin[2]

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Through case studies of maternal life writing, Part 1 teased out various relationships between spirituality, mothering, and work, including various forms of public leadership. I introduced "motherwork" as a term to cut through the dichotomizing of these spheres and to make visible the labor that is mothering and the labors into which mothering extends. Mechthild Hart explains: "While motherwork holds onto the nurturing, life-affirming connotation of the term mothering, it also takes the latter out of the conceptual box of 'nonwork' where the multitude of efforts and activities are usually kept under ideological and material/financial lock and key."[3]

Part 2 of this book identifies and explores selected issues and themes pertaining to spirituality and motherwork, drawing upon the maternal narratives

1 Annie Dillard, "Living Like Weasels," in *Leading Lives that Matter: What We Should Do and Who We Should Be*, edited by Mark R. Schwehn and Dorothy C. Bass (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 301.

2 Joan Martin, *More Than Chains and Toil: A Christian Work Ethic of Enslaved Women* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 105. See also Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

3 Mechthild Hart, *The Poverty of Life-Affirming Work: Motherwork, Education, and Social Change* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 3.

in dialogue with other theological sources. This chapter focuses on work, vocation, and discernment. In the subsequent two chapters, I explore the related issues, first, of time poverty, Sabbath, and motherwork; and, second, of broader implications for understanding spirituality and practicing spiritual guidance.

As noted in Chapter 1, Catholic social teaching provides an argument for fresh practical theological reflection on work in changing times: "Work is one of these aspects, a perennial and fundamental one, one that is always relevant and constantly demands renewed attention and decisive witness. Because fresh *questions* and *problems* are always arising."[4] In looking to maternal life writings such as those presented here, we retrieve more fully the tradition of Christian spirituality, surfacing voices too often marginalized, muted, dismissed, or simply unknown. In inviting contemporary narratives, we understand more fully the fresh questions and problems that are emerging. This continual attending to work, according to John Paul II, draws out what is old as well as what is new from the Gospel – it is in continuity with tradition and yet "calls for the discovery of the *new meanings of human work*. It likewise calls for the formulation of the *new tasks* that in this sector face each individual, the family, each country, the whole human race, and, finally, the Church herself."[5]

Several of the authors discussed thus far enacted precisely this kind of critical attention and response to work: they saw the most acute needs of workers; they called anew for understandings of work grounded in human dignity; and they gave decisive witness through their public leadership. They developed and realized new visions of community (e.g., Visitation congregation and Catholic Worker houses). They struggled against sexism and racism in their labors to do the work of the church, to communicate the gospel through public preaching that transgressed social norms (e.g., Jarena Lee). They sacrificed tremendously in order to work on behalf of some of the most vulnerable of laborers, migrant farm workers (e.g., Huerta and Edwards). Whereas theologies of work offer norms and visions, narratives such as these offer case studies and potential exemplars, showing contextual, embodied struggles to enact callings and convictions that emerge over time, that are imbedded in particular communities, that are sometimes dimly grasped, partially realized, imperfectly enacted, or blocked.

Building on Ruddick, a practical theological task is to listen to voices "that are themselves in process of becoming, in process of seizing language to artic-

4 John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens* [Encyclical Letter on Human Work], September 14, 1981, sec. 1: http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens.html.

5 Ibid., sec. 2.

ulate experience and thinking."[6] The study of life writing fits naturally as an approach to this task, which, as Ruddick notes, can be "an act of resistance."[7] So too, deep listening to the narratives of a community can be framed as an act of solidarity, as womanist ethicist Joan Martin argues.[8] If listening to narratives is to become an act of resistance or solidarity, practical theologians must do the difficult work of reflecting theologically upon others' narratives without co-opting them, without writing over them, sanitizing, or homogenizing them.

A narrative approach is warranted particularly as a means of incorporating women's diverse self-representations and experiences into practical theological reflection on work and vocation. Life narratives function as a locus of theological reflection and a potential site of theological knowing. They train our eye to look at particularities and contexts rather than abstractions. In an essay on teaching queer life writing texts, Georgia Johnston remarks that teaching life writing texts from different historical periods "can keep queer from being read as essentialist."[9] The same can be said about research and teaching of women's life writing, and more specifically, of maternal life writing. Analyzing case studies from different historical and cultural contexts is difficult but valuable to prompt critical reflection about spirituality, mothering, and work. The diversity of the narratives interrogates essentialist theologies; clearly, mothers are not all the same. Narratives, moreover, expand categories of knowledge. R. Ruard Ganzevoort notes that "Scholarly practical attention to narrative…has to account for alternative ways of knowing besides rationalist positivism."[10] This point is made vividly by the mystical autobiographies of Kempe and Lee, but also by the embodied epistemology seen in Day; the affective, relational spirituality of de Chantal and de Sales; the communal knowledge that emerges through struggle and self-sacrifice, as described by Huerta.

At the same time, I concur with Terrence Tilley in seeing narratives as complementing – not replacing – critical analysis: "stories without analysis and

6 Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 40.

7 Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking*, 40.

8 Joan Martin, *More Than Chains and Toil: A Christian Work Ethic of Enslaved Women* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 151-52.

9 Georgia Johnston, "Teaching Queer Lives" pp. 336-42 in *Teaching Life Writing Texts*, edited by Miriam Fuchs and Craig Howes (Modern Language Association, 2008), 338.

10 R. Ruard Ganzevoort, "Narrative Approaches," pp. 214-23 in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, edited by Bonnie Miller-McLemore (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 215.

criticism are as dangerous as analysis without stories."[11] Thus, in this second part of the book I draw women's life writing into critical conversation with other theological sources, including Catholic social teaching and spiritual literature, to articulate directions for a spirituality of motherwork. I do not attempt to abstract a singular theology from the diverse case studies, smoothing out their differences. While I do select themes upon which to focus, the meanings of these texts are multivalent and best interpreted not only by an individual academic but also by diverse communities of scholarship and practice. I recognize the danger of attempting to harmonize or synthesize these varied texts, which arise from different cultural contexts and from communities that are themselves internally pluralistic. Here Tom Beaudoin and Katherine Turpin's sharp critique of white practical theology is worth repeating: "White practical theologies render history and society in terms that are paradoxically claiming contextual specificity through locatedness in the Christian community and speaking too abstractly and broadly about these historic communities as if they were not conflicted, multiple, and contextually specific."[12] The study of life writing foregrounds contextual specificity and allows the conflict, fragmentation, "double voice"[13], incoherence, and struggle of women's maternal lives to have voice and visibility in theology. At the same time, bringing life writing into dialogue with texts of Catholic social teaching and other literature in spirituality affords needed critical perspective, and is a communal act rooted in my own contextual location as a Roman Catholic practical theologian. Narratives do not stand in isolation; individuals are part of larger communities and theological traditions. Life writing has ethical, theological, and spiritual implications that must be a subject of critical reflection.[14] Thus, I bring maternal life writing in its complexity into critical dialogue with multiple other sources that shape my own community of practice and that represent Catholic beliefs and practice.

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11 Terrence Tilley, "Experience and Narrative," pp. 3-26 in *Tradition and Pluralism: Essays in Honor of William M. Shea*, edited by Kenneth L. Parker, Peter A. Huff, and Michael J. G. Pahls (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2009).

12 Tom Beaudoin and Katherine Turpin, "White Practical Theology," pp. 251-69 in *Opening the Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction*, edited by Kathleen A. Cahalan and Gordon S. Mikoski (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 263.

13 As noted in Chapter 4, the term "double voice" is analyzed by Sidonie Smith, *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation*, see discussion in Mary G. Mason, "Dorothy Day and Women's Spiritual Autobiography," 186.

14 For a further resource on this point, see Paul John Eakin, ed., *The Ethics of Life Writing* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004).

To put this in terms more specific to Catholic theology: life writing provides one means of access to the *sensus fidelium*, or sense of the faithful. The spiritual instinct or sense of the whole Church, including the laity, is one authoritative source of Catholic theology, and one that merits further study and weight. Orlando Espin defines the *sensus fidelium* as the "'faith-full' intuition of the Christian people, moved by the Spirit, that senses, adheres to, and interprets the Word of God."[15] It is important to understand better the spiritual practices and experiences of the laity; these can reflect and embody the *sensus fidelium*.[16] Of course, practices are theory-laden and experiences are always interpreted. As Richard Gaillardetz explains in his analysis of authority in Catholic theology, recent theologies of revelation open more room for experience, but experience is always interpreted in light of received traditions. Scripture, tradition, experience, and the teachings of the magisterium all operate in a dynamic interplay.[17] As a Catholic practical theologian, I look to maternal life writing to open up and stimulate theological reflection on mothering, work, and Christian spirituality; this theological reflection is done most fully in dialogue with other sources regarded as authoritative by the tradition. My reading here is such an exercise; it is not exhaustive but is intended to be generative.

Work and a Critical-Prophetic Spirituality

Work is a universal practice, a prominent aspect of everyday life, and a key spiritual question – one that should be at the center of practical theological inquiry. There is evidence of on-the-ground movements to connect faith and work.[18] Several studies detail growing interest in spirituality and business.[19]

15 Orlando O. Espin, *The Faith of the People: Theological Reflections on Popular Catholicism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 1997), 80.

16 For a discussion of spiritual practices and the *sensus fidelium*, see Colleen M. Griffith, "Practice as Embodied Knowing: Epistemological and Theological Considerations," pp. 52-69 in *Invitation to Practical Theology: Catholic Voices and Visions*, edited by Claire E. Wolfteich (New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2014.

17 Richard R. Gaillardetz, *By what Authority?: Primer on Scripture, the Magisterium, and the Sense of the Faithful* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 9.

18 David W. Miller, *God at Work: The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

19 See, for example, Lake Lambert III, *Spirituality, Inc.: Religion in the American Workplace* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2009); Margaret Benefiel, *Soul at Work:*

Sociological research is exploring work as an aspect of religion in everyday life, with variance across job sectors.[20] And yet, Miroslav Volf describes a dearth of Protestant theologies of work: "Amazingly little theological reflection has taken place in the past about an activity that takes up so much of our time."[21]

Catholic social teaching does give substantial attention to work, from *Rerum Novarum* (1891), published during the Industrial Revolution, through more recent documents. These documents can serve as a resource for practical theology, although, as I will show, their theological treatment of motherwork needs further development. Contributions of Catholic social teaching include its emphasis on work as a universal calling; recognition of the realities of suffering in work; the centrality of human dignity and personhood as criteria for just work; attention to spirituality and work; and affirmation of the value of women's domestic labor.

The 1981 encyclical "On Human Work" (*Laborem Exercens*) includes extensive analysis of the oppressive realities of work. The encyclical argues for the priority of labor over capital and stipulates the rights of workers and criteria for just labor practices. It critiques the "error of materialism" – the subjection of the "spiritual and the personal" to the "material," seen in the reduction of the value of labor solely according to its economic value.[22] Rather, the human person is the subject of work. The document links spiritual formation with

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Spiritual Leadership in Organizations (New York: Seabury, 2005); and Laura L. Nash and Scotty McLennan, *Church on Sunday, Work on Monday: The Challenge of Fusing Christian Values with Business Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001). Note also the "Management, Spirituality, and Religion" interest group of the Academy of Management: http://aom.org/ (accessed February 12, 2014). On work and spirituality, see also Claire E. Wolfteich, *Navigating New Terrain: Work and Women's Spiritual Lives* (New York: Paulist Press, 2002).

20 See Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes: Finding Religion in Everyday Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), particularly Ch. 6 "Nine to Five: Spiritual Presence at Work," 171-211. Additional examples include Nancy Tatom Ammerman and Wade Clark Roof, eds., *Work, Family, and Religion in Contemporary Society* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Amy Marcus-Newhall, Diane F. Halpern, and Sherylle J. Tan, eds., *The Changing Realities of Work and Family* (Malden and Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008); Jonathan Gershuny, *Changing Times: Work and Leisure in Postindustrial Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). The study of work crosses disciplinary boundaries. See, for example, a humanities approach to the topic in Robert Sessions and Jack Wortman, eds., *Working in America: A Humanities Reader* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992).

21 Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 69.

22 *Laborem Exercens*, sec. 13.

the prophetic, ethical, and evangelical tasks of the Church regarding work.[23] Spirituality cannot be disconnected from social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, and theological analysis and action. Any spirituality of work must adopt a critical-prophetic stance in the face of the dehumanizing, unjust, and totalizing aspects of labor.

Work should not be understood only as paid employment; the separation of domestic and market labor is a modern development that unfortunately hides the multiple forms of labor in which women engage within and outside the home. Moral theologians such as Barbara Hilkert Andolsen rightly argue that women's unpaid domestic labor is a social justice issue.[24] Moreover, as sociologist Susan Crawford Sullivan notes, most studies of spirituality and work focus on professionals, and very few consider mothering.[25] I use the term "work" to encompass both paid and unpaid labor, market work as well as all forms of unpaid or volunteer labor. The relationship between spirituality and work must be delineated carefully with respect to particular practices of labor as embedded in specific contexts and institutions.

Motherwork is not immune from the dehumanizing conditions that can affect any form of work – and indeed mothering can make women particularly vulnerable. Historian Jacqueline Jones shows, for example, that mothering was imbedded in the economic structures of slavery; women slaves' productive and reproductive functions were "equally significant" to slave owners, who sought to maximize both so as to increase economic production.[26] Pregnant and nursing slave women not only were compelled to work long hours in the field, they also faced abuse, rape, and beatings. Jones describes the whipping of pregnant and nursing mothers, noting that "the terrorizing of pregnant women was not uncommon."[27] High rates of miscarriage and infant mortality among slave populations meant loss of children. Slave families were separated by death, escape, and the selling of slaves "down South." Sojourner Truth captured this

23 Ibid., sec. 24.

24 Barbara Hilkert Andolsen, "A Woman's Work is Never Done: Unpaid Household Labor as a Social Justice Issue," in *Women's Consciousness, Women's Conscience: A Reader in Feminist Ethics*, edited by Barbara H. Andolsen, Christine E. Gudorf, and Mary D. Pellauer (Minneapolis: Winston, 1985), 3-18. See too Barbara Hilkert Andolsen, *The New Job Contract: Economic Justice in an Age of Insecurity* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 1998).

25 Susan Crawford Sullivan, *Living Faith: Everyday Religion and Mothers in Poverty* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 66.

26 Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family, From Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 14.

27 Ibid., 20.

experience in her heartbreaking lament: "I have bourne thirteen children, and seen them most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! Ain't I a woman?"[28]

Any theology of work or vocation, any spirituality of work, has to take account of such suffering and the structures of racial/ethnic oppression which rendered these mothers' bodies so vulnerable to abuse. As Martin writes in her analysis of African American women's slave narratives: "the overwhelming reality of suffering, evil, and toil cannot be overlooked."[29] Martin critiques the "Protestant work ethic" – and particularly the Calvinist embrace of work as vocation or calling, which left the tradition "with no theological or moral recourse for challenging exploitative work."[30] The construction of a spirituality of work has to be able to confront all forms of dehumanizing labor; otherwise, spirituality lapses into a religious rationale for oppressive work. Life writing brings vulnerable mothers' self-representations and experiences of work more concretely into the theological conversation. In listening deeply to such texts, theologians confront the inadequacies of their received theological traditions and attempt reconstruction.

While Martin draws upon the narratives of women slaves in her womanist ethical reconstruction of Protestant theologies of work, Sullivan shows how the Protestant work ethic, now virulently powerful in secular form in American culture,[31] impacts the narratives of contemporary poor mothers and shapes debates about welfare reform. Detailing how notions of the value of hard work and antipathy towards "idleness" have shaped American views on poverty and welfare, Sullivan describes how such theologies of work impact also poor mothers' own narratives and self-images. For single, poor mothers, religious values around hard work and religious values around maternal roles often conflict:

> Faith-based welfare-to-work job training programs capitalize on religious cultural interpretations emphasizing hard work and self-sufficiency. Poor

28 Sojourner Truth, quoted in Elaine Graham, "From Terrible Silence to Transforming Hope: The Impact of Feminist Theory on Practical Theology," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 2 (1999): 189.

29 Joan Martin, *More Than Chains and Toil: A Christian Work Ethic of Enslaved Women* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 105. See also Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

30 Martin, *More Than Chains and Toil*, 128.

31 On this point, see Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1958), 181-83.

> mothers appear to believe that religion calls them to work hard…But the examples of workers from the Bible whom poor women extol are not single mothers of young children who must leave their children in substandard child care to toil in poorly paid jobs….a religious interpretation that emphasizes the primacy of motherhood and caretaking discourages some from the labor force or adds a burden of guilt on some who work.[32]

The narratives of poor women of color analyzed by Martin and Sullivan suggest that any spirituality of work should be evaluated critically by its impact on vulnerable mothers. Maternal work is always situated in political and economic structures and, like all work, mothering can be a site of oppression and/or freedom, suffering and/or fulfillment. I position mothering within a larger understanding of the dignity of work and the critical-prophetic task of the church, such that the study of spirituality and mothering must address questions such as: how do theologies of work and vocation perpetuate or ignore maternal suffering and toil? How do we reconstruct ill-conceived theologies? How do we retrieve theological resources from traditions to further the dignity of maternal labor?

A critical-prophetic stance must distinguish "work" and "vocation"; the latter term should not be reduced to the former. The vocation to follow Christ cannot be conflated with any particular work – though no situation of work can be deemed wholly outside the realm of spirituality and grace. If the language of vocation is retrievable in contemporary contexts, vocation must be considered a larger category than work. Women's life writing provides one valuable source for practical theological analysis and reconstruction of theologies of vocation.

Vocational Narratives, Practical Wisdom, and Discernment

In teaching a course entitled "Vocation, Work, and Faith," I have seen first-hand the need for more theological resources on vocation that address issues of gender, broadly, and mothering, more specifically. For example, the title of one anthology suggests a comprehensive historical view of vocation in Christian theological perspective: *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation*.[33] Yet the collection contains only a few selections by women authors,

32 Sullivan, *Living Faith*, 93.

33 William C. Placher, *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005).

only one of whom is a mother. Looking out at my students, which include many women – young women right out of college, second career women with extensive family and workplace experience – I struggle with the inadequacy of the vocational wisdom. So too, in his book *Awakening Vocation: A Theology of Christian Call*, Catholic theologian Edward Hahnenberg discusses Martin Luther, Ignatius of Loyola, Karl Barth, and Karl Rahner as he traces the "modern Catholic trajectory of vocation."[34] Where are the women's voices?

Few English-language theologies of vocation are written by women or give specific attention to gender, although there are some important exceptions.[35] Several women practical theologians have made important strides to address this lacuna. Bonnie Miller-McLemore broke new ground with her book *Also a Mother: Work and Family as Theological Dilemma* (1994), using the theme of "generativity" to cut across dichotomies between work and mothering.[36] Miller-McLemore's appeal remains salient today: "Hearing the challenge of the mother's voice to distorted ethical and religious definitions of love, self-fulfillment, self-sacrifice, work, vocation, and the generative life, is a requisite step in the longer-term project of broader social change."[37] Miller-McLemore continues to advocate for a "disruptive" rethinking of vocation that includes

34 Edward P. Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation: A Theology of Christian Call* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010).

35 Examples of monographs on vocation include: Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Parker Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999); Edward P. Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation: A Theology of Christian Call* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010); Brian J. Mahan and Robert Coles, *Forgetting Ourselves on Purpose: Vocation and the Ethics of Ambition* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002); and Douglas J. Schuurman, *Vocation: Discerning Our Callings in Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004). Edited volumes include: Ann Mitsakos Bezzerides, ed., *Christ at Work: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Vocation* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2006) and Mark Schwehn and Dorothy Bass, eds., *Leading Lives that Matter: What We Should Do and Who We Should Be* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006). Note too that a major funding initiative by the Lilly Endowment, launched in 1999, has supported theological explorations of vocation in more than eighty church-related, liberal arts colleges across the United States. See http://www.lillyendowment.org/religion_ptev.html, accessed April 26, 2016.

36 Bonnie Miller-McLemore, *Also a Mother: Work and Family as Theological Dilemma* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994). An excerpt of the book also was published as "Generativity Crises of My Own," pp. 263-72 in *Leading Lives that Matter: What We Should Do and Who We Should Be*, edited by Mark Schwehn and Dorothy Bass (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006).

37 Miller-McLemore, *Also a Mother: Work and Family as Theological Dilemma*, 40.

acknowledgment of the "multivocal" or "multiple," rather than singular, nature of vocation for both women and men.[38] Practical theologian Mary Elizabeth Moore turns to women's narratives to enlarge the theological conversation about vocation and to inform education and formation for vocational discernment. Drawing from an oral history project, Moore describes life narration as a valuable practice through which women "uncover complex relationships, construct meaning, retrieve or question memories, re-live emotions and re-process them, protect against painful memory, and reconstruct meanings, even rechart one's life."[39] While this project makes important contributions to the study of vocation, it does not address mothering in any detail. This would be a further extension of the study. Kathleen Cahalan has contributed significant work on vocation through a robust research project of the Collegeville Institute, which includes a narrative component, and several newly published volumes, one of which addresses vocation through the life stages.[40]

How do maternal narratives, including narratives of toil and suffering, inform theologies and practices of vocation and discernment? How does one account for women's experiences of conflicting, interrupted, postponed, or missed vocations in spiritual care and guidance? How does the care of children intersect with other forms of work and leadership? Such questions are vital for practical theological retrieval and reconstruction of the concept of vocation.

Mothering as Sacred Calling: A Critical Task of Retrieval and Reconstruction

One of the problems in discussing mothering in terms of vocation is that the idea of motherhood as women's calling has been used to perpetuate patri-

38 Bonnie J. Miller McLemore, *In the Midst of Chaos: Caring for Children as Spiritual Practice* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 2007), 94-5.

39 Mary Elizabeth Moore, "Stories of Vocation: Education for Vocational Discernment," *Religious Education* 103, no. 2 (March 2008): 232.

40 Kathleen A. Cahalan and Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, eds., *Calling All Years Good: Christian Vocation Throughout Life's Seasons* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017); Kathleen Cahalan and Douglas J. Shuurman, eds., *Calling in Today's World: Voices from Eight Faith Perspectives* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016) and Kathleen Cahalan, *The Stories We Live: Finding God's Calling All Around Us* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017). Regarding the Collegeville Institute project on vocation, see the wealth of resources at http://collegevilleinstitute.org/the-seminars/, accessed April 10, 2016.

archal systems, to restrict women to the domestic sphere, and to promote a privatized understanding of mothering. Certainly the life writing studied here contests that reductionist notion of mothering as calling. From Kempe to Edwards, the case studies explored in this book point to the complex interrelationships of women's domestic and public callings, shaped by particular historical and theological contexts. We need conceptions of Christian spirituality and vocation nuanced enough to encompass these deep complexities and interrelationships and, as will be discussed further in the last chapter, to accompany contemporary women in ongoing processes of discernment, guidance, and spiritual renewal.

This means rethinking – but not jettisoning – the idea of mothering as vocation. Patricia Hill Collins points out that the cult of true womanhood, with the notion of motherhood as "woman's highest calling," has "long held a special place in the gender symbolism of White Americans."[41] This notion of calling is linked, in Eurocentric perspectives, with the separation of mothering from work/economic production and a privatizing of the nuclear family. As Hill Collins notes, discourse about vocation is culturally specific and functions ideologically. The idea of motherhood as "sacred calling" also has been critiqued by white feminists such as Adrienne Rich.[42] Rich distinguishes between motherhood as institution and mothering as the experience and practice of bearing and caring for children. Her critique rightly points to the ways in which motherhood as an institution can oppress women. However, in framing the idea of motherhood as "sacred calling" purely as a tool of patriarchal control and "institutionalized heterosexuality," Rich leaves little room for affirming mothering as a spiritual/vocational path.[43] We can name, then, this practical theological question/task: how theorize mothering as a dimension of vocation without reinforcing the patriarchal and Eurocentric structures and ideologies in which this understanding has functioned?

Is there a place for Dorothy Day's embodied knowledge of pregnancy as a form of co-creation? Is there space for Lena Edwards' interpretation of motherhood as giving back to her community? Or Margery Kempe's expansive mystical-maternal self-understanding? Writing from a womanist perspective,

41 Patricia Hill Collins, "The Meaning of Motherhood in Black Culture and Black Mother-Daughter Relationships," pp. 42-62 in *Double Stitch: Black Women Write About Mothers & Daughters*, edited by Patricia Bell-Scott et al. (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 43.

42 Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: Norton, 1986).

43 Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, 42-3.

Melina Abdullah describes motherhood as empowering: "Even within the confines of a White supremacist patriarchal capitalist society, motherhood brings power – the power of immortality, the power to change the world beyond one's own generation. Thus, the oppressed state of motherhood, and Black motherhood in particular, is tempered by the power of womanist mothering as a revolutionary praxis."[44] Feminist critiques of the patriarchal institution of motherhood should go hand in hand with the work of listening to and creating space for the voices of women who interpret their mothering in terms of sacrality, vocation, or empowerment. The language of "sacred calling" may be appropriated, even within patriarchal religion, not as internalized misogyny but as spiritual praxis, transformative power, and even mystical reversal.

Given inadequate attention to mothering in Christian spirituality and the fact that mothering is such a significant part of many women's everyday lives and labors, we cannot move too quickly past the idea of mothering as calling, mothering as holy. Yet looking at mothering or motherwork with a vocational lens requires critical retrieval and reconstruction. As I engage the case studies of maternal life writing in dialogue with Catholic theology, I seek to open up the notion of maternal callings beyond privatized caretaking to a more communal, more integrated domestic-public practice. I situate mothering within a conception of vocation not as a singular kind of labor or static state but rather as an evolving dynamic responsiveness to God throughout the changing seasons of one's life. Mothering can be one dimension of a life lived in receptive attention and faithful responsiveness to God's purposes. Vocation to spiritual/ecclesial leadership does not necessarily require withdrawal from everyday family life; holy callings need not wholly transcend the ordinary labors of the home. I reject the idea that mothering requires a capitulation to patriarchy though recognize in women's own life writing the struggles to disentangle the two. I aim to clarify how spirituality might better animate, support, and guide women's multiple forms of communal-political-ecclesial-domestic labors in contemporary contexts.

Laity as Leaven: Vocation, Mission, and Spirituality in Catholic Social Teaching

Aspects of Catholic social teaching are a useful resource here, insofar as they affirm mothering as vocation while also situating lay vocation in the midst of

44 Melina Abdullah, "Womanist Mothering: Loving and Raising the Revolution," *The Western Journal of Black Studies* 36, no. 1 (2012): 58.

public life. According to *Lumen Gentium*, a central document of the Second Vatican Council, laity are to sanctify the world from their ordinary contexts, "from within as a leaven."[45] Like yeast that dissolves in warm water, laity spread through all spheres of secular life to bring transformation, making them rise. Lay spirituality encompasses domestic, economic, and political spheres.[46]

Catholic social teaching underscores the interrelationships of family, work, and community. Work provides the foundation of family life; it makes the family possible and furthers the fulfillment of the educative ends of the family. In turn, the family forms workers: "the family is simultaneously a *community made possible by work* and the first *school of work*, within the home, for every person."[47] Community is central to these understandings of work, vocation, and family. Work is a universal calling and a distinguishing characteristic of the human person. The personal calling is always situated within a community: "work bears a particular mark of man and of humanity, the mark of a person operating within a community of persons."[48] Such texts of Catholic social teaching can be harnessed to articulate a spirituality of motherwork that links rather than dichotomizes family and work, and that positions work and family within a broader communal and political understanding of calling. Motherwork is not limited to the private sphere but rather is essential to the larger community; it is a vocation with political and economic dimensions. Social change activists such as Day, Huerta, and Edwards show the political reach of motherwork to an especially high degree. As Hart notes, mother-activists extend caregiving into social change movements; they "make a leap from caring for their own children to those of others, and of their community and society, by understanding and fighting against social or economic power structures."[49]

Women's life writing provides concrete detail about how women *practice* such motherwork in different contexts. There is, of course, the labor of pregnancy, birthing, and nursing. There is the daily physical and emotional care of children – the attention, responsiveness, provision of food and shelter, protection. For Jarena Lee, motherwork entailed a fine balance between responding

45 Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium* [Dogmatic Constitution on the Church], November 21, 1964, sec. 31: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.

46 See for example, Paul VI, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* [Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity], November 18, 1965, sec. 7: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651118_apostolicam-actuositatem_en.html.

47 *Laborem Exercens*, sec. 10.

48 Ibid.

49 Mechthild Hart, *The Poverty of Life-Affirming Work: Motherwork, Education, and Social Change* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 9.

to the needs of her sick child and entrusting her children to othermothers without distraction from her gospel call. For Jane de Chantal, motherwork involved teaching and forming, arranging marriages and financial settlements, grieving, praying, and building community. Dolores Huerta interwove practices of labor organizing, lobbying, striking, speaking, self-sacrifice, and child care. Edwards described motherwork as a constant process of educating, guiding, listening, growing together, negotiating, and shaping persons who would benefit society and hold the faith even in a racist church.

Women's narratives also surface the costs and dilemmas of practicing motherwork. For example, Day's autobiography struggles with the question of how exactly family and community can be mutually sustaining. How permeable are their boundaries? What are the costs of hospitality? In Day's experience, the family alone was not enough to assuage the long loneliness. A wider gospel-centered community was necessary. As she writes in *The Long Loneliness*: "Community – that was the social answer to the long loneliness. That was one of the attractions of religious life and why couldn't lay people share in it? Not just the basic community of the family, but also a community of families, with a combination of private and communal property."[50] In practice, this was a difficult vision to realize. For example, the Catholic Worker farming communes, dear to Day's heart, were marked by difficulty and discord and eventually became a largely failed experiment.[51] Day personally experienced tensions between the intimacy of the family and the demands of community; the loss of intimacy marks her autobiographical writing:

> I was thirty-eight, wishing I were married and living the ordinary naturally happy life and had not come under the dynamic influence of Peter Maurin…for a woman who had known the joys of marriage, yes, it was hard. It was years before I awakened without that longing for a face pressed against my breast, an arm about my shoulder. The sense of loss was there. It was a price I had paid.[52]

So too the ever-present needs of the Catholic Worker community cut into her time with Tamar; consequently, feelings of guilt, vocational conflict, and

50 Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 224.

51 For a description of the difficulties of the farming communes, as well as the impact of Day's communal commitments on her daughter Tamar, see the recent biography of Day written by her granddaughter, Kate Hennessey, *Dorothy Day: The World Will Be Saved By Beauty* (New York: Scribner, 2017).

52 Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 236.

exhaustion punctuate her life writing. Day's narrative makes visible certain practical difficulties and costs of integrating mothering, public leadership, and spirituality; the texture of such experience is often invisible in systematic theologies of work.

Domestic Church and Women's Labor

Developing understanding of spirituality and motherwork requires reexamination of the home and family as spiritual/vocational site – not because mothering labor is confined to the home but because it certainly *includes* the home as a primary space of labor. Women's narratives examined in this study show an unsettled stance toward home and family. As a young widowed mother, Jane de Chantal struggles to balance her domestic responsibilities with her pull to contemplative religious life; out of this struggle she envisions and builds a new form of religious community and serves as spiritual director to many. For Margery, the pilgrims' terrain takes center stage, though her mystical visions happen first on her own bed and at the end of her life, she returns to the home to care for her ill husband. Lee's call requires the breaking up of housekeeping; dislocation and itinerancy feature prominently in her spiritual autobiography. Day travels constantly as she builds the Catholic Worker movement, but asserts poignantly that "a good healthy family life was as near to heaven as one could get in this life."[53] Such narratives point to a need for further theological reflection on home and family as spiritual site. What would it mean, without romanticizing home and family, to consider the home as a vocational locus and spiritual landscape with its own distinctive spiritual practices, challenges, and wisdom? How reflect theologically on home as public site?

Critical retrieval of theologies of the "domestic church" can contribute to reflection on such questions. The idea of the "domestic church" has roots in the Jewish tradition of family-based religious education and worship; New Testament Scripture (e.g., Colossians 4:15; 2 Tim. 4:19; Philemon 1-2); and patristic authors such as John Chrysostom and Augustine.[54] Muted for centuries within

53 Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 136-37, 140.

54 For detailed historical background on the "domestic church," see Florence Caffrey Bourg, *Where Two or Three are Gathered: Christian Families as Domestic Churches* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004) and Joseph C. Atkinson, "Family as domestic church: developmental trajectory, legitimacy, and problems of appropriation," *Theological Studies* 66, no. 3 (September 1, 2005): 592-604.

Catholicism, a theology of the domestic church was revived in the Second Vatican Council and has gained prominence in the ensuing decades. As Vatican II advanced notions of lay spirituality, vocation, and mission, so it affirmed the spiritual-ecclesial work of the family. *Lumen Gentium*, for example, states: "In what might be regarded as the domestic Church, the parents, by word and example, are the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children."[55] The spiritual formation that happens in the home is not uni-directional but rather mutual between spouses and between parents and children: "While parents surely guide their children on the road to holiness, so too "children as living members of the family contribute in their own way to the sanctification of their parents."[56] Paul VI frames the domestic church not only as space of sanctification but also of evangelism: "the family, like the Church, ought to be a place where the Gospel is transmitted and from which the Gospel radiates. In a family which is conscious of this mission, all the members evangelize and are evangelized."[57] According to John Paul II's encyclical *Familiaris Consortio* (1981): "The Christian family constitutes a specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion, and for this reason too it can and should be called 'the domestic Church.'"[58] Such statements provide a powerful framework for affirming the spiritual and ecclesial significance of work in the home and family. Florence Caffrey Bourg notes that the idea of the domestic church permeates Catholic theological and pastoral theology: "Particularly remarkable is the fact that this distinctive way of thinking and talking about families is not confined to official Church documents, or to academic theology, or to resources for pas-

55 *Lumen Gentium*, sec. 11.

56 Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes* [Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World], December 7, 1965, sec. 48: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html. See too Paul VI, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, sec. 11; John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* [Apostolic Exhortation on the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World], November 22, 1981, sec. 21, 38: http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html; John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, February 2, 1994: https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_02021994_families.html.

57 Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* ("On Evangelization in the Modern World") [Apostolic Exhortation], December 8, 1975, sec. 71: http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html.

58 *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 21.

toral ministries, or to popular reading for believers. References to domestic church are found in all these genres."[59]

Yet domestic church theologies are untenable without more critical examination of gender and race. Arguments for the ecclesial nature of the family depend excessively on essentialized views of women's vocation and a theology of complementarity that prioritizes *a priori* women's domestic roles. Just as *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) dictates that women should work primarily in the home,[60] so too Pius XI's 1930 encyclical on Christian marriage, *Casti Connubi*, denounces a "false emancipation" of women in which "the wife being freed from the cares of children and family, should, to the neglect of these, be able to follow her own bent and devote herself to business and even public affairs."[61] In such documents, women's public work is associated with the demise of the family, which is thereby deprived of wife and mother, the "ever watchful guardian" of the home and family.[62] Such texts provide a religious endorsement of Euro-American ideologies of true womanhood, a spiritualizing of a privatized, female domestic spirituality.

The documents of the Second Vatican Council and more recent postconciliar teachings articulate a cautious openness to women's public roles while continuing to assert essentialist understandings of women's nature and vocation. *Gaudium et Spes* states that women's caring labor in the home is required by the needs of children, particularly young children, but that women's important domestic role should not undermine women's "legitimate" social progress.[63] In 1981, John Paul II acknowledged that women were working outside the home in nearly every economic sector and agreed that women should not be discriminated against in the workforce. He also reiterated the call for a family wage, affirmed women's choice to devote themselves exclusively to the home, and called for a restructuring of labor such that women's professional advancement would not undermine their role in the family:

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59 Florence Caffrey Bourg, *Where Two or Three are Gathered: Christian Families as Domestic Churches* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 2.

60 Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno* [Encyclical Letter on Reconstruction of the Social Order], May 15, 1931: http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno.html.

61 Pius XI, *Casti Connubi* [Encyclical Letter on Christian Marriage], December 31, 1930, sec. 74: https://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19301231_casti-connubii.html.

62 Ibid., sec. 75.

63 *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 52.

> It is a fact that in many societies women work in nearly every sector of life. But it is fitting that they should be able to fulfil their tasks *in accordance with their own nature*, without being discriminated against and without being excluded from jobs for which they are capable, but also without lack of respect for their family aspirations and for their specific role in contributing, together with men, to the good of society. The *true advancement of women* requires that labour should be structured in such a way that women do not have to pay for their advancement by abandoning what is specific to them and at the expense of the family, in which women as mothers have an irreplaceable role.[64]

The 1981 apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* similarly prizes women's "maternal and family role" over all other public contributions and emphasizes the importance of a renewed theology of work that affirms women's domestic labor.[65]

Can we re-imagine the "domestic church" without domesticating women? Theologies of the domestic church affirm the value of mothering labor, even asserting its vital ecclesial dimension. In this way, theologies of the domestic church have potential to work against a privatized spirituality of mothering. The home is not a private enclave but rather the Church in miniature, fully connected to the larger Body of Christ. Yet, while Catholic teaching includes this larger ecclesial vision for the household and asserts a significant interrelationship between work and family, when it turns to women's roles it interjects a heightened sense of division and even competition between domestic and public or market work. As moral theologian Christine Firer Hinze argues, theories of gender complementarity are interwoven with Catholic social teaching on labor in ways that unnecessarily link the two and undercut the Church's mission to promote social justice for workers.[66] To critically retrieve the idea of the "domestic church" as part of a spirituality of motherwork, monolithic understandings of the primacy of women's domestic vocation must be rejected while the ecclesial and spiritual significance of women's labor in and for the household is nevertheless strongly affirmed. Moreover, following the impulse of Catholic social teaching and the examples of several women authors

64 *Laborem Exercens*, sec. 19.

65 *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 23.

66 See Christine Firer Hinze, "U.S. Catholic Social Thought, Gender, and Economic Livelihood," *Theological Studies* 66 (2005): 568-91 and "Women, Families, and the Legacy of *Laborem Exercens*: An Unfinished Agenda," *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* 6, no. 1 (2009): 63-92.

discussed here, forming a spirituality of work requires not only retreats or individual guidance but structural changes to ease women's labor and make the full range of the lay vocation/apostolate accessible in practice.

Ecclesial Support and Resistance

How does the church support and accompany women in discerning and living out their multidimensional familial-public vocations? The case studies in Part 1 show a mixture of ecclesial support and resistance. Margery received support from the vicar of Lynn, while a monk wished her enclosed in stone. On several occasions, she barely escaped with her life. Rev. Richard Allen first denied Jarena Lee a preaching license, then publicly confirmed her calling to preach. De Chantal's maternal vocation and spiritual leadership was nurtured through her decades-long spiritual friendship with the bishop Francis de Sales. Yet church hierarchy eventually enclosed the Visitation order, restricting women from a more fluid, public, and active form of religious community. The church both celebrated and denounced Day and the Catholic Worker movement, and Day struggled with how to enact her received understandings of women's spirituality within her very public role. The church expelled Huerta's children from a Catholic school populated by grape growers, and a priest told Huerta to stay out of organizing and stay home with her children. Edwards encountered discrimination in both secular workplace and church – though she does not indicate that the church stood in the way of her medical calling.

To enact a vision of lay spirituality and vocation as articulated in Catholic social teaching will require more constructive ecclesial responses to and support of women's motherwork than these ones. This entails a more expansive understanding of women's spirituality and vocation. Vocation is not singular for any of the women explored in this book. Women negotiate multiple callings on their lives. These callings at times conflict, a reality that requires skills of discernment and an ability to live in the tension of multiple claims and spheres. They often are enacted seasonally, over time.[67] Moore's analysis of women's oral histories similarly shows the multiplicity of women's vocations and their surprising twists and "unexpected turns." Often vocation is seen only in retrospect.[68] Rather than defining *a priori* the shape of women's vocations,

67 On this point, see also my book *Navigating New Terrain: Work and Women's Spiritual Lives* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2003).

68 Mary Elizabeth Moore, "Stories of Vocation: Education for Vocational Discernment," *Religious Education* 103, no. 2 (March 2008): 218-39.

the church could respond more constructively by listening to women's own narratives, even helping to facilitate their voicing. This would yield a fuller understanding of the various meanings of work in women's lives and at different life stages. It would enable the church to hear women's nascent vocational impulses, to identify the disruptions and impediments in women's vocations, and to support women's own search for spiritual vocabulary and scripts that make sense of their experience.

More constructive ecclesial responses to women also means foregrounding the importance of "communal motherwork" and stepping in as "othermothers" when needed. The Church already has a model of "othermothers" in its tradition of godparents – members of the Body of Christ who promise to share in the spiritual formation of particular children.[69] As Joseph H. Lynch shows in his history of godparenting in early medieval Europe, godparents traditionally had both a social and spiritual function.[70] They provided for the child's religious upbringing as well as physical needs such as protection and material provisions. Godparents expanded the familial circle, as Elaine J. Ramshaw states: "Asking someone to sponsor your child became a powerful way to bring a helpful outsider into your kinship system and to make alliances."[71] Yet in contemporary practice, godparents often function as little more than liturgical window dressing at baptisms, what Alois Stenzel calls a "liturgical lie."[72] Revitalizing a practice of godparenting would situate "communal motherwork" or "othermothers" in an ecclesial and liturgical framework. Ramshaw writes:

> Since the sixteenth century, the social institution of godparenthood/coparenthood has gradually decreased in importance in western European societies. Coparenthood became so unimportant in the English speaking world that we no longer have words for the relationship between parent and godparent…Coparenthood has survived in southern and eastern Europe, and has become a crucial kinship-friendship structure in Latin America and the Philippines. The godparent/godchild relationship itself has become socially negligible in most Protestant societies in the last 200 years.[73]

69 I acknowledge here my colleague, liturgical scholar Karen Westerfield-Tucker, who raised this idea in conversation.

70 Joseph H. Lynch, *Godparents and Kinship in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1986).

71 Elaine J. Ramshaw, "Rethinking the Role of Godparents," *Word & World* XIV, no. 1 (1994): 45.

72 Lynch, *Godparents and Kinship in Early Medieval Europe*, 40.

73 Ramshaw, "Rethinking the Role of Godparents," 47.

Within post-Vatican II Catholicism, efforts to highlight the parents' role in faith formation correlate with decreased emphasis on godparents' roles, as reflected in the 1969 revised rite of baptism of children.[74] Can a tradition of godparenting as social, material, spiritual coparenting be reanimated in contemporary contexts? The baptismal rite presents a model of coparenting that does not displace the parents' primary role in the domestic church but situates godparents as partners. During the baptismal rite, godparents are asked if they are ready to "help the parents of this child in their duty as Christian parents" and the community prays that the parents and godparents may be "examples of faith to inspire this child."[75] If this liturgical assertion became more of a reality in practice, godparenting as social and spiritual co-parenting could provide a concrete ecclesial practice of communal motherwork that crosses gender and racial/ethnic boundaries.

Ideally, liturgical practice also would be consistent with workplace policies. On a public policy level, "communal motherwork" translates into better parental leave policies, more affordable child care, equal pay for equal work, and flexible working conditions that accommodate the needs of children and other dependents. The United States, for example, is the only industrialized nation with no federal paid maternity leave policy. The Catholic Church has made statements in support of public policies that support working parents.[76] The recent apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* ("On Love in the Family") by Pope Francis, resulting from the Synod on the Family, for example, repeats earlier church statements that families have the right "to be able to count on an adequate family policy on the part of public authorities in the juridical, economic, social and fiscal domains."[77] Yet, according to the *National Catholic Reporter*, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has no national policy on parental leave for church employees and most American dioceses surveyed do not offer paid parental leave to its own lay employees: "...countless U.S. church employees can testify to the exhaustion of

74 Ibid.

75 See "Rite for the Baptism of One Child," May 15, 1969 (1970 Missal): http://www.catholicliturgy.com/index.cfm/fuseaction/textcontents/index/4/subindex/67/textindex/7.

76 See, for example, *Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy* (Washington, DC: U.S. Catholic Conference, 1986).

77 See Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* ("On Love in the Family"), March 19, 2016, sec. 44: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia.html, accessed June 18, 2016. The quotation therein is from the Pontifical Council for the Family, *Charter of the Rights of the Family* (22 October 1983).

forming young Catholics – building up the 'domestic church' – without much help from our national one."[78] Embodying the family as "domestic church" and church as "othermother" and "otherfather" requires both public policy change and family-friendly policies within the church as workplace.

Gladness

> "There are all different kinds of voices calling you to all different kinds of work, and the problem is to find out which is the voice of God rather than of Society, say, or the Superego, or Self-Interest…
>
> The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."[79]

I turn to one further question at this point in the exploration of spirituality and motherwork. Frederick Buechner's well-known description of vocation locates calling at the intersection of "deep gladness and the world's deep hunger."[80] Much of the life writing explored thus far shows a keen commitment to addressing the world's deep hunger – bringing consolation to sinners, showing the mercy of God, preaching the gospel, leading communities, forming women spiritually, advocating for the poorest of workers, protesting war, caring for the sick, providing obstetrical care for immigrant women. The life writing in this book, though, is achingly quiet on the joys of mothering. We get only some glimmers of gladness. Day's description of pregnancy and childbirth speak poignantly to the spirituality of mothering – the deeply embodied sense of working in something far larger than oneself, the beauty and connection of all creation. Edwards sees mothering as central to her life's work, and she takes pleasure in her children and grandchildren. De Chantal is deeply invested in her relationships. But deep gladness: this is somewhat muted. Of course, the particular sample of life writing in this book may indicate certain features of public leaders that may not be representative of many other women. Further research on the topic of joy in maternal experience and narrative would be a worthwhile extension of this study, certainly important for articulating the

78 Jennifer Mertens, "The Paradox of a Pro-Life Church Without Paid Parental Leave," *The National Catholic Reporter*, July 23, 2015: http://ncronline.org/blogs/young-voices/paradox-pro-life-church-without-paid-parental-leave, accessed June 13, 2016.

79 Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Seeker's ABC* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 118-19.

80 Ibid.

beauty of spirituality in everyday life. At the same time, the women's life writing studied here raises some critical questions about Buechner's definition of vocation, which reflects his own social location, with an assumption of choice and mobility in work. Mothering in different contexts is experienced and constructed differently, dramatically impacted by war, disease, high child mortality, low education rates, and social mobility. Again, the value of life writing brings to voice and visibility the ambiguities of women's experiences. Practical theology takes account of the ambiguities that rub against idyllic social and religious constructions of motherhood. Reading narratives of maternal suffering, toil, travail, and vocational conflict interjects a pause in the face of overly romanticized theological portraits of mothering and the kind of token affirmations given in church on Mother's Day. This writing presses us to look deeper, to ask what vocation means in the absence of "delight," to name women's lived spiritualities, and to push harder for praxis that transforms conditions of motherwork.

Conclusion

Theologies of work and vocation are incomplete without serious attention to motherwork. Indeed, the neglect of mothering in spiritual literature can be related to a hierarchy of vocations that is difficult to shed, suspicion of embodiment, and an *a priori* essentializing of women's callings. Theologians can assist in the needed process of voicing narratives of motherwork by retrieving, eliciting, and analyzing women's life writing. How is the embodied practice of motherwork formed or deformed by social, economic, political, ecclesial, and cultural structures? How might maternal narratives shed light on work and vocation? What might a spirituality of work look like for mothers? We continue to follow such questions in the next chapter as we consider related issues of time poverty, just work, leisure, Sabbath, and spiritual guidance.

CHAPTER 6

Seeking Sabbath: Time Poverty, Women's Labor, and Spiritual Renewal

> "They are running me ragged, that's why I don't write…I'm about done in…I have felt collapsed with all the work." – Dorothy Day, letter to Tamar, 1951[1]

•••

> "It's hard to write and have kids. Don't let anyone tell you that it's not. You cannot get lost in the easy wind and downy flake of motherhood and then turn around, focus, and produce work. You have to be cunning, practical, and selfish. You have to steal time. Time is your enemy, your gift, your wanton desire, and you will never have enough of it." – Stephanie Brown, poet and mother of two[2]

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The caption of a photo of Lena Edwards in *Ebony* magazine reads: "Mass at 6:30 AM, begins work at 8 AM, never tired." Here is a spiritual problem writ large. Should women as accomplished as Lena Edwards – mother of six, physician, and missionary – never get tired? What models of leadership, what understandings of work and time, are communicated in this short caption?

While the life writings included in this book provide case studies for theological reflection and not a comprehensive survey, the narratives underscore the problem of time poverty for women leaders, compounded by understandings of spirituality built on self-depletion and reinforced by images of the

1 Dorothy Day, Letter to Tamar, postmarked October 4, 1951. Marquette University, Department of Special Collections and University Archives.

2 Stephanie Brown, "Not a Perfect Mother," in *The Grand Permission: New Writings on Poetics and Motherhood*, edited by Patricia Dienstfrey and Brenda Hillman (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2003), 31.

good, self-sacrificing mother. Jane de Chantal writes in "breathless haste…always overwhelmed with work here."[3] Dorothy Day is nearly "collapsed with all the work."[4] Lena Edwards recalls that heart failure was "the only way they could slow me down…"[5] Dolores Huerta apologizes for taking time out for major surgery. Where is the feminist theology of Sabbath keeping?

In envisioning a spirituality of motherwork, I frame time as a spiritual and political issue. Time availability shapes spiritual practice, well-being, and women's ability to care for families and bring their gifts into public leadership. I seek a spirituality that incorporates practices of rest, renewal, and contemplative delight – recognizing the structural pressures and circumstances, such as poverty, trauma, and intense caregiving responsibilities that can make rest and renewal inaccessible.

I turn to Sabbath keeping as a potentially vital practice and theological resource for a spirituality of motherwork. Sabbath not only affirms the human need for rest; it positions rest as a spiritual practice at the core of our relationship with God. Theologies of Sabbath keeping resist enslavement and all forms of unjust work while affirming a vision of ecological, economic, and familial *shalom*. Sabbath keeping is not only cessation from work; it fundamentally reorients our relationship with time and roots all labor in the creativity of God and the dignity of the person as creature. In his classic book *The Sabbath*, Jewish theologian Abraham Joshua Heschel writes poetically of Sabbath as "the exodus from tension"[6] and an "island of stillness"[7] wherein a person can reclaim her dignity.

Driven in part by concerns about the contemporary pace of life, there has been a recent wave of books written about Sabbath from a Christian theological perspective. Yet Sabbath theologies tend to the abstract, and few address issues of women's labor, mothering, race and ethnicity, or time poverty in any depth. Where is Heschel's "island of stillness" in mothers' lives? Does the practice of Sabbath keeping hold liberative potential for women juggling the demands of mothering and other forms of work? What forms might Sabbath

3 Letter to Mother Jeanne Charlotte de Bréchard, Superior at Moulins, March 12, 1620, in *Selected Letters of Saint Jane Frances de Chantal*, translated by The Sisters of the Visitation (London: R. & T. Washbourne, LTD, 1918), 89.

4 Dorothy Day, Letter to Tamar, postmarked October 4, 1951. Marquette University, Department of Special Collections and University Archives.

5 Ibid., 31-2.

6 Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1951), 29.

7 Ibid.

take in mothers' different life stages, cultural contexts, and economic circumstances?

To open exploration of such questions, I engage here with the mothers' life writing discussed in previous chapters – and particularly the themes of time poverty, rest, and self-sacrifice. I extend the conversation by incorporating several examples of Jewish women's writing on Sabbath. To inform a contemporary framework for interpretation, I also draw on social scientific time use research and feminist leisure studies. I propose a Christian practical theology of Sabbath that begins to address – and does not hide or gloss over – the real challenges of time poverty and fatigue in motherwork and public leadership. Sabbath keeping will be life-giving if it is not set up as one more spiritual expectation or burden on women, another practice at which we too easily fall short or fail. Rather, the practical theological task is to realize Sabbath keeping as a liberating spiritual and ethical practice for women, one that affirms the dignity of labor and maternal creativity while resisting oppressive work structures, workaholism, and maternal exhaustion. Maternal life writing makes clear the need for gender analysis in Sabbath theology. Life writing also may yield fresh insights into Sabbath in terms of what it means to steward creation; to toil; to resist dehumanizing work; to embrace wonder and play along with productivity; to walk with a child's pace;[8] and to practice contemplative delight.

My exploration of Sabbath is necessarily dialogical; Christians have much to learn from Jewish visions and practices of Sabbath keeping.[9] While I draw from Jewish sources in my reflections on Sabbath, I do not make theological claims about Sabbath for the Jewish community. Rather, I respectfully seek to learn from Jewish experience and reflection in ways that might inform and enrich Christian understandings and practices. The distinctive and diverse meanings of Sabbath in Jewish and Christian communities are far more complex than can be addressed here; existing scholarly resources explore such issues.[10] Here I note several key working points in my approach. I presuppose that Sabbath is

8 Bonnie Miller McLemore also reflects on the pace of children, noting: "The slower, unconcerned pace with which almost all children move along fosters a reassessment of normative definitions of what it means to work and to love." See Miller-McLemore, *Also a Mother: Work and Family as Theological Dilemma* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 154.

9 I seek to employ this dialogical approach in teaching a course entitled "Sabbath: Theology and Practice" at Boston University School of Theology; I gratefully acknowledge my Jewish guest speakers and teaching partners in this effort.

10 See, for example, Tamara C. Eskenazi, Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., and William Shea, eds., *The Sabbath in Jewish and Christian Traditions* (New York: Crossroad, 1991).

a gift that can be received by Christians, albeit with some different meanings.[11] I understand the meaning of Sabbath for Christians in relationship to God's creative and liberative activity (a meaning we share with our Jewish sisters and brothers), the rest offered by Jesus, whose "burden is light" (Mt. 11:30), and the joy of the resurrection.

Time Poverty

In social science research, "time poverty" is an economic calculation: put simply, it is the difference between time requirements and time availability.[12] When there is less time available than time needed, there is "time poverty." Sociologists and economists have charted time poverty, seeking to understand this common contemporary experience and its causes. As we will see, social scientific approaches understand time as a valuable resource; time poverty has real economic, social, and political consequences. This research is quite complex and here I only provide an overview of key themes and debates.

The realities of time poverty are complicated, woven into larger economic changes and cultural shifts in how labor and leisure are valued. Clearly, the perception of time poverty is not limited to women but also is part of an increasingly rapid pace of life and a cultural affinity for busyness. I will focus here primarily on the American context though I will draw upon international research to offer some larger points of comparison. Research indicates "a growing perception of a time famine…Between 1965 and 1992, for example, the percent of respondents saying that they 'always feel rushed' increased almost 50%, so that now more than one in three Americans say that they *always* feel rushed."[13] Studies indicate that the pace of work has intensified in recent decades, with work-home boundaries increasingly permeable.[14]

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11 One issue is the relationship between Sabbath and Sunday, and on this point note the current work of the Lord's Day Alliance: http://www.ldausa.org/lda/, accessed March 21, 2017.

12 Andrew S. Harvey and Arun K. Mukhopadhyay, "When Twenty-Four Hours Is Not Enough: Time Poverty of Working Parents," *Social Indicators Research* 82, no. 1 (2007): 57-77.

13 Marin Clarkberg, "The Time-Squeeze in American Families; From Causes to Solutions," in *Balancing Acts: Easing the Burdens and Improving the Options for Working Families*, edited by E. Applebaum (Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute, 2000), 25.

14 David J. Maume, "The 'Over-Paced' American: Recent Trends in the Intensification of Work," in *Research in the Sociology of Work. Vol. 17: Workplace Temporalities*, edited by B. Rubin (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2007), 251-83.

American work hours are far longer than those in continental Europe, where workplace policies in many countries such as France and Sweden provide for shorter workweeks, more vacation, and more day care support and parental leave for working parents. Juliet Schor's influential 1993 book, *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure*, argued that Americans over the previous two decades worked increasingly longer hours and enjoyed less leisure time – in marked contrast to European patterns.[15] In his history of "overwork," Golden describes a "time divide" among workers, with a growing proportion of the American work force putting in increasingly long work hours with a consequent decline in leisure time and an experience of "time scarcity in the household."[16] Canadian author Heather Menzies chronicles the effects of time poverty, overwork, and technology on identity and relationships in her book *No Time: Stress and the Crisis of Modern Work*.[17]

Social science research indicates a growing perception of busyness across contexts: "There is a well-documented, cross-nationally consistent historical growth of busy feelings through the last part of the twentieth century."[18] Jonathan Gershuny, Director of the Centre for Time Use Research at the University of Oxford, describes shifts in cultural valuations of paid work and leisure over the past century. In English or American Victorian society, the leisure class held social status; though their days included activity, these unpaid activities held more social stature than the wage work of a laboring class. There is a marked change in contemporary society: paid work now is key to social status. Gershuny describes the "social construction of busyness": "work – and hence 'busyness' – at the start of the third millennium, succeeds leisure as 'the badge of honor,' the signifier of high social status."[19] He notes that increasing time pressures relate to changes in work patterns, particularly mother's increased employment and hence their increased cumulative paid and unpaid labor hours.

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15 Juliet Schor, *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).

16 Lonnie Golden, "A Brief History of Long Work Time and the Contemporary Sources of Overwork," *Journal of Business Ethics* 84 (2009): 217-27.

17 Heather Menzies, *No Time: Stress and the Crisis of Modern Life* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2005), 90.

18 Jonathan Gershuny, "Busyness as the Badge of Honor for the New Superordinate Working Class," *Social Research* 72, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 287-88.

19 Ibid., 297.

Employed parents – and mothers in particular – experience a particularly acute time squeeze.[20] In her book *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home*, Arlie Hochschild argued provocatively that within dual-earner households, women clock an additional month of work in unpaid domestic tasks (the "second shift") as compared to their partners. Some researchers have disputed Hochschild's claim as exaggerated and based on old data.[21] While the exact extent of labor inequity is a complicated question, the overall picture of a disproportionate time bind affecting employed mothers is clear. In a study of 29 countries, Jonas Edlund notes: "it can be observed that the work-family time squeeze is in most countries a problem more pertinent to women than to men."[22] Australian time use data showed that motherhood "markedly intensifies gender inequities in time allocation by increasing specialization and women's workload" and that men's increased child care work does not necessarily free up mothers for leisure activities.[23] A study of single,

20 U.S. Labor Department records indicate that the percentage of mothers of children under six years old who are in the workforce rose from 39% to 64% from 1975-2010. Mothers with children between the ages of 6 and 17 (school age) in the workplace rose from nearly 55% to 77% in those same years (*Boston Globe*, June 19 2011). For an example of a discussion of the "time bind," see Arlie Hochschild, *The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work* (New York: Metropolitan/Holt, 1997). See also Hochschild's widely read book *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1989) and recent studies such as Melissa A. Milkie, Sara B. Raley, and Suzanne M. Bianchi, "Taking on the Second Shift: Time Allocations and Time Pressures of U.S. Parents with Preschoolers," *Social Forces* 88, no. 2 (2009): 487-517 and Kei M. Nomaguchi, Melissa A. Milkie, and Suzanne M. Bianchi, "Time Strains and Psychological Well-Being: Do Dual-Earner Mothers and Fathers Differ?" *Journal of Family Issues* 26, no. 6 (2005): 756-92.

21 A team of researchers tested Hochschild's claim in their own study of American mothers of preschoolers, for example, finding that women employed full-time in dual-earner couples worked an extra week-and-a half per year, rather than a full extra month. See Melissa A. Milkie, Sara B. Raley, and Suzanne M. Bianchi, "Taking on the Second Shift: Time Allocations and Time Pressures of U.S. Parents with Preschoolers," *Social Forces* 88, no. 2 (2009): 487-518. See too Lyn Craig, "Is There Really a Second Shift, and If So, Who Does It? A Time of Diary Investigation," *Feminist Review* 86 (2007): 149-70. See also Suzanne M. Bianchi, John P. Robinson, and Melissa A. Milkie, *Changing Rhythms of American Family Life* (Russell Sage, 2006).

22 Jonas Edlund, "The Work-Family Time Squeeze: Conflicting Demands of Paid and Unpaid Work Among Working Couples in 29 Countries," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 48, no. 6 (2007): 451-80.

23 Lyn Craig, "Children and the Revolution: A Time-Diary Analysis of the Impact of Motherhood on Daily Workload," *Journal of Sociology* 42, no. 2 (2006): 125-43. On this point

divorced mothers notes: "The routines described by these mothers are finely tuned but very interdependent. Drop one plate and others follow, leaving the woman feeling like her control over time is fragile indeed." When asked to describe their experience of time, the single mothers interviewed used words such as "frantic, rushed, never enough time, always limited, and chaotic." The study described their feelings of "unrelenting responsibility."[24]

Working-class families face particular issues, such as the impact of shift work on family life, the difficulty in synchronizing work schedules for shared leisure, less control over working hours, and fewer resources to pay for child care, elder care, and household maintenance.[25] Low-income and poor women face distinct issues in managing time – for example, in organizing child care (often dependent on family members' schedules), medical visits, social service appointments, erratic employment, and urban transportation schedules.[26]

Such time poverty has real economic and political consequences. From an economic standpoint, time is an overlooked resource that, some have argued, should be counted in any measure of well-being or poverty. Clair Vickery developed a model for calculating time poverty in 1977, and others have built on this work.[27] Thus, for example, Canadian economists Harvey and Mukhopadhyay argue that time poverty should be factored into measures of economic poverty – and they note that working parents, particularly single parents, are a "a severely time deprived group."[28] Time also is a form of political capital, and women are disadvantaged by their lack of it. As Valerie Bryson writes:

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about father's involvement in child care, and for a study in the American context, see also M.J. Mattingly and S.M. Bianchi, "Gender Differences in the Quantity and Quality of Free Time: The U.S. Experience," *Social Forces* 81 (2003): 999-1031.

24 Judaline Hodgson, Anna Dienhart, and Kerry Daly, "Time Juggling: Single Mothers' Experience of Time-Press Following Divorce," *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 35, no. 1/2 (2001): 1-28 (for quoted sections, see pp. 8-11, 15-7).

25 Tracey Warren, "Class-and Gender-Based Working Time? Time Poverty and the Division of Domestic Labor," *Sociology* 37, no. 4 (2003): 733-52.

26 K.M. Roy, "Don't Have No Time: Daily Rhythms and the Organization of Time for the Low-Income Families," *Family Relations* 53, no. 2 (March 2004): 168-78. See too S. Jody Heymann, "Low-Income Parents and the Time Famine," in *Taking Parenting Public: The Case for a New Social Movement*, edited by Sylvia A. Hewlett, Nancy Rankin, and Cornel West (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 103-16, and Peggy Kahn, "The Work-Family Time Binds of Low-Income Mothers: Nurse Aids Struggle to Care," *Journal of Women, Politics, and Policy* 27, no. 3-4 (2005): 97-111.

27 Clair Vickery, "The Time Poor: A New Look at Poverty," *The Journal of Human Resources* 12, no. 1 (1977): 27-48.

28 Andrew S. Harvey and Arun K. Mukhopadhyay, "When Twenty-Four Hours Is Not Enough: Time Poverty of Working Parents," *Social Indicators Research* 82, no. 1 (2007): 57-77. Note

> Today, many feminist writers on citizenship see time as a scarce political resource that women have less of than men, and argue that 'time poverty' continues to act as a constraint on their citizenship…Such problems are compounded in developing nations, where women's 'time poverty' is bound up with acute economic and educational disadvantage.[29]

Feminist Leisure Studies

Feminist leisure scholars point to a significant leisure gap for mothers, particularly mothers who also work outside the home. They argue that traditional time use research fails to accurately capture women's caregiving and their multi-tasking.[30] Time-use studies tend both to undercount time allotted to family care and also to miss women's qualitatively different experience of time. Bryson names some of the difficulties in capturing the time that women give to care responsibilities:

> even though the attempt to measure time spent on care may be intended to recognize women's experiences and needs, it actually represents a confirmation of male time which is likely to misrepresent the nature and implications of caring roles and responsibilities. It reduces care to a set of discrete and quantifiable activities. It loses sight of the emotional aspects of care…It cannot distinguish between 'childcare' as a set of tasks and activities and 'mothering' as a personal attachment, a state of mind and a constant attentiveness that is much more than the sum of its parts.[31]

In other words, time use research presumes that care can be compartmentalized from other activities, when in fact women's practices of caregiving are

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also Robin A. Douthitt, "Time to Do the Chores?: Factoring Home Production Needs into Measures of Poverty," presented at the conference "Poverty: Feminist Perspectives," University of British Columbia, School of Social Work, November 18-20, 1993.

29 Valerie Bryson, "Time-Use Studies: A Potentially Feminist Tool," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 10, no. 2 (June 2008): 135-36. Bryson notes that 1500 feminist organizations world-wide successfully lobbied for the "Platform for Action" of the 1995 United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing to include a commitment for developing time-use studies that more accurately would measure women's unpaid labor and reflect it in national economic data (p. 139).

30 See Maureen Harrington, Don Dawson, and Pat Bolla, "Objective and Subjective Constraints on Women's Enjoyment of Leisure," *Society and Leisure* 15, no. 1 (1992): 203.

31 Bryson, "Time-Use Studies: A Potentially Feminist Tool," 146.

far more all-encompassing, porous and multi-tasked. Caregiving extends into "leisure" time both in practical activities and emotional work. Feminist leisure studies describe

> the greater time fragmentation and time scarcity apparently experienced by some women in their experiences of leisure and their attempts to capture time and space free from work and household obligations. These attempts are often frustrated by the existence of responsibilities which do not disappear even when they are apparently engaged in leisure.[32]

Mothers tend to experience leisure differently than do men. They catch pockets of leisure in unpredictable times – for example, when a child takes a nap – during which they may be constrained to the home. Mattingly and Bianchi describe women's "triple burden": "Women have less free time. The free time that they have is often contaminated by other activities or the presence of children, and their free time is not as beneficial to them as men's in terms of reducing feelings of time pressure."[33] Mothers' subjective experiences of time is compressed and commodified, not experienced as spacious but as something to be made, stolen, or bought. "Mothers at work in the family home therefore experience time as *needing to be made*, or constantly generated, rather than *spent* on work or leisure and any experience of 'free time' is likely to be in short bursts, rather than in blocks, involving considerable anticipation, planning and preparation for their children's needs ahead of time. To spend time, mothers first have to make it."[34]

Mothers' labor in creating leisure for others often goes unnoticed, for example, on family vacations; mothers' own leisure is not prioritized: "The existence of time hierarchies often meant prioritizing the needs of some family members over others; this process rarely seemed to give high priority to mothers."[35] Janet Martin Soskice captures this experience of family vacations in lively autobiographical form:

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32 Rosemary Deem, "No Time for Rest? An Exploration of Women's Work, Engendered Leisure and Holidays," *Time & Society* 5 (1996): 6.

33 M.J. Mattingly and S.M. Bianchi, "Gender Differences in the Quantity and Quality of Free Time: The U.S. Experience," *Social Forces* 81 (2003): 999-1031.

34 Christine Everingham, "Engendering Time: Gender Equity and Discourses of Workplace Flexibility," *Time & Society* 11, nos. 2/3 (2002): 338-39.

35 Deem, "No Time for Rest? An Exploration of Women's Work, Engendered Leisure and Holidays," 17.

> I have been in the past envious and in awe of colleagues (usually bachelors) who spend their holidays living with monks in the Egyptian desert or making long retreats on Mount Athos. They return refreshed and renewed…I then recall my own 'holiday' as entirely taken up with explaining why you can't swim in the river with an infected ear, why two ice creams before lunch is a bad idea…with trips to disgusting public conveniences with children who are 'desperate,' with washing grubby clothes…cooking large meals in inconvenient kitchens for children who are cranky…From such holidays one returns exhausted and wondering why people go on holidays.[36]

Of course, Soskice's frame of reference reflects economic status and privilege far different than the situations of the poor mothers interviewed by Susan Crawford Sullivan. Leisure deprivation merits reflection but cannot be equated with the economic survival needs of single, poor mothers. Indeed, women's experiences of leisure vary according to class, race, age, sexual orientation, geographic location, and physical abilities. Women who manage multiple roles and women in marginalized social groups tend to have more constraints on their leisure.[37]

What is clear is that mothers' access to leisure, their experiences of time, and the fatigue of motherwork are issues that warrant theological reflection. Research indicates that "The situation is most accentuated for women who are both full-time workers and mothers; they have the least time for leisure…They feel the burden of their manifold responsibilities and have a hard time getting them off their mind long enough to enjoy leisure. Working mothers are the most fatigued among women because of their double-day."[38] In short, feminist leisure scholars argue that women's experiences of leisure or rest are quite different from men's and must be accounted for in the thick matrix of their multiple roles in work and family, time deprivation, and the fatigue that accompanies their abiding "ethic of care."[39]

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36 Janet Martin Soskice, "Love and Attention," in *Philosophy, Religion, and the Spiritual Life*, edited by Michael McGhee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 61.

37 See Henderson's helpful review of feminist leisure studies, "One Size Doesn't Fit All: The Meanings of Women's Leisure," *Journal of Leisure Research* 28, no. 3 (1996): 139-54.

38 Harrington, Dawson, and Bolla, "Objective and Subjective Constraints on Women's Enjoyment of Leisure," 217.

39 Ibid.

Spiritual Practice and Maternal Time Poverty

That time poverty also must impact mothers' spiritual practice would seem likely. Recent popular spiritual literature is suggestive. In *The Busy Mom's Guide to Spiritual Survival*, Kelli Trujillo describes how her spiritual practice was nearly obliterated by the birth of her son. Upon opening a book about spiritual disciplines: "I was excited at first and so ready to deepen my spiritual life; yet as I turned each page, I felt worse and worse and worse. I can't do any of this, I realized, I don't have the time…the discouragement became overwhelming."[40] Megan Breedlove, evangelical author of the book *Manna for Moms*, similarly describes her experience, laced with accounts of a struggle to find prayer time amidst the unpredictable and tiring rhythm of life with a baby: "I couldn't seem to figure out how to spend time alone with God. I tried to get up early and have my quiet time, but I was too exhausted. I tried to stay up late, but I started falling asleep. I tried to plan a time during the day, or simply to seize the moment, but babies have an infallible sense of timing."[41] Her lament is but one surfaced in popular spiritual books aimed at "busy Moms." The titles are catchy and speak directly to women's experience of time poverty: *Grace on the Go: Quick Prayers for New Moms; Prayer Starters for Busy Moms: How to Pray All Day and Still Put the Laundry Away; NIV Busy Mom's Bible: Daily Inspiration Even if You Only Have One Minute*.[42] Then there are Catholic versions – books of daily saint devotions and meditations, such as *Catholic Mom 24|7: Daily Meditations for Busy Mothers* and the ever-practical *Smart Martha's Catholic Guide for Busy Moms*, written by Tami Kiser, a mother of nine who also leads "Smart Martha" seminars."[43] Lisa Hendey, who writes books and blogs for Catholic Moms, confesses:

> I ultimately had to call a halt for a week and take my own 'time inventory.' …Notebook in hand, I went through the week documenting the way in

40 Trujillo, 15.

41 Megan Breedlove, *Manna for Moms: God's Provision for Your Hair-Raising, Miracle-Filled Mothering Adventure* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2010), 9.

42 Examples include: Barbara Bartocci, *Grace on the Go: Quick Prayers for New Moms* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Pub., 2008); Tracy Klehn, *Prayer Starters for Busy Moms: How to Pray All Day and Still Put the Laundry Away* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2006); and Kristen Welch, *Don't Make Me Come Up There!: Quiet Moments for Busy Moms* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011).

43 Tammy M. Bundy, *Catholic Mom 24|7: Daily Meditations for Busy Mothers* (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2003) and Tami Kiser, *Smart Martha's Catholic Guide for Busy Moms* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2010).

> which my days were spent…I was shocked by the results – even during the most basic of weeks my days had been packed to the gills. I'd let things go undone, I felt exhausted and overwhelmed, and my spiritual life had been largely neglected.[44]

The publication of such popular devotional books and blogs suggests that time poverty is indeed perceived to be a spiritual issue; further empirical study of the relationship between time poverty and mothers' spiritual practice would be a useful next step in research.

Sacred Time

In contrast to the experience of scarcity and commodification of time described above, Jewish and Christian traditions describe time as a sacred gift and the arena for sacred encounter and revelation. Heschel writes: "Judaism is a religion of time aiming at the sanctification of time."[45] Sabbath is a preeminent practice of sanctifying time, with one day each week set aside for rest, prayer, special meals, and fellowship. The practice of observing Sabbath (or Shabbat) marks this day as holy. On the seventh day of creation, God rests, delights in creation, blesses the seventh day and hallows it (Gen. 2:3). The Israelites are commanded to remember the Sabbath as they imitate God's creative rhythms:

> "Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it" (Ex. 20:8-11).

Divine time and human time are forever linked, mirroring one another. As Jewish scholar Elliot Ginsburg writes: "The sabbath is both the crown of God's creation and the climax of each mundane week."[46] In Jewish practice, the Sab-

44 Lisa M. Hendey, *The Handbook for Catholic Moms: Nurturing Your Heart, Mind, Body, and Soul* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2010), 96-7.

45 Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1951), 8.

46 Elliot K. Ginsburg, *The Sabbath in Classical Kabbalah* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 60.

bath is regarded as the culmination of the week; all days lead to Sabbath and flow from Sabbath. Sabbath is holy time; it is the "day of eternity."[47]

A sense of the sacrality of time also permeates Christian theology and liturgical practice. John Paul II's 1998 apostolic letter *Dies Domini* ("The Day of the Lord") emphasizes that, "In Christianity time has a fundamental importance."[48] Rooted in Jewish Sabbath theology, the document moves to recover the meaning of Sunday, the "Lord's Day." It describes Christ as "the Lord of time; he is its beginning and its end; every year, every day and every moment are embraced by his Incarnation and Resurrection, and thus become part of the 'fullness of time.'"[49] As the "weekly Easter," Sunday is the day that reveals the meaning of time.[50] Christians are exhorted to give time to Christ and to the Church through participation in the Eucharistic assembly on Sunday, which both expresses and forms the reality of the Church.[51] To rediscover Sunday is to "open our time to Christ, that he may cast light upon it and give it direction."[52]

Jewish and Christian traditions understand time as an abundant sacred gift. These theologies contrast sharply with the language of scarcity, poverty, and commodification reflected in contemporary time use research and several case studies of maternal life writing. In continuing to unpack theological understandings of time and work, we turn now to explore Sabbath in relationship to just labor.

Sabbath Rest and Just Work

As it reorients our relationship to time, the practice of Sabbath keeping also carries a vision of liberation and just work. Sabbath observance remembers and re-enacts Yahweh's liberation of the Jewish people from slavery: "Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you…Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm;

47 Aryeh Kaplan, *Sabbath: Day of Eternity* (New York: OU/NCSY, 1998).

48 John Paul II, *Dies Domini* [Apostolic Letter on Keeping the Lord's Day Holy], May 31, 1998, sec. 74: https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1998/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_05071998_dies-domini.html.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid., sec. 75.

51 Ibid., sec. 32.

52 Ibid., sec. 7.

therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day" (Deut. 5:12-15). The twin commands to "remember" and "observe" are marked today in women's practice of lighting of the two candles at the beginning of Shabbat. The liberation that Sabbath recalls is extended to women and men, and not only to the people of Israel but to all people, including strangers, and to animals: "you shall not do any work – you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns" (Ex. 20:10). Sabbath thus affirms the dignity of all creatures.

Beginning with *Rerum Novarum* (1891), which addressed the plight of workers in the Industrial Revolution, Catholic social teaching has consistently affirmed a corollary right and *duty* to rest both physically and spiritually. Workers have a right to leisure and rest and cannot give up these rights, cannot "give up his soul to servitude."[53] Rest is a duty to God and to self.[54] Sunday rest is understood not as "mere idleness" but as time set aside for renewal and worship, "a rest sanctioned by God's great law of the Ancient Covenant – 'Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath day,' and taught to the world by His own mysterious "rest" after the creation."[55]

The Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes* ("Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World") echoes *Rerum Novarum* in insisting on a liberative theology of work: "It happens too often, however, even in our days, that workers are reduced to the level of being slaves to their own work. This is by no means justified by the so-called economic laws." Leisure and rest are important not only for Sunday worship but because they are essential to the full development of the person, family, and society; workers should be given "sufficient rest and leisure to cultivate their familial, cultural, social and religious life. They should also have the opportunity freely to develop the energies and potentialities which perhaps they cannot bring to much fruition in their professional work." This applies to mothers as well. Work should be adapted to the needs of the person, "especially in respect to mothers of families, always with due regard for sex and age."[56]

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53 Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* [Encyclical Letter on Capital and Labor], May 15, 1891, sec. 40: http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html.

54 Ibid., sec. 42.

55 Ibid., sec. 41.

56 Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes* [Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World], December 7, 1965, sec. 67: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

The church is tasked with proclaiming a "gospel of work"; the "good news" about work lies in its dignity in the freedom of the person. The personhood of the worker, a subject, is the fundamental basis of the meaning of work. In Catholic social teaching, the right to rest is both a benefit due to workers and key to a spirituality of work.[57] Human beings, created in the image and likeness of God, are called to imitate the Creator in the dynamic rhythm of work and rest, as depicted in Genesis: "God himself wished to present his own creative activity under the form of *work and rest*."[58] A spirituality of work has an eschatological dimension also as preparation for "the *'rest' that the Lord reserves for his servants and friends*."[59] *Dies Domini* similarly portrays the rest of the Sabbath as humanizing and liberating, a life-giving lifeline to the Creator. Rather than being a burden, through honoring God's rest the person fully discovers herself.[60]

Jewish Women's Voices on Sabbath: Three Examples

How do such theologies of time, work, and rest get enacted in practice in women's lives? How might women's lived experience contribute to a practical theology of Sabbath keeping? To explore such questions, I begin with three examples of Jewish women's writing on Sabbath. First is Bertha Pappenheim (1859-1936), who was raised in an Orthodox Jewish family and became an early twentieth-century Jewish Austrian feminist and founder of the *Jüdischer Frauenbund* (League of Jewish Women).[61] Speaking at the Women's Congress in Munich in 1912, Pappenheim described women's sacred responsibility in observing Sabbath for the household and argued that Jewish women should have legal protection to take time off for Sabbath preparation, noting the particular demands on working mothers:

57 John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens* [Encyclical Letter on Human Work], September 14, 1981, sec. 19: http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens.html.

58 Ibid., 25.

59 Ibid.

60 *Dies Domini*, sec. 61.

61 Pappenheim also is the pseudonymous patient "Anna O.," presented by Sigmund Freud as the first patient of psychoanalysis. See Joseph Breuer and Sigmund Freud's *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) and, for a more recent investigation, Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, *Remembering Anna O. A Century of Mystification* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

> It has long been one the of the most justifiable demands of women of all confessions that all working women who earn their daily bread should be allowed these hours of preparation before the day of rest, which Jewish law, saturated as it is with the social spirit, so judiciously and lovingly prescribes. It is especially for the trebly difficult and responsible duties of the woman, as housekeeper, mother and wage-earner, that this evening, which ushers in the day of rest, should be observed, in order to ensure the full religious, physical, and aesthetic enjoyment of the Sabbath.[62]

Pappenheim argues here that Sabbath implies a demand for social justice, that women carry the labor of Sabbath preparations for the home, and that Sabbath rest is *especially* for women carrying the multiple demands of home, family, and workplace. Pappenheim frames Sabbath as a particular balm for employed mothers while also arguing for economic and public policy changes to increase access to Sabbath rest.

Blu Greenberg's classic *How to Run a Traditional Jewish Household* (1983) provides a glimpse into the gendered complexity of Orthodox observance for a late twentieth-century professional and mother. As an Orthodox Jew, Greenberg's practice of Sabbath keeping is strictly regulated by rabbinic law, which outlines thirty-nine categories of forbidden work, or *melakhot*, including cooking/baking, gathering, tying, tearing, igniting a fire, and carrying from private to public domain. Greenberg, then mother of five teenagers, provides a detailed outline of the preparation required for Orthodox Shabbat observance, including cleaning, shopping, cooking, doing laundry, sewing, pre-tearing of toilet paper. These tasks of physical preparation of the home fell primarily to the woman of the household, a fact noted by Greenberg. Describing the male custom of going to the *mikvah* (ritual bath) on Friday afternoon, she writes, with an understated critique: "It is a lovely custom, for mikvah not only symbolizes a spiritual cleansing, it also offers a few moments of private time to reflect, to relax, to disengage from the past week, to think about the coming experience of Shabbat. However, if their wives are home frenziedly preparing for Shabbat, caring for eight kids, it's not altogether fair, nor is it in the spirit of the day." Ideally, the preparation responsibilities would be divided such that women and men both could enter "more restfully into Shabbat."[63]

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62 Bertha Pappenheim, "The Jewish Woman in Religious Life," pp. 158-63 in *Four Centuries of Jewish Women's Spirituality: A Sourcebook*, edited by Ellen Umansky and Dianne Ashton (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2009). Quotations are taken from p. 162.

63 Blu Greenberg, *How to Run a Traditional Jewish Household* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983), 49.

Greenberg also notes that Orthodox Sabbath observance can constrain mothers of small children to the private sphere unless an *eruv* is present. An *eruv* is a wire established around many Jewish communities, which technically makes the whole domain "private" in terms of rabbinic law. Thus, while carrying from private to public domain is prohibited on Shabbat, such carrying would be permitted within the zone of the *eruv*. Greenberg recalls:

> For most of my early married and childraising years, I lived in a community that had no eruv; and therefore, if I didn't plan ahead for a baby-sitter to mind the babies at home or take them out in a carriage, there was no way that I could go to shul or take a walk with Yitz and the bigger children. For the most part, I took it with great equanimity. When I look back on those times, I can only wonder in amazement why it didn't bother me more and why I didn't organize a huge rally of all Orthodox mothers of young children.[64]

Drawing from a diary she kept at the time, Greenberg describes the harried Shabbat preparations of her household, noting her own fatigue and time famine as a working mother:

> Thursday night: I had planned to do a bit of Shabbat preparation after dinner. But I am too tired, having put in a full day's work. So, after we clean up the dairy dishes…I announce that everyone must come home immediately after school tomorrow and we will all do the job together. Working woman and all, I am still pretty much in charge of the whole plant and its day-to-day functioning.[65]

The pressure of time bears down on her as the fixed time for candle-lighting on Friday evening approaches. Greenberg has resources to redistribute the labor to some degree; a cleaning woman arrives to help prepare the house. She tries without success to enlist all of her children in the meal preparations as she showers and gets dressed. She engages in a tense dialogue with her son who asks her to sew on a button in the final five minutes before she lights the candles. When it is time, she and one son are the only ones ready, and she lights the candles nearly alone. At that point, she describes a physical release

64 Ibid., 48-9.

65 Ibid., 54.

as she welcomes Shabbat: "I heave a sigh of relief…and feel the stress and strain of the week begin to drain out of my body."[66]

More recently, Meredith Jacobs, a married mother of two, sets out to connect with other busy Jewish mothers in her readable book *The Modern Jewish Mom's Guide to Shabbat*. She refers again and again to an experience of time poverty: "We modern Moms have very little extra time on our hands. So when my children came home from nursery school and said, 'Mommy, it's Friday. We have to have Shabbat,' my reaction was, 'Ach, like I have time for this.'" Jacobs experiments with keeping Shabbat, but returns to ordering pizza at the tired end of the week instead. The narratives of older women in her congregation who share their memories of Shabbat, and her own memories of lighting candles with her mother and sister, eventually lead Jacobs to commit to regular Shabbat dinners. "I suddenly saw Shabbat not as a burden that would take extra time and effort, but as a gift I could give to myself and my family."[67]

These examples are culled from the relatively small number of texts on Sabbath written by Jewish women.[68] They serve here not as definitive data on Jewish women's experience of Sabbath but rather as examples of the more textured descriptions of practice that women's writing makes visible. They also present varied models of Sabbath keeping practice. Bertha Pappenheim and Blu Greenberg draw from their own experience of Orthodox observance, which they describe as deeply renewing as well as a substantial burden of labor on women. They note that structural changes in economic systems, more equitable division of labor in the home, and religious innovations such as the *eruv* play important roles in making Sabbath more liberative and spiritually refreshing for women. Jacobs is not strictly observant; she presents a more flexible model of Sabbath practice that recognizes the challenges of Sabbath observance for contemporary families, and especially for contemporary mothers. At the same time, in listening to women's narratives about the power of Sabbath in their own lives, she comes to affirm Shabbat as a gift.

66 Ibid., 57.

67 Meredith L. Jacobs, *The Modern Jewish Mom's Guide to Shabbat* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 2-3.

68 See too Susannah Heschel's introduction to her father's classic text in the 2005 edition, Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2005), vii-xvi. Other books on Sabbath by female Jewish authors include Francine Klagsbrun, *The Fourth Commandment* (New York: Harmony Books, 2002) and Judith Shulevitz, *The Sabbath World: Glimpses of a Different Order of Time* (New York: Random House, 2010).

Time Poverty, Work, and Rest in Women's Life Writing

Turning now to Christian women's reflections, it is clear that the life writing presented in Part 1 of this book include striking references to time poverty and an inability to access rest. Jane de Chantal writes that she "has so little leisure" and is "overwhelmed with work" (interestingly, these comments made after the prime of her young mothering years and amidst intensive leadership responsibilities for the Visitation congregation). Day laments the "little time" she has with daughter Tamar as a "cruel hardship." Huerta "hates to lose the time" needed to have a tumor removed from her ovary, and she worries that without someone to watch her children, she "just can't find the time to work." Lena Edwards comments: "But now everything is rush, rush, rush."[69] Heart failure was the only way to slow her down. The impression left from these narratives: time is scarce, work unrelenting – and the cost is significant in terms of care of children, health, work, and spiritual well-being.

It is important though to note the culturally specific contexts for work, leisure, and time poverty. Huerta resists any indictment of her motherwork as a middle-class hang-up. Edwards says that her work mirrors the labor patterns of Eastern European working-class immigrant women, who were "out of bed the next day" after delivering a baby. She follows that pattern with pride rather than complaint, climbing stairs in the tenement houses days after the birth of her children, finishing her office hours even after her membranes rupture. Developing a practical theology of Sabbath keeping entails recognition of diverse cultural patterns and values around motherwork – and, indeed, the telling and re-telling of such narratives brings voice and visibility to mothers who have gone before. A practical theological question then is how or whether to interrupt narratives of maternal self-sacrifice so as to create pathways for rest and renewal[70] without dishonoring mothers or imposing alien cultural frameworks on spirituality. The image of the strong, working mother can be both a source of pride and a debilitating image for women to live up to. Delores Williams notes that while "Womanist emphasis upon the value of mothering and nurturing is consistent with the testimony of many black women," so too

69 Black Women Oral History Project. Interviews, 1976-1981. Lena Frances Edwards-Madison. OH-31. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, written transcript, 6.

70 Note Marva Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989). According to Dawn, Sabbath rest entails not only physical rest but also emotional, intellectual, social, and spiritual rest.

womanist visions for genuine community require affirmation of women's self-love and "are thwarted if black women are expected to bear 'the lion's share' of the work…"[71]

As maternal life writing renders visible complexities of rest, time poverty, and spirituality in motherwork, so too it can express fresh insights and practical wisdom. While the authors in Part 1 do not explicitly discuss Sabbath, I highlight here three relevant points: maternal images of rest in suffering; mothering as delightful co-creation; and differential age experiences of rest and work.

First, what does "rest" mean in a context of maternal suffering? Jane de Chantal's daughter Françoise experiences the death of her husband just two weeks after the birth of their son. As De Chantal tries to comfort and guide her daughter, whose traumatic experience echoes her own young widowhood, she draws upon maternal imagery: "rest quietly on the breast of divine Providence."[72] While rest may appear impossible at such a time, de Chantal points to spiritual rest in terms that resonate with the life-giving dependence embodied in Sabbath keeping. In Judaism, Sabbath is portrayed in female terms as the cherished "Queen" or "Bride." De Chantal provides a maternal image of rest as the care, nurture, and comfort of a breastfeeding mother. In addition, for de Chantal, a reoriented relationship to time yields some comfort in intense suffering; eternity is the place of real rest. When she seeks to guide her daughter Françoise, bereft after the death of her infant son, she writes: "Raise your mind often to the thought of eternity, and aspire to and long for this happiness. You will see that there is no real rest anywhere else…"[73] Her spiritual guidance of Françoise here points to an eschatological rest – resonant with understandings of Sabbath as a foretaste of eternity.

Second, in contrast to the image of rest in suffering, one can identify the theme of Sabbath as contemplative delight. *Dies Domini* describes the practice of Sabbath as a kind of contemplative, lingering (or leisurely) practice that imitates a creative God:

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71 Delores S. Williams, "Womanist Theology: Black Women's Voices," *Christianity & Crisis* (March 2, 1987): 68. Regarding womanism and practical theology, note Evelyn's Parker's discussion: "Womanist approaches to practical theology are concerned with ministry that brings wholeness and flourishing to black women and girls." Evelyn L. Parker, "Womanist Theory," pp. 204-13 in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, edited by Bonnie Miller-McLemore (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 206.

72 Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal, *Letters of Spiritual Direction*, 250.

73 Ibid., 215.

> The divine rest of the seventh day does not allude to an inactive God, but emphasizes the fullness of what has been accomplished. It speaks, as it were, of God's lingering before the "very good" work (*Gn* 1:31) which his hand has wrought, in order to cast upon it *a gaze full of joyous delight*. This is a "contemplative" gaze which does not look to new accomplishments but enjoys the beauty of what has already been achieved.[74]

Dorothy Day speaks to this contemplative, wondrous delight in creation in her own experience of pregnancy. Her essay on childbirth captures the contemplative delight of the woman who has just given birth. The link between Sabbath and an understanding of God as creator is clear. Yet few texts draw upon mothering to deepen a theology of Sabbath. Might this image of Sabbath as part of the rhythm of creation, as delighted, slow, lingering attention to the goodness of the creation, resonate with mothers? Mothering, including the physical experience of pregnancy as an embodied practice and site of theological knowing, could provide unique insights into God's creative action and contemplative delight.

Third, Lena Edwards contributes the insight that work and rest have different meaning at different seasons of a mother's life. As a young mother of six separated from her husband and balancing a medical residency, Edwards surely experienced time poverty. Writing as an elder in her eighties, Edwards no longer sees busyness as a problem; rather, she flags the need for activity, for meaningful work, in older years: "If I was at home doing nothing, I'd blow my top through suicide or drugs or alcohol…People can't live if they're just sitting around and doing nothing…The solution is to keep seniors busy."[75] Edwards' advocacy for activity for older adults underscores the importance of a life stage and social-systemic approach to issues of work, rest, and spirituality. Time demands vary according to the ages and stages of children, the particular needs of individual children, wealth and poverty, and family situations. Busyness is intense in the most physically demanding years of raising small children, and the adolescent years bring a proliferation of activities and social/emotional/educational issues to address. Mothering does not end when children become young or middle-aged adults, but the time demands of mothering do change (influenced by factors such as longer financial dependence of young adults on parents, high rates of mobility leading to adult children at a

74 *Dies Domini*, sec. 11.

75 "Dr. Lena Edwards – A Sprite Senior Who Keeps Fighting," *The Monitor*, Trenton, NJ (May 7, 1981).

distance from parents, grandmothers assuming care of grandchildren, particularly in contexts of high drug abuse or disease). All these life stage and contextual factors shape the demands of mothering and the meaning of Sabbath as spiritual practice.

In light of women's life writing, read in conjunction with time use research, feminist leisure studies, and theologies of Sabbath, I underscore the importance of thinking about time as a spiritual issue and incorporating practices of rest and renewal in a spirituality of motherwork. Practical theologians can problematize self-sacrificial ideals of mothering and leadership that render women's own labor depleting and unceasing. Literature on Sabbath says little about how gender, race, class, or life stage impact practice. By contrast, a practical theology of Sabbath keeping is highly contextual, interpreting Sabbath practice in light of the concrete realities of a situation. Such contextual reading must take account of maternal time poverty, self-sacrificial labor, and the culturally and developmentally specific challenges of motherwork. Analysis of women's narratives informs a practical theology of Sabbath keeping, which can stimulate the imagination about creative, flexible Sabbath practices organic to the rhythms of women's lives; build communal supports for Sabbath keeping; and promote structural changes that clear pathways for women's access to Sabbath.

Sabbath and the "Public" of the Family: Towards a Home-Centered Model of Spiritual Renewal

While Sabbath is by no means an easy practice in contemporary contexts, it offers a model of spiritual renewal rooted in the home and organic to family life. From my Catholic perspective, this is a huge contribution to a tradition that elevates motherhood and the family but still maintains a strong tradition of retreat as a model of spiritual renewal. Indeed, retreats can offer laity rest and a powerful, brief immersion in silence, a focused time for reflection and prayer. Christian spiritual traditions point to the power of such a temporary withdrawal from ordinary life. In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus tells his weary apostles to "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while. For many were coming and going and they had no leisure even to eat" (Mark 6:31). According to Douglas Burton-Christie, early desert spirituality was characterized by "a kind of rhythm of withdrawal, encounter, and return."[76] Cer-

76 Douglas Burton-Christie, "Solitude, the Ground of Compassion," *Journal of Supervision and Training in Ministry* 18 (1997): 130-31.

tainly some intentional time apart for prayer and reflection can be a gift. And yet, models of spiritual renewal premised on withdrawal suggest that spiritual growth requires separation from home and family. This is theologically problematic if we truly see the family as domestic church and the ordinary contexts of lay life as primary spiritual landscapes. Moreover, there is the practical theological issue of access: models of spiritual renewal premised on withdrawal exclude many caregivers (of children and elderly parents alike), for whom such separation is not possible or not compatible with the demands of their vocation. For example, retreats may be out of reach for parents of young children, especially nursing mothers, single mothers, and those without financial resources and extended family support. Few retreat centers offer multigenerational or family retreats. Few welcome children. By contrast, Sabbath keeping is a home-centered, multi-generational practice of spiritual renewal, imbedded in the rhythm of the week, encompassing family meals, prayer, play, rest, and the blessing of children. From a Christian perspective, Sabbath keeping is a practice well suited to the domestic church.[77]

To make a case for home-centered Sabbath not as privatized devotion but as a richly communal, public practice, it is worth noting Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman's framing of liturgy. Hoffman argues that liturgy (Greek: *leiturgia*, meaning "public works") is properly situated in the "public" of the family. He notes that while Christian liturgy became associated with church as home table fellowship waned, rabbinic Judaism "gave equal weight to synagogue and to home." Hoffman describes an "explosion" of family liturgies, including resources to help Jewish families celebrate Shabbat at home: "Shabbat at home has made a recovery that could never have been predicted a decade or two

77 While this chapter focuses on Sabbath as a home-centered model of spiritual renewal, in other publications I have explored alternative models of spiritual renewal. These include family retreats, for examples see the Malvern Retreat Center in Pennsylvania (http://www.malvernretreat.com/index.htm) and the Marianist Family Retreat Center in Cape May, NJ (http://www.capemaymarianists.org/). Another model of spiritual formation/renewal accessible to children can be found in Protestant traditions of Christian camping, see, for example, the Christian Camp and Conference Association (http://www.ccca.org/public/about/visionmissionvalues.asp) and the United Methodist Camp and Retreat Ministries (http://www.gbod.org/camping). Some small group ministries cater to mothers with young children, e.g., the "Mom to Mom" ministry (http://www.momtomom.org/), a biblically-based program with an evangelical Christian orientation. See Wolfteich, "It's About Time: Rethinking Spirituality and the Domestic Church," in *The Household of God and Local Households*, edited by Thomas Knieps-Port le Roi, Gerard Mannion, and Peter De Mey, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 254 (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 127-44.

ago."[78] In creatively exploring the meaning of Sabbath in light of Christian theology, practical theologians can work with such Jewish liturgical resources.

Popular Jewish parenting literature, which also reflects a resurgence of interest in Sabbath, provides another potential resource. Several bestselling books invite contemporary Jewish families to incorporate Shabbat into their homes as an antidote to the accelerated pace of family life and as a means of connecting with family and community. For example, Wendy Mogel's popular book *The Blessing of a Skinned Knee: Using Jewish Teachings to Raise Self-Reliant Children* describes the "blessing of time" in which Mogel counsels parents about how to "guard time" and "how to teach your child the value of the present moment." She discusses the impact of technology, adult investment in work, and rising levels of children's homework ("the time bandit") in compressing time and disconnecting relationships within the family. Mogel describes Sabbath as a "blueprint for rest, renewal, and reflection" and highlights the mystical dimensions of the Sabbath. Sabbath's sanctification of time extends to attitudes and practices of time throughout the week.[79] The book *How to Raise a Jewish Child*, by Anita Diamant and Karen Kushner, similarly highlights Sabbath practice. Acknowledging that the labor of Sabbath preparation can be daunting, it encourages flexibility in adapting traditions to the realities of one's own family situation.[80]

Such popular Jewish parenting literature moves towards a contextual practical theology of Sabbath that can inform Christian efforts to incorporate Sabbath as a model of spiritual renewal rooted in home and family.[81] Dorothy Bass,

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78 Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman, ed., *My People's Prayer Book, Vol. 7, Shabbat at Home* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2004), 3, 9.

79 Wendy Mogel, *The Blessing of a Skinned Knee: Using Jewish Teachings to Raise Self-Reliant Children* (New York: Scribner, 2001), 209-35.

80 Anita Diamant with Karen Kushner, *How to Raise a Jewish Child: A Practical Handbook for Family Life* (New York: Schocken Books, 2008).

81 The contributions of Marva Dawn to a Christian theology of Sabbath must be noted here. See Marva Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989) and Marva Dawn, *The Sense of the Call: A Sabbath Way of Life for Those Who Serve God, the Church, and the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006). Rooted in Christian faith, Dawn marks Sunday as a day for Sabbath keeping and worship, feasting with special foods, music, beauty, and more leisurely time for visiting with friends. Dawn's multi-faceted discussion of "rest" is helpful in thinking about women's leisure and spiritual renewal. Identifying herself as a single woman, though, Dawn's reflections on Sabbath keeping are not highly engaged with family issues and rarely address gender issues, though she certainly speaks of busyness and the juggling of life and work.

a Lutheran theologian and mother of two, is one Christian theologian who has wrestled with the shape of Sabbath in contemporary family life. She illustrates a flexible, contextual approach to the practice of Sabbath keeping: "Each person needs to consider what forms this practice can take in his or her life, and each local community, family, or institution needs to discern the life-giving shape of Sabbath within its own unique context." Bass relates stories from her own family to illustrate the challenges of Sabbath, including arguments with her twelve-year-old daughter about going to the mall on a Sunday afternoon and the dilemmas posed by the proliferation of children's sports activities on Sunday. Bass contributes thus a theological treatment of Sabbath that attends to the realities of a certain slice of family life, including attention to shifting cultural pressures and the dynamics of formation and practice, although her work does not look extensively at mothering in particular.[82]

Norman Wirzba's *Living the Sabbath: Discovering the Rhythms of Rest and Delight* similarly takes home and family seriously in a Christian theology of Sabbath keeping, although his book also illustrates the need for sharper gender analysis of work and Sabbath. Wirzba draws attention to the ecological and economic dimensions of Sabbath keeping as he advocates for the cultivation of Sabbath homes. Practices of Sabbath homes include resisting the intrusions of technology, cultivating face-to-face relationships, extending hospitality, and sharing family meals with food grown in home gardens or purchased from local markets, thus sustaining a connection to food as a gift of God. Wirzba calls for a renewal of the domestic arts, which include not only necessities such as cleaning and laundry but "the creation of a pleasing and beautiful home," through which we "participate in the beauty that God is."[83] Wirzba's vision of the Sabbath home as a deeply formative space is right on target. Yet, beyond his critique of "questionable assumptions about gender roles," he says little about how the cultivation of the Sabbath home will impact and depend upon women's labor. This is a very high standard for the home – one that requires substantial labor, particularly given women's disproportionate share in domestic work. Given the time poverty and overwork experienced acutely by mothers who engage in market work; by single mothers; and by poor mothers, practical theology must address the public policies, ecclesial supports, and cultural and theological frameworks needed to make Sabbath

82 Dorothy C. Bass, *Receiving the Day: Christian Practices for Opening the Gift of Time* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2000), 70, 63-4, and 74.

83 Norman Wirzba, *Living the Sabbath: Discovering the Rhythms of Rest and Delight* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 1996), 14, 105, 109, and 113.

renewal a reality for mothers. This is vital to the project of envisioning Sabbath as a genuinely life-giving practice of spiritual renewal rooted in home and family.

Conclusion

Theologies of work and theologies of Sabbath are deeply complementary. Sabbath keeping is an embodied affirmation of the dignity of labor, the spiritual necessity of rest, and a prophetic call for just work and liberation. The liberative vision of work imbedded in Sabbath theology and practice aligns closely with the commitments of women such as Day, Huerta, and Edwards, all of whom worked "tirelessly" on behalf of the dignity of workers, including the poorest and most vulnerable. A commitment to just work and the care of workers was at the core of their public leadership. Yet, Day's admission that she is "nearly collapsed with all the work" should ring out as a stark counterpoint to the *Ebony* caption for Lena Edwards: mothers, public leaders, spiritual leaders, do indeed get tired. If it is an ecclesial task to develop a spirituality of work in changing times, then the church must come alongside women in experiences of overwork and time poverty, offering a better ideal of spirituality with concrete practices and resources of rest and renewal.

Sabbath keeping is a counter-cultural domestic model of spiritual renewal, one that affirms the home as "ordinary" locus of spirituality; taps into the creativity of mothering; brings a prophetic stance to women's labor and just work; re-members fatigued bodies; delights in the goodness of creation, and brings contemplative practice into ordinary time. Mining women's reflections about their lived experiences of time, work, and Sabbath, I argue for a practical theology of Sabbath that makes the gendered complexity of practice visible, listens for women's practical wisdom, and addresses theological, socio-economic, and cultural impediments to Sabbath rest.

CHAPTER 7

Spiritual Travail and Sacred Tales

> "I write unto you little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you." – Susanna Wesley[1]

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> "Forget the room of one's own. Write in the kitchen, lock yourself up in the bathroom. Write on the bus or the welfare line, write on the job…While you wash the floor or clothes, listen to the words chanting in your body." – Gloria Anzaldúa[2]

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Retrieving and critically engaging the narratives of mothers is an important task for practical theology and the study of spirituality. Maternal narratives make visible the highly contextualized and culturally-specific spiritual challenges and insights embedded in the practice of mothering. They generate theological reflection; enlarge understandings of spirituality; and are potentially transformative performances of spiritual formation, spiritual guidance, and communal re-membrance. Yet, the "canon" of Christian spirituality contains few works by mothers, and even autobiographical writing by mothers can hide the detail of everyday mothering. Creative means of retrieving and inviting maternal life writing are necessary, as the demands of motherwork often leave little time or mental space to write and women may lack spiritual vocabulary to articulate their experiences.

Practical theologians have noted the use of life writing in fields such as pastoral care and counselling, religious education, social work, and vocational dis-

1 Charles Wallace, Jr., ed., *Susanna Wesley: The Complete Writings* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 427.

2 Gloria Anzaldúa, "Speaking in Tongues: a Letter to Third World Women Writers," pp. 30-5 in *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, edited by AnaLouise Keating (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 31-2.

cernment. According to Mary Clark Moschella, life writing facilitates meaning making and aids processes of grieving for older adults: "In late middle age and beyond, the developmental task of coming to terms with one's life story becomes compelling."[3] Particularly given a devaluation of the experiences of older women in American society, the practice of life writing can be empowering and daunting. When shared within congregations, life narratives enhance intergenerational relationships and community building.[4] Heather Walton notes that life writing is increasingly utilized in pastoral care and counseling, trauma recovery, vocational discernment, and values-based fields such as social work and community engagement.[5] Mary Elizabeth Moore demonstrates the utility of life writing in religious education for vocational discernment; life review is a "vital educational process."[6] I extend such research on life writing and practical theology by examining the relevance of life writing to spirituality studies, spiritual formation, and spiritual direction. Spiritual direction has been one significant location for practical theology in Catholic traditions,[7] so this discussion contributes to the discipline of practical theology also a perspective not typically foregrounded in Protestant literature.

Maternal narratives are not *a priori* holy, life-giving, or exalted; they are always shaped by culture and context, including social constructions of mothering, gender, and spirituality. Some maternal narratives reflect legacies of pain and trauma. Maternal life writing is significant not because mothers necessarily possess an inexhaustible fund of spiritual wisdom but because the spiritual

3 Mary Clark Moschella, "Spiritual Autobiography and Older Adults," *Pastoral Psychology* 60 (2011): 96.

4 Moschella, "Spiritual Autobiography and Older Adults," 95-8. See too K.J. Scheib, *Challenging Invisibility: Practices of Care with Older Women* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2004) and D.P. McAdams, "Narrating the self in adulthood" pp. 131-48 in *Aging and Biography: Explorations in Adult Development*, edited by J.E. Birren, G.M. Kenyon, J.E. Ruth, J.J.F. Schroots, and T. Svensson (New York: Springer, 1996). John-Raphael Staude also argues for the therapeutic and spiritual value of writing autobiography for older adults. He discusses four techniques for working with autobiography: life review, guided autobiography groups, the intensive journal technique, and twelve-step work. See John-Raphael Staude, "Autobiography as Spiritual Practice," *Journal of Gerontological Social Work* 45, no. 3 (2005): 249-69.

5 On these points, see Heather Walton, *Writing Methods in Theological Reflection* (London: SCM Press, 2014), 91-8.

6 Mary Elizabeth Moore, "Stories of Vocation: Education for Vocational Discernment," *Religious Education* 103, no. 2 (March 2008): 232.

7 On this point, see Claire E. Wolfteich, ed., *Invitation to Practical Theology: Catholic Voices and Visions* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2014).

insights, questions, and wisdom they do carry have yet to be mined sufficiently. The study of maternal life writing provides a needed corrective in Christian spirituality – yielding more complex insights into mothering, work, and women's leadership; contesting assumptions about Christian spirituality that privilege monastic contexts and hierarchize vocations; stimulating a wider imagination about everyday life as spiritual site; and expanding models of spiritual direction.

Spiritual Direction, Sacred Tales, and Practical Theology

Ironically, while mothers are underrepresented in classic texts of Christian spirituality, "spiritual motherhood" is an important concept and practice in Christian tradition. Spiritual motherhood is a defining image of spiritual formation and spiritual direction, linked to birthwork or the "travail" of labor and to the ongoing process of "begetting." Sr. Donald Corcoran identifies "spiritual maternity" and "spiritual paternity" as the earliest model of Christian spiritual direction.[8] Addressed in Aramaic as "abba" (father) and "amma" (mother), the Desert Fathers and Mothers of the fourth through the sixth centuries sought to "beget" or "engender" others in the spiritual life. According to Corcoran:

> What distinguished the Christian guide in the early monastic context was the notion of fatherhood/motherhood in the Spirit.... Though the notion of spiritual fatherhood/motherhood may be found incidentally in other traditions, that notion is not the dominant image of the guide as it was for the early Christian monks and nuns. Thus fatherhood/motherhood – 'begetting in the Spirit' – is the distinctive character of Christian spiritual direction, particularly in the monastic context, compared with other traditions of spiritual direction.[9]

Clarissa Atkinson shows that with the development of monasticism, physical motherhood was "devalued" and seen as "incompatible with devotion to God," even as spiritual motherhood within religious life assumed great meaning.[10]

8 (Sr.) Donald Corcoran, "Spiritual Guidance," in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, edited by Bernard McGinn et al. (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 444-52.

9 Ibid., 447.

10 Clarissa W. Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), 67.

I do not put "spiritual maternity" and physical maternity in opposition or dichotomy. Certainly there is much to learn from "spiritual mothers" in the tradition, persons who did not have responsibility for biological children but who did identify as mothers of communities and souls. And yet, there is a risk of so "spiritualizing" motherhood that the concrete, everyday practices of motherwork get eclipsed or devalued. Women's life writing offers a glimpse of the spiritual work of mothering as seen not through the eyes of celibate elders but through the passionate spiritual travail of mothers who struggle to guide and to let go of their children, who sacrifice all to bring their children to freedom, who find grace in small sticky moments, who are brought to apophatic silence by their children's suffering. Their narratives deepen understandings of what it means to accompany a soul.

These narratives are aptly called "sacred tales," a term Janet K. Ruffing uses in her writing on spiritual direction. Ruffing describes spiritual direction primarily in terms of story; the process of telling one's "sacred tale," a narrative of God and self, is central to this ministry. According to Ruffing: "Whatever else spiritual direction involves, it is fundamentally a narrative activity."[11] As I stated previously, life writing is both a source useful for the study of spirituality and itself a practice of self-representation, testimony, discernment, and/or prayer. Not only is the content of life writing texts relevant to spirituality studies but also the process by which "sacred tales" are voiced and heard. Ruffing's narrative approach to spiritual direction provides a useful framework for practical theological engagement with life writing. As my method involves not only the retrieval and re-telling of narratives but also critical analysis in dialogue with other theological sources, so too for Ruffing, spiritual direction is not only about telling stories but also about interpreting them. A spiritual director invites and facilitates a person's telling of her "sacred tale," engaging together with the directee in a shared process of theological interpretation, discernment, and meaning making. Thus, Ruffing frames spiritual direction as a "collaborative narrative process" and "grass-roots narrative theology"[12] as well as a "shared exercise of practical theology and discernment."[13] I also have

11 Janet K. Ruffing, *To Tell the Sacred Tale: Spiritual Direction and Narrative* (New York: Paulist Press, 2011), 21.

12 Janet K. Ruffing, "The Practice of Spiritual Direction: A Theologically Complex Process," in *Invitation to Practical Theology: Catholic Voices and Visions* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2014), 198-99.

13 Ibid.

discussed how practical theological study of women's life narratives can be an act of "resistance" and "solidarity." This specifies the critical role of listening, which is not a passive activity but an active choice to hear a word that is in process of coming to voice, to hear a tale that is not often told.

"Sacred tales" are not necessarily coherent narratives; they may be fragmentary, out of order, and partial, as illustrated by the *Book of Margery Kempe*. They may present "double voice," as Sidonie Smith noted is common in women's autobiographies, and as Mason saw in Dorothy Day's self-writing.[14] Indeed, recent scholarship in autobiography explores whether women's autobiography tends to more disjointed forms, rejecting the push toward coherence and culmination seen in male autobiography.[15] Sacred tales are not necessarily voiced all at once but often in fragments, pieced together over time in sustained relationships, as seen with Jane de Chantal and Francis de Sales. Like spiritual directors, practical theologians hear and hold these narrative fragments, seeking within them traces of divine presence, deep questions, and life-giving wisdom.

Maternal Theodicy and Apophatic Spirituality

Mothering has been described as a kind of spiritual travail or labor, rooted (ideally) in love and often involving suffering. As Day wrote, mothering "is Love and therefore of course it is suffering."[16] De Sales also pointed to the passionate nature of maternal love when he compared it to crucifixion. Seeking the salvation of one's children, suffering the loss of one's children, risking one's life for their freedom: these are examples of the spiritual travail, the labor pain of motherwork, which emerges in women's life writing. Sometimes suffering results from normal life course transitions. Day described a sense of loss as she reflected on her daughter's growing up: "I never felt so great a sense of loneliness…No matter how many times I gave up mother, father, husband, brother, daughter, for His sake, I had to do it over again."[17] Maternal suffering is

14 Sidonie Smith, *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), see discussion in Mason, 186.

15 See Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998) and Donna C. Stanton, *The Female Autograph: Theory and Practice of Autobiography from the Tenth to the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

16 Ibid., 236.

17 Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 239.

particularly intense in contexts of slavery, high child mortality, violence, war, and other traumatic situations. Jane de Chantal saw two of her children die in childbirth and three more preceded her in death. Women slaves saw their children sold off, violated, abused. The suffering of maternal love resists a notion of spirituality that dichotomizes body and spirit, as seen in this tragic narrative of a Salvadoran mother who witnessed the brutal slaying of her children by the army in 1981:

> [Y]ou never stop feeling sorrow for your children.... The one that was most painful was my eight month old girl who was still nursing. I felt my breasts full of milk, and I wept bitterly.... Today I can tell the story, but in that moment I was not able to; I had such a knot and a pain in my heart that I couldn't even speak. All I could do was bend over and cry.[18]

This mother's ability to "tell the story" emerges only after the silence of incomprehensible suffering; the apophatic silence, the speechless suffering, is here the precursor of the maternal voice. What might we learn about "living in the Spirit" from halting narratives such as these? What if Christian spirituality were located precisely in the weight of this mother's milk, in her inconsolable sorrow for her children?

Mothers' life writing presents powerful texts for theological reflection on suffering, theodicy, and spirituality. Rather than treating theodicy as an abstract theological problem, I frame maternal suffering as an issue within spirituality and, more specifically, within spiritual guidance. We can identify avenues for practical theological research around questions such as: How does maternal suffering shape the spiritual life and theories/practices of spiritual guidance? What prayer language might maternal life writing suggest for others confronting inexplicable pain and loss? How do such experiences exceed the capacity for language? What spiritual/theological insights do suffering mothers bear? The following sections explore maternal suffering, spirituality, and spiritual guidance through a further glimpse into mothers' life writing.

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18 Rufina Amaya, Mark Danner, and Carlos Henríquez Consalvi, *Luciérnagas en El Mozote* (San Salvador, El Salvador: Ediciones Museo de la Palabra, 1996), 20. Translated by Elizabeth Gandolfo and cited in her article "Mary Kept These Things, Pondering Them in Her Heart: Breastfeeding as Contemplative Practice and Source of Theology," *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 13, no. 2 (Fall 2013): 179.

Zealous Mother Love and an Incomprehensible God

The letters of Susanna Wesley (1669-1742), mother of Methodist movement founders John and Charles Wesley and a student of "practical divinity,"[19] provide one such glimpse. Like Jane de Chantal, Susanna Wesley grew into a vocation as a spiritual director to her own children and to others. As a mother who gave birth to nineteen children, nine of whom died before the age of one, Wesley knew the passion of maternal love and loss. These experiences shaped her spirituality and her efforts to guide others.[20]

As a mother, spiritual director, and theological mentor to her children, Susanna Wesley's work "involved innovation, dissent, and a measure of independence within a traditional role."[21] Wesley was aware of her circumscribed vocational opportunities and yearned for more, as she notes in defending her practice of leading uncanonical Sunday evening services in the absence of her husband: "At last it came into my mind, though I am not a man nor a minister of the gospel, and so cannot be employed in such a worthy employment as they were; yet if my heart were sincerely devoted to God…I might do somewhat more than I do."[22] Though not a man or a minister of the gospel, through her mothering, which entailed teaching and guiding her children well into adulthood, Wesley exercised spiritual leadership in the emerging Wesleyan movement.

When her children were young, Wesley assumed primary responsibility for their spiritual formation, meeting weekly with each child for individual religious instruction. When the children were temporarily dispersed to other homes after the Epworth rectory fire in 1709, Susanna fervently tried to keep them on the right path, as demonstrated by her 1709/10 catechetical letter to daughter Susanna (Suky) analyzing the Apostles' Creed. She continued to counsel her children even after they reached adulthood and left home for studies and ministry, as seen in the letters to her sons Samuel, John, and Charles.

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19 See Wesley's references to "practical divinity" in her letters to son John and daughter Suky, in Wallace, *Susanna Wesley*, 106, 418.

20 For a more extended analysis, see Claire E. Wolfteich, "A Difficult Love: Mother as Spiritual Guide in the Writing of Susanna Wesley," *Methodist History* 38, no. 1 (October 1999): 53-62.

21 Charles Wallace, Jr., ed., *Susanna Wesley: The Complete Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 360.

22 Susanna Wesley to Samuel Wesley, 6 February 1712, cited in Charles Wallace, Jr., "'Some Stated Employment of Your Mind': Reading, Writing, and Religion in the Life of Susanna Wesley," *Church History* 58 (September 1989): 360.

Wesley's intense involvement in the spiritual/theological formation of her children reflected cultural and religious teachings of the day. Both Puritanism and Anglicanism emphasized the mother's important role in shaping piety, often characterized as a kind of spiritual labor. For example, Richard Baxter, a Dissenter author whom Wesley recommended to her son John, counsels mothers in *The Saints' Everlasting Rest* (1650): "What a deal of pains you are at with the bodies of your children more than the fathers, and what do you suffer to bring them into the world; and will you not be at as much pains for saving their souls?"[23] So too, in writing her spiritual autobiography in the form of a letter "To My Dear Children," English Puritan poet Anne Bradstreet (1612-1672), describes her mothering as both physical and spiritual birth work: "that as I have brought you into the world, and with great paines, weaknes, cares, and feares brought you to this, I now travail in birth again of you till Christ bee formed in you."[24] Bradstreet "bequeathes" her narrative to her eight children for their spiritual benefit, describing her struggles with faith, infertility, sicknesses, affliction, and doubt. References to "spiritual travail" clearly echo the Letter to the Galatians, which portrays Paul in gender-fluid imagery as a spiritual mother: "My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you…" (Gal. 4:19).

Wesley describes her work as spiritual travail in nearly the exact same phrasing in the epigraph to her "Religious Conference between Mother and Emilia": "I write unto you little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you."[25] For Wesley, spiritual travail is rooted in a fierce maternal love that left little room for distance: "for I do not love distance or ceremony; there is more of love and tenderness in the name of mother than in all the complimental titles in the world."[26] Love is not only tender but also zealous and jealous.[27] Loving her children meant showing "tender concern" for

23 Richard Baxter, *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*, cited in John A. Newton, *Susanna Wesley and the Puritan Tradition in Methodism* (London: Epworth Press, 1968), 105-6.

24 Anne Bradstreet, "To My Dear Children," in *The Works of Anne Bradstreet in Prose and Verse*, edited by John Harvard Ellis (Charlestown: A.E. Cutler, 1867): http://eada.lib.umd.edu/text-entries/to-my-dear-children/.

25 Wallace, *Susanna Wesley*, 427.

26 Ibid., 73.

27 In a 1725 letter to son John, Susanna Wesley wrote: "Zeal or jealousy is an effect of love; and the more intense the love is, the greater is our desire of the good and possession of what we love, and the more vigorously shall we strive to repel and exclude everything that is repugnant to the belov'd object or may prevent our attainment or quiet enjoyment of what we so love." See Wallace, *Susanna Wesley*, 119.

them, and particularly for the care of their souls, jealously guarding the will of God for them, as Wesley wrote in her journal.[28] Wesley recognized that zeal can be dangerous; when unmoderated, it can be "the most pernicious thing in nature."[29] Still, this passionate, even zealous, maternal love – not distance or detached care – characterizes Susanna's style of spiritual direction.

Susanna Wesley, like other figures discussed in this book, presents a complicated, ambiguous maternal example. Historian Philip Greven singles out Wesley as an example of the repressive evangelical parent who rigidly controlled her children in order to destroy their sense of self and cultivate obedience to God.[30] According to Greven, Wesley's linking of love and obedience was characteristic of child-rearing and discipline among evangelical Protestants in 17th and 18th century Britain and New England. Practical theological engagement with Wesley could involve mutually critical conversation between Wesley and theologies of spiritual direction that emphasize the freedom of the directee (such as the Ignatian Exercises), or between Wesley and current research on parenting practices, providing useful vantage points to critique the conflation of harsh parental discipline and spiritual direction. At the same time, Wesley's passionate love for her children and her deep commitment to their ongoing religious formation provides a fruitful alternative image of spiritual direction that gives primacy to parents' role in spiritual formation and contrasts with more professionalized contemporary models of spiritual direction.

Wesley's zealous maternal love led her into questions of theodicy. She writes that as a mother who loves her children, she does not want them to suffer. This seems to be a basic element of love. Why, then, she asks, would a loving God permit her children to suffer? Wesley worries about her children's needs, as she explains in a 1727 letter to son John:

> I often revolve the state of my family and the wants of my children over in my mind. And though one short reflection on the sins of my youth and the great imperfection of my present state solves all the difficulty of Providence relating to myself, yet when I behold them struggling with misfortunes of various kinds, some without sufficiency of bread, in the most literal sense, all destitute of the conveniences or comforts of life, it

28 Wallace, *Susanna Wesley*, 246.

29 Wallace, *Susanna Wesley*, 120.

30 See Philip Greven, *The Protestant Temperament: Patterns of Child-Rearing, Religious Experience, and the Self in Early America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 13, 36-8, 44, 48.

> puts me upon the expostulation of David, "Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly, but these sheep, what have they done?" Though thus the tenderness of a mother pleads their cause, yet I dare not dispute God's justice, wisdom, or goodness.[31]

While Wesley attests that God is "infinitely just…justice itself,"[32] her children's suffering raises theological questions not easily resolved. There is an apophatic[33] dimension of Wesley's spirituality; God remains unknown to her, even as she commits in faith. As she writes to John: "For my part, after many years' search and inquiry I still continue to pay my devotions to an unknown God. I cannot know him. I dare not say I love him – only this, I have chosen him for my only happiness, my all, my only God, in a word, for my God."[34] Grappling with the death of her beloved son Sammy in 1739, she admits to her son Charles that she does not understand God's ways: "his ways of working are to myself incomprehensible and ineffable!"[35] Wesley professes to trust in the love of a God she cannot see, despite her intense love for the child who was intimately known.

Such texts can be generative for theological reflection as they situate questions of suffering in particular contexts, emerging from life narratives that are in process, unfinished, at times contradictory. Practical theologians bring "empathic" and "critical" readings to such texts,[36] surfacing alternative praxis for reflection. What if we read Christian spirituality through the lenses of these maternal theodicies? How might accounts of maternal "spiritual travail" expand the history of Christian spirituality and spiritual guidance? What language might maternal lament offer to theology and to prayer?

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31 Ibid., 131.

32 Ibid., 163.

33 One can distinguish apophatic spirituality from cataphatic spirituality. Cataphatic spirituality is a more "positive" spirituality which relies on images of God and the felt presence of the divine. Cataphatic spirituality emphasizes the presence of God in all creation. Apophatic spirituality by contrast is a more "negative" spirituality which emphasizes the unknowability of God and the inability of any image to contain God.

34 Wallace, *Susanna Wesley*, 161.

35 Ibid., 179.

36 On empathic and critical readings of spiritual autobiographies, see Gary Comstock, ed., *Religious Autobiographies* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Pub. Co., 1995).

Re-Membering Spiritual Motherwork: Narratives and Transformation

Catholic womanist theologian M. Shawn Copeland points to the transformative power of maternal narratives of suffering: "Black women remember and draw strength in their own anguish from hearing and imitating the strategies adopted by their mothers, grandmothers, great-grandmothers, great-great-grandmothers to handle their suffering. These stories evoke growth and change, proper outrage and dissatisfaction, and enlarge black women's moral horizon and choices."[37] Slave narratives provide many examples of maternal suffering – a deeply embodied spiritual travail – as well as the power of life writing for communal remembrance and formation.

For example, Mattie Jackson spent eighteen years in slavery before escaping from St. Louis, Missouri to free soil in Missouri and then on to Indianapolis. Her mother and step-mother encouraged her to publish her story; her step-mother, a physician, wrote and arranged it for her and endorsed its publication in 1866. Age twenty, Jackson intended to use the sale of the book to fund her education; she enlists her readers to assist her by buying the book.[38] Jackson is conscious of the power of writing. She learns to write after her escape, and she conveys her passionate insight about its importance: "I would advise all, young, middle aged or old, in a free country, to learn to read and write. If this little book should fall into the hands of one deficient of the important knowledge of writing I hope they will remember the old maxim: – 'Never to[o] old to learn.' Manage your own secrets, and divulge them by the silent language of your own pen."[39]

Jackson describes how she was sold separately from her mother and sister for nine hundred dollars in 1863. She endured terrible conditions in the home of her master, where she was constantly given heavy work and denied sufficient food and access to heat in the winter. She was seventeen years old at this time.[40] Jackson was able to escape by ferry to Jefferson City, Missouri and then on to Indianapolis. Within the year, after the surrender of Lee's army

37 M. Shawn Copeland, "'Wading Through Many Sorrows': Toward a Theology of Suffering in Womanist Perspective," pp. 157-71 in *Cut Loose Your Stammering Tongue: Black Theology in the Slave Narrative*, edited by Dwight N. Hopkins and George C.L. Cummings, 2nd edition (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 171.

38 Mattie Jackson, "The Story of Mattie J. Jackson," in *Six Women's Slave Narratives*, introduction by William L. Andrews (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 36.

39 Ibid., 29.

40 Ibid., 25-26.

and the assassination of Lincoln, her mother finally escaped and met her in Indianapolis, following forty-three years of slavery.

Mattie Jackson describes this meeting as a sacred moment, as she and her mother join with all of creation in praise of a liberating Creator God: "The sound of freedom was music in our ears; the air was pure and fragrant; the genial rays of the glorious sun burst forth with a new lustre upon us, and all creation resounded in responses of praise to the author and creator of him who proclaimed life and freedom to the slave."[41] Like Jarena Lee, Jackson draws upon language to describe the indescribable: "Our joy that we were permitted to mingle together our earthly bliss in glorious strains of freedom was indescribable. My mother responded with the children of Israel, – 'the Lord is my strength and my song…'"[42] Jackson's story thus intermingles suffering and song, praise and experience beyond words.

While Jackson wrote as a young adult, newly freed from slavery, Lucy Delaney (b. 1830) wrote her narrative in 1891 as an older woman, many years past the day in 1844 when a St. Louis court awarded her freedom in a suit brought by her mother, Polly Berry. In writing a sketch of her life, *From the Darkness Cometh the Light, or, Struggles for Freedom*, Delaney explains her purpose:

> …the unaccountable longing for the aged to look backward and review the events of their youth will find an answering chord in this little book. Those of you who have never suffered as we have, perhaps may suppose the case, and therefore accept with interest and sympathy the passages of life and character here portrayed and the lessons which should follow from them.[43]

She asks her readers to excuse any lack of literary quality, and then offers this defense of life writing: "although we are each but atoms, it must be remembered, that we assist in making the grand total of all history, and therefore are excusable in making our affairs of importance to ourselves, and endeavoring to impress them on others."[44] Delaney calls upon her deceased mother as part of that history – not as a distant memory but as a living companion whose spirit infuses the writing process: "Dear, dear mother! how solemnly I invoke

41 Ibid., 32.

42 Ibid.

43 Lucy Delaney, "From the Darkness Cometh the Light or Struggles for Freedom," in *Six Women's Slave Narratives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), vii-viii.

44 Ibid., viii.

your spirit as I review these trying scenes of my girlhood, so long agone!" Remembering her ancestors, in particular her mother, is crucial to the process of telling her "sacred tale"; remembering re-members those who hold memories. And indeed, memories of her mother during her childhood under slavery stand bright in her mind. Delaney recalls how her mother fought in court for her freedom and that of her daughter and celebrated its eventual attainment with her: "and hand in hand we gazed into each others [sic] eyes and saw the light of freedom there, and we felt in our hearts that we could with one accord cry out: 'Glory to God in the highest, and peace and good will towards men.'" Her mother is companion and light to her still: "Never would an ordinary observer connect those virtues with aught of heroism or greatness, but to me they are as bright rays…the qualities of her true, steadfast heart and noble soul become 'a constellation, and is tracked in Heaven straightway.'"[45] The spirit of Delaney's mother infuses the process of life writing, which also re-members the community's suffering and liberation.

In telling mothers' stories as part of their own story, these authors contribute to what Copeland calls "collective cultural memory," which constitutes a people, is fragile, "emerges from a field of common" experience, and is "enriched by diverse expressions of those experiences."[46] Such narratives provide formative scripts of agency in suffering, and offer powerful testimonies to divine liberation. The practice of remembering so integral to life writing becomes here not only literary act but communal spiritual practice and formation. From a Catholic perspective, the process of remembering ancestors is deeply spiritual and can be linked to understandings of the communion of saints. Copeland writes that African American Catholics "seek and find communion, belonging, and home with the ancestors…. To pour out libation to them signifies conscious and willing acceptance of the wisdom, comfort, and courage of that great cloud of witnesses whose visitation descends in accord with the Spirit."[47]

Poetry by African American women such as Margaret Walker continues to carry narratives about strong, working mothers and grandmothers and othermothers who were "full of memories."[48] Remembering the strength of grandmothers does not automatically transfer that strength to future generations;

45 Ibid., 50-1.

46 M. Shawn Copeland, "Weaving Memory, Structuring Ritual, Evoking Mythos," in *Invitation to Practical Theology: Catholic Voices and Visions*, edited by Claire E. Wolfteich (New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2014), 135.

47 Ibid., 142.

48 Margaret Walker, "Lineage," in *Double Stitch: Black Women Write About Mothers & Daughters*, edited by Patricia Bell-Scott et al. (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 175. See too The

narratives are not formative in this kind of simplistic way. Walker's telling the tale of her grandmothers serves as a mirror to herself, pressing a challenging, introspective question: "My grandmothers were strong. Why am I not as they?"[49]

These examples of African American women's poetic and prose narratives suggest an understanding of spiritual formation and guidance as communal processes of remembering and liberation. Spirituality cannot be separated from the suffering of mothers who have gone before, whose memories are passed down and re-membered in daughters' own narratives, whose spiritual travail on behalf of their children moves toward liberation. Life writing here can be framed theologically as a Spirit-infused process of re-membering the communion of saints. Maternal narratives may be formative for a community, passing on strength, enlarging a view of what one might become, prompting self-examination. What do we learn about spiritual companionship from sturdy mothers who toil and hold memories, who rejoice with their daughters in freedom, whose strength reveals our weakness and elicits our desire for transformation?

Rethinking Spiritual Practices: Towards an Ordinary Spiritual Theology

The previous sections have explored the contribution of women's life writing to theological reflection on suffering, love, and practices of spiritual formation and guidance. In this section, I continue discussion of spiritual practice and spiritual guidance with a focus on the development of ordinary spiritual theology. An ordinary spiritual theology emerges from and provides interpretive frameworks for the quotidian. The project of advancing an ordinary spiritual theology is not really new; it can be considered an extension of the work of Jane de Chantal and Francis de Sales, albeit now for a new context and theological situation. Recall that de Sales and de Chantal sought to guide devotion for those who "live an ordinary life as to outward appearances."[50] The "ordinary" aims of early Salesian spirituality can be seen also in lay movements of the twentieth century and the development of lay spirituality in the Second

Poetry Foundation: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/53463#poem, accessed February 13, 2017.

49 Ibid.

50 Saint Francis de Sales, *Invitation to the Devout Life*, 33.

Vatican Council, yet these aims still have not been fully realized. The continuing project of developing an ordinary spiritual theology intersects well with the commitments of practical theology to the study of lived religion and to current empirical research on "ordinary theology."[51] Here I focus specifically on the contributions of maternal life writing to an ordinary spiritual theology and the necessity of such a theology for deepening a spirituality of motherwork. These tasks of mining life writing sources and theological construction are linked and mutually informing. How do mothers even come to see their stories as "sacred tales"? How articulate the spirituality woven into everyday mothering and how harness its theological insight?

Conceptions of spirituality and spiritual practice that do not encompass the ordinary work of caregiving compound mothers' sense of spiritual inadequacy. As noted previously, Kelli Trujillo writes about the difficulties of doing spiritual disciplines with a young baby; with little alternate framework for thinking about spirituality: "I soon came to a realization shared by many Christian mothers of young children: Although motherhood is a deeply profound spiritual experience, it can also become a faith wasteland."[52] In a blog published in *The New York Times*, Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg similarly admits that while early in her ministry, she spoke often about the importance of spiritual disciplines, the lived reality of combining mothering and spiritual practice was something entirely different: "Then I became a mother, and my prayer life tanked."[53] She points to the implicit or explicit devaluation of child care in spiritual theology: "There is a not-very-implicit assumption that someone else, somewhere, is in charge of the sticky, cuddly, needy, emotional little humans who evidently impede a person's ability to live a life of spiritual service."[54]

To advance an ordinary spiritual theology, one must address several issues. First, paradigms of spirituality need to be contextualized appropriately, so that a conceptualization of spirituality from a monastic context is not overlaid on a lay domestic context without regard for the actual rhythms and organic spiritual practices of this lay context. Second, spirituality research must draw upon

51 See, for example, Jeff Astley and Leslie J. Francis, eds., *Exploring Ordinary Theology: Everyday Christian Believing and the Church*, Explorations in Practical, Pastoral and Empirical Theology (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2013).

52 Kelli B. Trujillo, *The Busy Mom's Guide to Spiritual Survival* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2007), 10.

53 Ibid.

54 Danya Ruttenberg, "Parenting as Spiritual Practice," *The New York Times*, Sept. 4, 2013: http://parenting.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/09/04/parenting-as-a-spiritual-practice/?_r=0, accessed February 22, 2016.

a variety of sources – textual, material, social scientific – that yield insights into everyday spirituality or lived religion.[55] Life writing is one such source. Contemporary sources will be highly relevant to practical theologians, but examination of historical life writing also can yield important theological visions and comparative case studies for practical theology. For example, early Salesian spirituality, shaped by the lived dilemmas and experiences of women, flagged the importance of an ordinary spiritual theology, though it was still framed within a context that prioritized the vocations of contemplative religious. Third, one needs to expand the concept of spiritual practice so as to explicitly encompass the ordinary labor of mothering. Indeed, mothering can be a spiritual practice or set of practices that, when well practiced and supported, together constitute a deeply "life-giving way of life," to refer again to Dorothy Bass' definition of the aim of practical theology.[56]

Maternal life writing reveals small moments of spiritual insight that emerge in motherwork and suggests a reconceptualization of spiritual practice beyond traditionally recognized disciplines such as prayer, silence, fasting, and meditation. For example, a nursing mother points to breastfeeding as a spiritual practice, done regularly over time, yielding embodied theological knowing: "breastfeeding was one of the most beautifully nonverbal experiences of God in her life, helping her to go beyond verbal attempts to articulate the meaning of God to a more integrated experience of spiritual presence."[57] Bonnie Miller-

55 I acknowledge here social scientific work that has advanced understanding of everyday spirituality, including Nancy T. Ammerman, "Finding Religion in Everyday Life," *Sociology of Religion* 75, no. 2 (2014): 189-207 and Ammerman, *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). While Ammerman's work approaches the topic from the discipline of sociology, my approach is theological. See too Sara MacKian, *Everyday Spirituality: Social and Spatial Worlds of Enchantment* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). MacKian uses the term "everyday spirituality" to describe contemporary spirituality-beyond-religion; I focus more on spirituality located within religious traditions and communities in historic and contemporary contexts. Regarding the need for more ethnographic methods in the study of Christian spirituality, see Kristy Nabhan-Warren, "Post AAR-SBL 2013: Reflections on the Method of Ethnography for the Study of Christian Spirituality," *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 14, no. 1 (2014): 55-9, and Tone Kaufman, "A Plea for Ethnographic Methods and a Spirituality of Everyday Life in the Study of Christian Spirituality: A Norwegian Case of Clergy Spirituality," *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 14, no. 1 (2014): 94-102.

56 Dorothy C. Bass, "Ways of Life Abundant," in *For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education, and Christian Ministry*, edited by Dorothy C. Bass and Craig Dykstra, 27.

57 Karen Groh, "The Spirituality of Breastfeeding," *Family Ministry* 15, no. 5 (2001): 48-60, at 48, cited in Gandolfo, 166.

McLemore describes everyday practices involved in the care of children, such as attending and pondering, negotiating justice, reading, cleaning diapers, and playing.[58] Wendy Wright reflects on welcoming, touching, forgiving, and letting go as practices of family spirituality.[59] For Jane de Chantal, mothering involved constant teaching and guiding, counseling about bad habits and marriages, gentle encouragement. For Day, ordinary mothering practices included bathing her daughter, writing letters, sharing meals, arranging for education, arguing about plans for marriage, shaping Tamar's moral and spiritual foundation. For Edwards, everyday motherwork included listening to her children, dialogue and negotiation, securing their educations. Yet these everyday practices and insights rarely get visibility in spiritual classics. As Arthur Holder writes, the "hegemony of spiritual classics," eclipses from view popular religion and everyday practice.[60] This is an issue not only within Christian spirituality. A blog reader comments: "If the rabbis of the Talmud had been women, or had Jewish women and men shared parenting and liturgical labor equally throughout history, Jewish prayer would be brimming with praises of ears, sticky fingers, and lullabies."[61]

An ordinary spiritual theology locates spirituality not only in silence or solitude or renunciation of the body, not only in deserts, pillars, and monastic cells, but also in the daily work of caring for children, in care of bodies, in maternal suffering, in political resistance, in walking at a child's pace, "in the midst of chaos."[62] Maternal narratives can offer an alternative imagination of the everyday as spiritual site, yet this alternative spiritual imagination often is muted or silenced because it doesn't entirely fit received traditions of spirituality. Ruttenberg alludes to her Jewish rabbi friends "confessing in whispers

58 Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, *In the Midst of Chaos: Caring for Children as Spiritual Practice* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 2007).

59 Wendy Wright, *Sacred Dwelling: Discovering and Living Your Family Spirituality* (New London, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2015).

60 Arthur Holder, "The Problem with 'Spiritual Classics,'" *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 10, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 25.

61 Comment signed Caryn Aviv, Denver, CO, Sept. 4, 2013: http://parenting.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/09/04/parenting-as-a-spiritual-practice/?_r=0.

62 See Bonnie Miller-McLemore's book *In the Midst of Chaos: Caring for Children as Spiritual Practice* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 2007). In addition to Miller-McLemore's work, see too Stephanie Paulsell, *Honoring the Body: Meditations on a Christian Practice* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2003); Wendy Wright, *Seasons of a Family Life: Cultivating the Contemplative Spirit at Home* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2003) and *Sacred Dwelling: An Everyday Family Spirituality* (Boston: Pauline Books, 2007); and Kathleen Norris, *The Quotidian Mysteries: Laundry, Liturgy, and "Women's Work."* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998).

that holding a sleeping child felt much more like worship than reading psalms most days."[63] How might spirituality be reconceived if these whispers were foregrounded? Are mothers able to recognize and claim spiritual experience when it does not fit inherited categories of spiritual practice? In order to gain access to maternal experience, practical theologians need to listen to muted voices in process of articulation and together develop an ordinary spiritual theology in critical dialogue with received traditions.

Getting Creative about Life Writing

I have discussed already some of the challenges of locating and interpreting life writing texts for practical theological study of spirituality and motherwork – the dearth of sources, the hermeneutical silences encountered even in texts written by mothers, the nature of autobiography as a representation of the self for particular purposes and audiences. I focus here on thinking creatively about life writing as spiritual practice, opening up possibilities for expanding source material and integrating life writing further in theological education and spiritual direction/formation ministries. What creates the conditions in which women's "sacred tales" may be told?

Addressing women of color, Latina queer theorist Gloria Anzaldúa reflects about the challenges of writing – distractions, lack of time and energy, the demands of children and work, as well as an inability to look at oneself. She emphasizes the importance of writing the self: "I write to record what others erase when I speak, to rewrite the stories others have miswritten about me, about you.... To discover myself, to preserve myself, to make myself..."[64] Writing, like theology, cannot be siphoned off to the sterility of an office. It happens at the kitchen table[65], and in all the everyday spaces of motherwork. Anzaldúa, though not a physical mother, captures this idea well: "And who has time or energy to write after nurturing husband or lover, children, and often an outside job? Forget the room of one's own room of one's own. Write in the

63 Ibid.

64 Gloria Anzaldúa, "Speaking in Tongues: a Letter to Third World Women Writers," pp. 30-5 in *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, edited by AnaLouise Keating (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 30.

65 Here I allude again to Elaine Graham, "A View from a Room: Feminist Practical Theology from Academy, Kitchen or Sanctuary?" in *Liberating Faith Practices: Feminist Practical Theologies in Context*, edited by Denise M. Ackerman and Riet Bons-Storm (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 129-52.

kitchen, lock yourself up in the bathroom. Write on the bus or the welfare line, write on the job…"[66] Mattie Jackson's words come forward with their similar urgency: "Manage your own secrets, and divulge them by the silent language of your own pen."[67] For Jackson, long denied the opportunity to write, writing is empowerment, the language of the free person.

But the impediments to writing can be daunting. Jane de Chantal barely has time to write in her haste. For Dorothy Day, writing is key to her public work, but it is "harrowingly painful," because writing takes her away from caring for the concrete needs of the poor who have a call on her life. Day laments: "The sustained effort of writing, of putting pen to paper so many hours a day when there are human beings around who need me, when there is sickness, and hunger, and sorrow, is a harrowingly painful job. I feel that I have done nothing well. But I have done what I could."[68] How justify the time and energy to write amidst multiple demands on the self? And what about women, like Lena Edwards, who have a big story to tell but are "not one for writing"?

Moschella notes that for some individuals, it takes courage to come to voice, to claim the power to speak, to believe that one's story matters enough to be told…. Those older adults who think of themselves as ordinary or unremarkable may need encouragement in order to "come to terms," to find the words with which to describe their lives."[69] Walton cautions that while life writing can be extremely beneficial for many, a traumatized person "may find their story is simply beyond telling, and the attempt to place it in a narrative frame would be a violation."[70] And some people simply do not like writing, do not perceive themselves as "good at writing," do not want to leave a written record, or do not have the time or energy to put pen to paper.

We need creative entry points into life writing for contemporary women. In teaching a course on spiritual autobiographies, I offer options for forms or genres of life writing, many drawn from case studies of life writing such as those discussed in this book, some also generated by students. Rather than a conventional prose narrative, students may write a letter to a real or imaginary child (e.g., as did Anne Bradstreet, Jane de Chantal, or Susanna Wesley). They may write a portion of their spiritual autobiography in third person (as did Kempe), as testimony (following Jarena Lee), in poetic form (as did Anne Bradstreet), or as allegory (as in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*). They may play with the

66 Ibid., 31-2.

67 Mattie Jackson, "The Story of Mattie J. Jackson," 29.

68 Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 11.

69 Moschella, "Spiritual Autobiography and Older Adults," 96.

70 Walton, *Writing Methods in Theological Reflection*, 99.

theme of marginality as they write their "sacred tale" only in the margins of the page. I have found it fruitful to offer artistic modes of autobiographical expression to complement textual modes. For example, illustrating one's textual narrative, or performing it in class, can be a creative way to open up reflection about experience. Such pedagogical exercises bring alive spiritual life writing in ways consistent with recent scholarship on visual and performative modes of women's autobiography.

Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith describe the "proliferating sites of the autobiographical. In addition to the textual modes of autobiography, memoir, diaries, and journals, there are many visual modes – sculpture, quilts, painting, photography, collage, murals, installations, as well as films, artists' books, song lyrics, performance art, and Web sites in cyberspace – that have not yet been recognized as autobiographical acts."[71] While Watson and Smith are not focusing on *spiritual* autobiography, their interdisciplinary inquiry into the interfaces of women's visual and performative autobiography is relevant to spirituality, and potentially fruitful for developing understanding of women's spiritualities. The study of visual and performative autobiographies could advance reflection on the material, aesthetic, and embodied dimensions of spirituality, all highly relevant to practical theology as well. Here too is a creative direction for ministries of spiritual care, guidance, formation, and renewal. Life writing, including visual and performative forms, may offer women new opportunities to narrate the maternal self as a practice of discernment, spiritual seeking, renewal, and testimony.

The creative arts can assist the process of maternal voicing across different seasons of life and can enrich processes of spiritual guidance and vocational discernment. In their book *Awakening the Creative Spirit: Bringing the Arts to Spiritual Direction*, Christine Valters Paintner and Betsey Beckman explore the arts as a "language of the soul": "If art is, in its essence, mediator of the sacred and window to the ultimate mystery, then as spiritual directors, we might invite ourselves (and directees) to become fluent in this language of the soul."[72] As Paintner and Beckman argue, the creative arts – visual art, dance, music, poetry – can open up images of God, express grief and loss, and deepen discernment in transition. The arts thus can be fruitfully integrated into spiritual

71 Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith, "Introduction: Mapping Women's Self-Representation at Visual/Textual Interfaces," pp. 1-46 in *Interfaces: Women, Autobiography, Image, Performance*, edited by Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 5-6.

72 Christine Valters Painter and Betsey Beckman, eds., *Awakening the Creative Spirit: Bringing the Arts to Spiritual Direction* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 2010), 8.

direction. They also serve an important pedagogical function in theological teaching and formation.

Furthermore, oral history can be a fruitful means of expanding life writing sources and encouraging mothers to tell their stories. StoryCorps, a vast, privately funded oral history project in the United States, is an example of a project that seeks to make available ordinary and extraordinary stories of everyday people. With booths set up in multiple locations, StoryCorps employs dialogical storytelling – where an "interviewer" invites a story and co-tells it with an "interviewee," often a family member or friend. The collected stories are available online, often with video, as well as in edited volumes, including one on stories about mothers.[73] The StoryCorps website describes listening as "an act of love" and states that the project seeks to "remind one another of our shared humanity, to strengthen and build the connections between people, to teach the value of listening….we are creating an invaluable archive for future generations."[74] Oral histories expand the range of narrative sources for spirituality studies and practical theology. The dialogical storytelling process employed in StoryCorps resonates well with communal understandings of autobiography; one's narrative is never solely one's own but is always part of a communal narrative, imbedded in relationships and a social context. Dialogical storytelling also has suggestive resonances with spiritual direction, understood, following Ruffing, as a dialogical narrative process.

Spiritual Direction and Mothering

Reading mothers' life writing in dialogue with current literature in spiritual guidance, including feminist theological perspectives on spiritual direction, opens up more expansive and more creative images, models, and practices of spiritual guidance and formation. We can read spiritual direction in terms of "spiritual travail," considering Monica, Anne Bradstreet, and Susanna Wesley. We find the integration of spiritual and physical mothering in Jane de Chantal's gentle, playful approach to the care of souls. Drawing upon African American women's life writing, we recall that spiritual guidance is not only an individual relationship, but also a communal practice, imbedded in everyday life, and with a liberative aim. In the motherwork of Huerta and Edwards, we

73 Dave Isay, *Mom: A Celebration of Mothers from StoryCorps* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2010).

74 See StoryCorps website: https://storycorps.org/about/, accessed June 6, 2016.

see a view of spiritual formation as self-sacrificial participation in the needs of the community. In mothers' quotidian soul care and spiritual insight, there are seeds of fresh theologies of spiritual direction. The study of maternal life writing opens a window onto spiritual direction in practice, though often unrecognized as such. Bringing these practices to visibility allows for critical and constructive reflection.

To read maternal life writing well, to listen to and interpret maternal "sacred tales," entails situating an individual's experience of mothering within larger social, cultural, political, and economic structures. As noted previously, the study of spirituality cannot be divorced from such structural and cultural analysis. While a woman may perceive difficulties as an individual spiritual problem (e.g., for de Chantal, an inability to make time for contemplation, for Day, an inability to care for Tamar and Catholic Worker), these spiritual issues often reflect larger contextual issues. Practical theologians, like spiritual guides, must bring that larger socio-cultural view and critical perspective. For example, how do particular notions of spirituality and mothering reflect social constructions of the "good" mother? How does time poverty impinge on mothering practice? Carolyn Gratton asserts that spiritual guides are called to be keen cultural critics. While spiritual guides respect the positive values that people gain through their cultures, they also cultivate critical skills in reading culture and resisting its damaging effects: "Spiritual guides must learn how to be counter-cultural.... Every society has in it patterns that tend to block or deform spiritual growth."[75] Taking maternal narratives seriously entails listening with a critical ear for those interconnections between spirituality and culture, identifying patterns that de-form and ones that support life in the Spirit.

Contemporary author and spiritual director Margaret Guenther, an Episcopal priest and mother of three, illustrates the possibilities of integrating everyday mothering wisdom in theories and practices of spiritual direction. Guenther writes: "for good or ill, I know that my own experience in mothering colors the way in which I do spiritual direction." Guenther has a certain conception of "good mothering" in mind when she speaks of maternal spiritual direction: "Good mothering enables the child to develop his own capabilities, grow to maturity, and move away from reliance on the mother."[76] The "wise mother" goes at the pace of the child, understanding stages of development, and meeting the child where she is.[77] Like Lena Edwards, she respects

75 Carolyn Gratton, *The Art of Spiritual Guidance* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 49.

76 Margaret Guenther, *Holy Listening: The Art of Spiritual Direction* (Boston, MA: Cowley Publications, 1992), 117.

77 Ibid., 118.

directees' growing wisdom and self-knowledge. Like de Chantal, she advocates gentleness in caring for souls. Guenther conceptualizes spiritual direction as "maternal conversation," drawing upon Belenky et al.'s *Women's Ways of Knowing*.[78] She indicates that maternal experience can inform practices of spiritual direction and she claims that "maternal ways of being are available to us all, men and women."[79]

African American women's narratives also suggest an integration of everyday mothering and the practice of spiritual direction. Robert Kelleman and Karole Edwards underscore the importance of retrieving the voices of the "countless female black exemplars of soul care and spiritual direction."[80] They describe the sustaining, healing, reconciling, and guiding dimensions of African American traditions of soul care and spiritual direction, pointing to "motherwit" as a distinctive form of spiritual guidance: "With biological children and with 'spiritual' children, with females and with males, older African American women shared their 'mother wit' – their proverbial wisdom found in the Scriptures, cultivated in community, and applied to daily life."[81] The study of such "motherwit" contributes to an ordinary spiritual theology, widens scholarship on spiritual direction, and expands understanding of Christian spirituality in diverse cultural contexts.

Feminist scholarship in spirituality studies makes a strong case that women's experiences, too often "invisible,"[82] need to be brought into a critical dialogue with Christian spiritual classics and theories of spiritual direction. For example, Katherine Dyckman, Mary Garvin, and Elizabeth Liebert propose feminist re-readings of Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, using "women's experience as our hermeneutical key."[83] The study of maternal life writing contributes to such feminist and womanist reinterpretations of Christian spirituality as it queries and widens the male assumptive worlds that dominate

78 Ibid., 118. See too Mary Field Belenky, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger, and Jill Mattuck Tarule, *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

79 Ibid., 117.

80 Robert Kellemen and Karole Edwards, *Beyond the Suffering: Embracing the Legacy of African American Soul Care and Spiritual Direction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 194.

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid., x.

83 Katherine Dyckman, Mary Garvin, and Elizabeth Liebert, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed: Uncovering Liberating Possibilities for Women* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2001), ix-x.

many classic texts. In her book *Women at the Well: Feminist Perspectives in Spiritual Direction*, Kathleen Fischer poses the question: "What do we know of the faith lives of our mothers, our grandmothers, our great-grandmothers? We hear many stories of fathers and sons…The stories of mothers and daughters are only beginning to be told."[84] Maternal life writing provides one significant source of these stories, and thus would be useful in the threefold process that Fischer proposes for "reclaiming," "healing," and "integrating" the spiritual heritage we receive from mothers and mother figures in our personal lives and religious traditions.[85] Greater attention to women's experiences, including mothering, is particularly important given that the preponderance of people seeking spiritual direction are women and given that laywomen's gifts for spiritual direction ministry have been undervalued.[86] In nurturing laywomen's gifts for spiritual direction, it is helpful to recall the many ways in which mothers throughout the history of Christian spirituality have practiced spiritual guidance – often not in formal venues but rather through everyday advice and care, letters of spiritual direction, proverbial "motherwit," ongoing spiritual travail.

Conclusion

The dearth of maternal voices in the canon of Christian spirituality is problematic for scholarship in spirituality and theology, skewing understanding of how Christian spirituality takes shape in women's lives; perpetuating conceptions of Christian spirituality that deny female, embodied experience and assume the absence of children; limiting reflection on key human experiences and practices. Life writing provides a window into women's spiritualities, rooted in the particularities of contexts and communities. Scholars of spirituality and practical theologians can participate in bringing maternal narratives to light as "sacred tales" that bear important spiritual insights, questions, vocabulary, and theological knowledge. Such research entails careful awareness of and critique of that which drowns out maternal voices.[87] These include political forces, of course, but also layers of male assumptive worlds in Christian spirituality; *a priori* templates for maternal sanctity that silence the genuine complexities of mothering spiritualities; and essentialized notions of women's

84 Kathleen Fischer, *Women at the Well: Feminist Perspectives on Spiritual Direction* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1988), 196.

85 Ibid.

86 Guenther, *Holy Listening*, 116.

87 Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace*, 40.

work and vocation. Practical theologians can facilitate the process of bringing maternal narratives to visibility; listen deeply to women's self-representations and experiences as reflected in these narratives; and interpret them in dialogue with other theological sources with an eye to informing practice.

We also can ask more broadly how theology and theological education might take mothering lives more seriously as a site of spiritual growth and struggle, and indeed as a praxis of leadership. How do we learn the art of maternal conversation? How might mothering enhance the skills and virtues needed across the practical disciplines, for example, in preaching, pastoral counseling, spiritual direction, education, and administration? How might we better engage the mothering lives of students in our teaching and formation? The study and creative teaching of life writing provides one entry point for approaching such questions.

Engaging women's life writing also stands to advance several trajectories of practical theology research. It obviously furthers narrative approaches in practical theology. Because life writing takes diverse forms, including poetic, performative, and aesthetic forms, attention to life writing also advances burgeoning movements towards poetic and aesthetic approaches in practical theology. Life writing provide examples, moreover, of what feminist practical theologians have named a "poetics of testimony" and a "poetics of resistance."[88] In providing access to neglected maternal voices, experiences, practices, and self-representations, and more generally providing access to an important mode of women's theology in the Christian tradition, the study of life writing contributes significantly to feminist and womanist practical theologies. Given that "the dominant discourses of practical theology" inadequately engage with women's experiences and paper over "ambiguity," "brokenness," and "dissonant experiences,"[89] maternal life writing provides a needed source that conveys the complexity of women's experiences. The study of life writing, then, has the potential to bridge poetic, feminist, and womanist practical theologies, expanding the communicative styles and sources of practical theology while high-

88 See Heather Walton, "Poetics," pp. 173-82 in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, edited by Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

89 Walton, "Poetics," 174. Note that Walton here is discussing work by Riet Bons-Storm, "Putting the Little Ones Into the Dialogue: A Feminist Practical Theology," pp. 9-26 in *Liberating Faith Practices: Feminist Practical Theologies in Context*, edited by Denise Ackermann and Riet Bons-Storm (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 1998), and Bonnie Miller-McLemore, "The Subject and Practice of Pastoral Theology as a Practical Theological Discipline: Pushing Past the Nagging Identity Crisis to a Poetics of Resistance," pp. 175-98 in *Liberating Faith Practices: Feminist Practical Theologies in Context*, edited by Denise Ackermann and Riet Bons-Storm (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 1998).

lighting women's own interpretations of their experiences and the dynamics of voice so significant to feminist theory and theology.[90]

Still, feminism may continue to sit uneasily with the topic of mothering, wary of any sanctification of a domain to which women were for so long restricted. This call for scholarly examination of mothering comes at a time of intense debate about the future of a divided feminist movement.[91] Can feminist theory and theology risk examining motherwork as a site of religion and spirituality? I argue that mothering is undeniably a critical practice deserving of scholarly study; by avoiding this topic, we minimize a domain of practice that is central to many women's lives and critical to social well-being. Popular literature is full of parenting self-help books. Culture war debates continue to rage about "Tiger Moms" vs. "the Dolphin way" of parenting, about "leaning in" and whether mothers really can "have it all."[92] The internet is full of mothering blogs and websites. Mothering should not be left in the realm of cultural debate, popular psychology, and internet chat rooms, but rather this highly significant practice should be a prime subject of theological research. The reading of mothering narratives, brought into dialogue with other theological and social scientific sources, leads to reappraisal of implicit definitions of spirituality and spiritual practice; fresh conceptions of lay vocation and work; and generative conversations about how to articulate and respond to the varied spiritual demands, dilemmas, and wisdom of mothers.

90 On the importance of themes of voice, speech, and silence in feminist theory and practical theology, see Elaine Graham, "Feminist Theory," pp. 193-203 in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, edited by Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

91 See, for example, Amanda Hess, "How a Fractious Women's Movement Came to Lead the Left," *The New York Times Magazine*, February 7, 2017: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/07/magazine/how-a-fractious-womens-movement-came-to-lead-the-left.html?_r=0, accessed February 22, 2017.

92 See Amy Chua, *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011); Shimi Kang, *The Dolphin's Way: A Parent's Guide to Raising Healthy, Happy, and Motivated Kids Without Turning into a Tiger* (New York: Penguin Group, 2014); Sheryl Sandberg, *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013); Anne-Marie Slaughter, "Why Women Still Can't Have It All," *Atlantic Monthly*, July/August 2012.

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