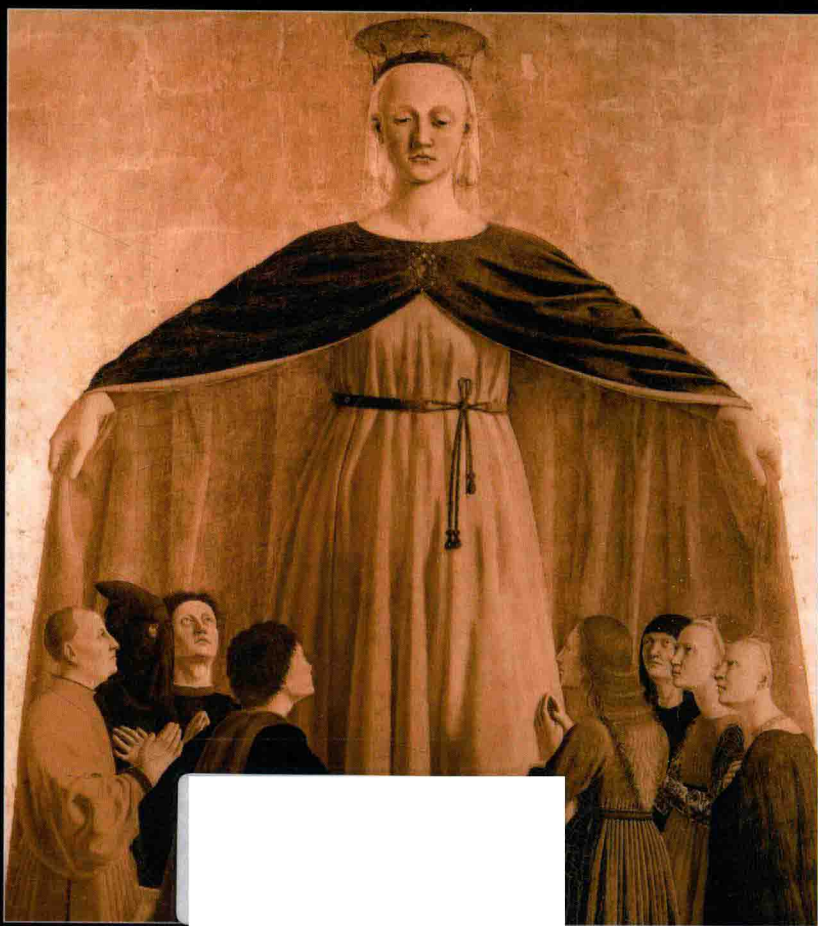


CHALLENGES IN CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY

# POWERS and SUBMISSIONS

SPIRITUALITY, PHILOSOPHY  
AND GENDER



*Sarah Coakley*

图书馆



Blackwell  
Publishing

# POWERS AND SUBMISSIONS

Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender

*Sarah Coakley*

 **Blackwell**  
Publishing

© 2002 by Sarah Coakley

BLACKWELL PUBLISHING

350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5020, USA

9600 Garsington Road, Oxford OX4 2DQ, UK

550 Swanston Street, Carlton, Victoria 3053, Australia

The right of Joe Sarah Coakley to be identified as the Author of this Work has been asserted in accordance with the UK Copyright, Designs, and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, except as permitted by the UK Copyright, Designs, and Patents Act 1988, without the prior permission of the publisher.

First published 2002 by Blackwell Publishing Ltd

2 2006

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Coakley, Sarah, 1951–

Powers and submissions : spirituality, philosophy, and gender / Sarah Coakley.

p. cm. — (Challenges in contemporary theology)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-631-20735-X (alk. paper) — ISBN 0-631-20736-8 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Feminist theology. I. Title. II. Series.

BV5083.M37 1998

BT83.55 C63 2002

230'.082—dc21

2001043964

ISBN-13: 978-0-631-20735-1 (alk. paper) — ISBN-13: 978-0-631-20736-8 (pbk. : alk. paper)

A catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library.

Set in 10.5 on 12.5 pt MBembo

by Kolam Information Services Pvt Ltd, Pondicherry, India

Printed and bound in the United Kingdom

by TJ International, Padstow, Cornwall

The publisher's policy is to use permanent paper from mills that operate a sustainable forestry policy, and which has been manufactured from pulp processed using acid-free and elementary chlorine-free practices. Furthermore, the publisher ensures that the text paper and cover board used have met acceptable environmental accreditation standards.

For further information on

Blackwell Publishing, visit our website:

[www.blackwellpublishing.com](http://www.blackwellpublishing.com)

# POWERS AND SUBMISSIONS

# Challenges in Contemporary Theology

Series Editors: Gareth Jones and Lewis Ayres

Canterbury Christ Church University College, UK and Emory University, US

Challenges in Contemporary Theology is a series aimed at producing clear orientations in, and research on, areas of 'challenge' in contemporary theology. These carefully co-ordinated books engage traditional theological concerns with mainstreams in modern thought and culture that challenge those concerns. The 'challenges' implied are to be understood in two senses: those presented by society to contemporary theology, and those posed by theology to society.

## Published

*These Three are One: The Practice of Trinitarian Theology*

David S. Cunningham

*After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy*

Catherine Pickstock

*Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology*

Mark A. McIntosh

*Engaging Scripture: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ*

Stephen E. Fowl

*Torture and Eucharist: A Model for Theological Interpretation*

William T. Cavanaugh

*Sexuality and the Christian Body: Their Way into the Triune God*

Eugene F. Rogers, Jr

*On Christian Theology*

Rowan Williams

*The Promised End: Eschatology in Theology and Literature*

Paul S. Fiddes

*Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy, and Gender*

Sarah Coakley

*A Theology of Engagement*

Ian S. Markham

*Alien Sex: The Body and Desire in Cinema and Theology*

Gerard Loughlin

*Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology*

Matthew Levering

*Faith and Freedom: An Interfaith Perspective*

David Burrell

*Keeping God's Silence*

Rachel Muers

*Christ and Culture*

Graham Ward

*Theology in the Public Square: Church, Academy and Nation*

Gavin D'Costa

*Rewritten Theology: Aquinas After His Readers*

Mark D. Jordan

*For Edith and Agnes Etheldreda,  
the future feminists*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With the exception of the 'Prologue', all the essays in this volume have appeared in other settings, and have been included here with light revisions. Where the copyright lies with the earlier publisher, I am grateful for permission to reproduce the material. The details of publication are as follows:

'*Kenōsis* and Subversion: On the Repression of "Vulnerability" in Christian Feminist Writing', in Daphne Hampson (ed.), *Swallowing A Fishbone? Feminist Theologians Debate Christianity* (London, SPCK, 1996), 82–111.

'Traditions of Spiritual Guidance: Dom John Chapman OSB (1865–1933) on the Meaning of "Contemplation"', as 'Traditions of Spiritual Guidance: Dom John Chapman OSB (1865–1933)', in *The Way* 30 (1990), 243–57.

'Creaturehood Before God: Male and Female', in *Theology* 93 (1990), 343–53.

'Visions of the Self in Late Medieval Christianity: Some Cross-Disciplinary Reflections', in Michael McGhee (ed.), *Philosophy, Religion, and the Spiritual Life: Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992), 89–103. © 1992 Royal Institute of Philosophy.

'Gender and Knowledge in Modern Western Philosophy: The "Man of Reason" and the "Feminine" "Other" in Enlightenment and Romantic Thought', in E. Schüssler Fiorenza and A. Carr (eds.), *The Special Nature of Women: Concilium* 1991/6 (London, SCM Press, 1991), 75–83. © Concilium, Nijmegen, The Netherlands.

'Analytic Philosophy of Religion in Feminist Perspective: Some Questions', as 'Feminism', in Charles Taliaferro and Philip Quinn (eds.), *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1997), 601–6.

'“Persons” in the “Social” Doctrine of the Trinity: Current Analytic Discussion and “Cappadocian” Theology’, as ‘“Persons” in the “Social” Doctrine of the Trinity: A Critique of Current Analytic Discussion’, in Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, SJ and Gerald O’Collins, SJ (eds.), *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, by permission of Oxford University Press), 123–44.

‘The Resurrection and the “Spiritual Senses”’: On Wittgenstein, Epistemology and the Risen Christ’, as ‘The Resurrection: The Grammar of “Raised”’, in D. Z. Phillips et al. (eds.), *Biblical Concepts and Our World* (London, St Martin’s Press, forthcoming).

‘The Eschatological Body: Gender, Transformation and God’, in *Modern Theology* 16 (2000), 61–73.

The publishers apologize for any errors or omissions in the above list and would be grateful to be notified of any corrections that should be incorporated in the next edition or reprint of this book.



## PREFACE

The idea for this book first arose on my arrival at Harvard from Oxford: my new American students encountered difficulty finding my articles in somewhat obscure (and usually English) publications. Gradually the idea took shape for a volume of *Gesammelte Schriften*. I am grateful to Alison Mudditt, Alex Wright, and Joanna Pyke at Blackwell for seeing the book through to publication and for guiding me in my choice of texts.

One of the interesting things in reviewing one's own essays – often written under pressure and for particular events and deadlines – is that only retrospectively does one see the constellation of themes that has dominated one's thought for a number of years. In my case, this constellation was centred on the profound paradox of an inalienable surrender ('submission') to God that – as I argue – must remain the secret ground of even feminist 'empowerment'. Elsewhere I have termed this 'the paradox of power and vulnerability'. Such a paradox may be surprising to some, whereas to others it will be outrightly offensive: disappointingly conventional, a sign of feminist 'false consciousness', or an apolitical retreat into introspective piety. I devote the 'Prologue' to explaining why I believe it is none of these things, and indeed how an analysis of the act of 'contemplation' may cause us to rethink the standard binary of 'power' and 'submission' altogether.

It is customary to thank one's friends, teachers and interlocutors in the preface to a book such as this. My debts are numerous; in some cases I have recorded my thanks to critics and respondents at the end of particular essays. The influence of other colleagues and mentors is infused more subtly and generally throughout these pages: Maurice Wiles, Andrew Louth, Rowan Williams, Mary Douglas, Fergus Kerr, OP, Daphne Hampson, John Milbank, Caroline Bynum, Brian Daley, SJ, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, David Hall, Nicholas Constatas, Richard

Swinburne, Hilary Putnam and Nicholas Wolterstorff. Since the members of this particular 'cloud of witnesses' would be unlikely to agree on even one item of theological controversy, they must nonetheless believe me when I say that I have learned from them all, with enormous gratitude and respect.

Without the generous support of the Lilly Foundation, which funded a sabbatical year for 2000–1, I doubt whether this book would even now be ready for the publishers. To Dorothy Bass and Craig Dykstra at Lilly: *gratias ago vobis*. Two Harvard research assistants, Heather Curtis and Todd Billings, have given cheerful assistance with practical and bibliographical matters. Finally, John Privett, SJ afforded me the luxury of a hiding place in Faber House, Cambridge, MA, during the last stages of the editorial work: this was an invaluable asset, reminding me again of the significance of silence.

S. C.  
Cambridge, MA  
St David, 2001

## PROLOGUE: POWERS AND SUBMISSIONS

In the 'liberal' and affluent West, 'power' is undeniably in vogue, not only with those who debate its meaning;<sup>1</sup> 'submission' most emphatically is not – unless perhaps as a titillating form of sexual bondage.<sup>2</sup>

This state of affairs may give even the secular cultural critic some pause for thought. The Enlightenment demand for an empowered human 'autonomy', despite all the intellectual criticism it has accrued in recent philosophical debate,<sup>3</sup> has in practice barely been softened by postmodernity's more nebulous quest for the state of 'agency',<sup>4</sup> and its implicit adulation of infinite consumer choice. In neither case – that of 'autonomy' or 'agency' – is any concomitant form of human 'submission' an obvious asset; if there is such surrender, it is seemingly at the *cost* of 'freedom' (so understood), a delimitation of options, a clamp on the desire for delicious risk-taking

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, S. R. Clegg, *Power, Rule and Domination* (London, 1975), esp. Ch. 1 ('The Problem of Definition'); S. Lukes (ed.), *Power* (New York, 1986); M. Kelly (ed.), *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate* (Cambridge, MA, 1994); and the lucid little encyclopedia article, 'Power' (M. Philp), in A. and J. Kuper (eds.), *The Social Science Encyclopaedia* (London, 1985), 635–9.

<sup>2</sup> See the illuminating discussion, from a feminist perspective, of Pauline Réage's sadomasochistic *Story of O*, in J. Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love* (New York, 1990), Ch. 2.

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, for current feminist debate on this Enlightenment heritage: L. J. Nicholson (ed.), *Feminism/Postmodernism* (New York, 1990); S. Benhabib, *Situating the Self* (New York, 1992); S. Benhabib, J. Butler, D. Cornell and N. Fraser, *Feminist Contentions* (New York, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> For an influential discussion of the difference between modern 'autonomy' and postmodern 'agency', considered from an anthropological and post-colonial perspective, see T. Asad, *Genealogies of Religion* (Baltimore, MD, 1993), 1–24.

possibilities. As Mary Douglas has shown us, in the culture of individualism, 'risk' can replace a dedicated commitment to a larger societal whole.<sup>5</sup>

Yet this perceptible cultural resistance to 'submission' is quite at odds with the lessons of a sophisticated philosophical discussion – reaching back to Hegel's Master/Slave parable – of how the subjugated 'other' can nonetheless strangely have the edge on the Master's position of 'power' – if his 'power', that is, alienates him finally from himself.<sup>6</sup> The notable demise of socialism in the West has, it seems, tended to occlude – at least in the debates of public politics – the wisdom that this parable enshrined, however elusively and ambiguously.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless it is this same conundrum – that of the problem of the recognition of the 'other', and of the profound personal and political dangers of failure in this task – that has so greatly exercised academic continental philosophy in recent decades, especially in the wake of the Holocaust.<sup>8</sup> The issue of 'alterity' has been at the heart of post-Kantian ethics in our new age of pluralism (and dangerous neo-Nazism) in Europe; and emergent post-colonial theory has, more recently, contributed its insights about the 'hybrid' self that has to negotiate a plethora of traditions and authorities.<sup>9</sup> To this (already complicated) debate secular feminist theory has added its distinctive voice, reminding 'malestream' philosophy of the specifically *gendered* nature of much political marginalization and subordination, and of the insidious entanglement of gender with race, class and other factors of discrimination in the hierarchy of oppressions.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> For a recent analysis of this theme in Mary Douglas's work, see R. Fardon, *Mary Douglas: An Intellectual Biography* (London, 1999); and in Douglas's own voluminous work on the theme of 'risk', see, *inter alia*, with Aaron Wildavsky, *Risk and Culture* (Berkeley, CA, 1982); *Risk Acceptability According to the Social Sciences* (London, 1986); *Risk and Blame* (London, 1992).

<sup>6</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind* (1807; New York, 1967), 'Lordship and Bondage', 229–40.

<sup>7</sup> For an astute and critical analysis of the demise of socialist thought in the *milieu* of postmodernity, see T. Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism* (Oxford, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> See most famously E. Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity* (1961; Pittsburgh, PA, 1969), esp. 'Ethics and the Face', 194–219.

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, H. K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York, 1994); R. J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (New York, 1995); P. Werbner and T. Modood (eds.), *Debating Cultural Hybridity* (London, 1997); and B. Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory* (London, 1997).

<sup>10</sup> For a powerful argument about the *intrinsic* entanglement of race and class issues with gender inequalities, see E. V. Spelman, *Inessential Woman* (Boston, MA, 1988); for an analysis of the potentially fruitful interplay between critical theory, feminist theory and feminist theology in the highlighting of multiple oppressions, see M. A. Hewitt, *Critical Theory of Religion* (Minneapolis, MN, 1995).

Even as this philosophical debate on power and submission has complexified, however, consumerist individualism has, on the wings of the Web, spiralled out to entice the 'two-thirds world', still itself in painful economic and political subjugation to the West, and increasingly crippled by the Aids pandemic. Whilst academics have been announcing the advent of 'post-modernity', and professedly sounding the death knell of all hegemonic 'grand narratives', global capitalism has insidiously established its power as perhaps the most rapacious grand narrative in the history of the West.<sup>11</sup> Rarely have philosophical discussion and economic reality been in such painful dislocation. The original Enlightenment resistance to 'submission' has ultimately spawned, it seems, an economic system that ironically guarantees the continuation of multiple forms of oppression.

For the *theologian* in this climate, the continuing cultural fear of 'heteronomy' – of submission, dependency or vulnerability – represents not just an intellectual, but also a spiritual, crisis of some magnitude. For how, in the wake of the twentieth century's shocking technocratic genocides,<sup>12</sup> and in the conditions of this new century's frighteningly globalized economic power and ever-more devastating fragilities (political, medical, ecological), is *divine* power to be seen as alluring and sustaining human (dependent) responsibility? Here we confront an unexpected twist, a seeming acknowledgement of theological defeat in the face of secularism's despair. For whilst some Jewish theodocy, unsurprisingly, has embraced the notion of a *finite* divinity, one intrinsically unable to effect a supernatural intervention in the face of grave human wickedness,<sup>13</sup> post-War Christian thought has tended more often to take a different turn: the most influential conglomerate of 'neo-orthodox' and 'post-liberal' (male) theologians has effected a new *valorization* of Christic 'vulnerability', an admission of divine self-limitation and exposure in the face of human cruelty.<sup>14</sup> Rather than deflecting human

<sup>11</sup> On these themes, see the trenchant essays by N. Boyle, in *Who are We Now?* (Notre Dame, IN, 1998).

<sup>12</sup> See Z. Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca, NY, 1989), for an analysis of the essentially modern, technocratic 'achievement' of the Holocaust.

<sup>13</sup> For a useful survey of Jewish theological responses to the Holocaust, including that of the rejection of the traditional belief in a providential God who acts in history, see D. Cohn-Sherbok, *Holocaust Theology* (London, 1989).

<sup>14</sup> This tendency is prominently found – with somewhat different outworkings – in the work of Karl Barth, Hans Urs von Balthasar and Jürgen Moltmann, amongst others. For Barth see *Church Dogmatics* IV/1 (Edinburgh, 1956), esp. §59; for von Balthasar, see *Mysterium Paschale* (Edinburgh, 1990); for Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (London, 1964). A 'post-liberal' account of the 'vulnerable' God, which owes much to Barth, is to be found in W. Placher, *Narratives of a Vulnerable God* (Louisville, KY, 1994), who does – briefly – raise the problem of a gendered notion of 'suffering' for this approach (see *ibid.*, 115–20).

weakness, this trend has embraced it – even into the trinitarian heart of God. Submission has become paradoxically *identified* with divine ‘power’.

Yet for the feminist theologian, we must note, this highly prized tactic has proved double-edged; indeed the question of power and submission has become yet further fraught in the light of this popular male theological strategy. For how can the call for the liberation of the powerless and oppressed, especially of women, possibly coexist with a revalorization of *any* form of ‘submission’ – divine or otherwise?<sup>15</sup> Precisely as male theology has wallowed in a new adulation of ‘vulnerability’ and ‘receptivity’ (perhaps aiming – consciously or unconsciously – to incorporate a repressed ‘femininity’ into its dogmatic system), feminist theology has emerged to make its rightful protest. Such a strategy, it has urged, merely reinstatiates, in legitimated doctrinal form, the sexual, physical and emotional abuse that feminism seeks to expose. An abused God merely legitimates abuse.<sup>16</sup>

It is with these tangled questions of power and submission, both human and divine, that this book is centrally concerned. At the heart of the book is an insistence that the apparently forced choice between dependent ‘vulnerability’ and liberative ‘power’ is a false one. But the terms of the debate – the different possible meanings of ‘power’ and ‘submission’ (whether human or divine), and their semantic cultural admixtures – are what are crucially at stake.

Things would be simpler if there were any agreement on what human ‘power’ was in the first place; but the academic disputes over its meanings in recent years rival in complexity – and arguably replicate in secular form – the debates that might in a pre-modern age have been held over the nature and purpose of divine ‘acts’.<sup>17</sup> Is power a force, a commodity, a hereditary deposit, a form of exchange, an authority, a means of ‘discipline’, sheer domination, or a more nebulous ‘circuit’? Must it necessarily involve intentionality, imply resistance, suppress freedom, or assume a ‘hierarchy’? And where does it reside: in individuals, in institutions, in armies or police forces, in money, in political parties, or more generally and democratically

<sup>15</sup> This objection becomes particularly pointed from women who have suffered physical or sexual abuse, and whose capacity for *trusting* ‘vulnerability’ or ‘receptivity’ becomes severely damaged. See J. L. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York, 1992).

<sup>16</sup> I face this important feminist argument in my discussion of christological *kenōsis* in ch. 1, below.

<sup>17</sup> One of the clearest introductions to this complexity is to be found in the editor’s introduction to Lukes (ed.), *Power* (see n. 1, above), 1–18. The account is strikingly devoid of any reference to God.

in every sort of subtle societal exchange?<sup>18</sup> There is no answer to these questions which is not also an implicit ideology, or at least a *recommendation*: this is nowhere more obvious than in the famous exchange between Foucault and Habermas on power, between the notion of inexorable local contestations of power/knowledge on the one hand (Foucault), and of an implicitly universalizable theory of 'communicative action' on the other (Habermas).<sup>19</sup> Thus, perhaps, as Steven Lukes has sagely put it, 'the very search for such a definition [of power] is a mistake. For the variations in what we are interested in when we are interested in power run deep . . . and what unites the various views of power is too thin and formal to provide a generally satisfying definition.'<sup>20</sup> In short, how we define 'power' will either be a charter of how *we* intend that it be used, or else a (more or less) despairing critique of what we see as its abuse.

Now it is strangely difficult to say how *divine* power could be reinstated in this complex and fascinating secular debate. Academic theologians are curiously coy about admitting their own institutional 'power', let alone inserting a rhetoric of God's power into an already-established secular discourse: the contrast with the explicit power language of the world of the New Testament, as Stephen Sykes has noted, is remarkable.<sup>21</sup> Whilst feminist theologians have made considerable use of the early Foucault (predominantly as a means of charting the 'genealogy' of repressive patriarchalism),<sup>22</sup> few theological commentators have ventured to describe the remarkable collapse of the secularization thesis as a sign of divine 'power' at work, or considered the notable success of Alcoholics Anonymous as an (actual) effect of a 'higher power', or – for that matter – wondered at the explosive recent growth of interest in 'spirituality' as anything else but another commodified 'leisure pursuit'.

<sup>18</sup> S. R. Clegg, *Frameworks of Power* (London, 1989), attempts a new account of power as 'circuit' or 'process' which does not necessarily throw these alternatives into a series of disjunctive choices.

<sup>19</sup> For a detailed account of this literary exchange (Foucault and Habermas never actually met), see Kelly (ed.), *Critique and Power* (n. 1, above).

<sup>20</sup> Lukes (ed.), *Power*, 4–5.

<sup>21</sup> S. W. Sykes, *The Identity of Christianity* (London, 1984), esp. 73–7.

<sup>22</sup> For a nuanced use of Foucault by a feminist theologian, see S. D. Welch, *A Feminist Ethic of Risk* (Minneapolis, MN, 1990). For assessments by secular feminists of the (somewhat mixed) blessing of a Foucaultian approach to power, see N. Hartsoc, 'Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?', in Nicholson (ed.), *Feminism/Postmodernism* (n. 3, above), 157–75; and L. McNay, *Foucault and Feminism* (Cambridge, 1992).

But what if this coyness proved, after all, to be a 'crime'?<sup>23</sup> What if divine power should not thus be short-changed, sidelined or embarrassedly left to the rhetoric of the new religious Right? It is to meet this challenge that the main arguments of this book are forged. In the essays in the first section of the book it is argued that a particular form of spiritual 'practice', known in the Christian West as 'contemplation', can – even in its humdrum 'acquired' form – be a graced means of human empowerment in the divine which the feminist movement ignores or derides at its peril. Certain previous tendencies in the feminist theological movement to belittle or downgrade the significance of ascetic practice are met and responded to: that such practice encourages societal 'submissiveness', disassociated introversion, apolitical anaesthesia, or the silencing of 'woman' are charges with which this book is familiar, and are already faced in chapter 1.<sup>24</sup> Chapters 2 and 3, however, acknowledge the deeply insidious ways in which such messages of trivialization and subordination can indeed be smuggled even into spiritual direction which is otherwise rife with wisdom; such a 'messy entanglement' is the stuff of adjudication for a new generation of feminist spiritual discernment.

But the alternative dangers of a busy pragmatism in matters of feminist reform are also underscored: to leap to the supposedly clear-cut goal of 'justice' without delicate training in *attending* to the 'other'; to impose programmes of reform without considering *self*-reform and *self*-knowledge; to up-end 'patriarchal' power without considering the possibility of the mimetic *feminist* abuse of power: such, we might say, are the looming dangers of feminist institutional 'success'. That most of the world has still not advanced even minimally towards the goals of 'Enlightenment' feminism<sup>25</sup> is no reason to suppress these questions and anxieties now; indeed the urgent matter of the integration of beliefs and 'practices' (now being advocated afresh in Western philosophy faculties by followers of the late Pierre Hadot<sup>26</sup>) is arguably more obvious to the emergent feminism of the

<sup>23</sup> My 'coy' allusion is of course to Andrew Marvell's 'To His Coy Mistress' (1681): 'Had we but world enough, and time./This coyness, Lady, were no crime'.

<sup>24</sup> See pp. 32–9, below.

<sup>25</sup> On this see the important new book of M. C. Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice* (Oxford, 1999), a defence of 'justice' in an (adjusted, feminist) 'liberal' tradition.

<sup>26</sup> See P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* (1987; Oxford, 1995), for the argument of the inseparability of belief and 'spiritual' practice in ancient philosophy.



'two-thirds' world than it is to the spiritually dessicated elite of the educated West.<sup>27</sup>

The message here is not, of course, one of submission to the 'world' – in the various senses of 'worldly' power that we have already entertained. On the contrary, it is about a very subtle, and one might say *sui generis*, response to the divine allure that allows one to meet the ambiguous forms of 'worldly' power in a new dimension, neither decrying them *in se* nor being enslaved to them, but rather facing, embracing, resisting or deflecting them with discernment. Whilst an earlier form of feminist theology tended undifferentiatedly to *identify* 'power' with ecclesiastical 'domination', this study makes no such simplistic assumptions. It does not of course deny that such domination has been a woeful part of Christian tradition, with heinous effects for women and other subordinates: many of the essays are concerned with unravelling and displaying such effects, ones often still hidden from the 'masculinist' gaze. But in the spirit of the late Foucault (though without his accompanying anarchic ethical presumptions) this work also takes the complex exchanges of societal power-relations to exclude very few of us from responsibility;<sup>28</sup> whilst institutions may indeed 'discipline' us (for good or ill), we also have the 'power' to discipline ourselves. It is as well to acknowledge how deeply unfashionable such a call may sound in a post-Freudian, post-Foucaultian generation (an issue with which chapter 9 later concerns itself).

Before that, in the second part of this volume we face the complicated question of the genesis of certain 'Enlightenment' visions of the self out of late medieval prototypes of 'spiritual practice' (this involves a somewhat novel argument),<sup>29</sup> and go on to indicate how attentiveness to such practice may cause us to make specifically feminist assessments of current philosophical trends more pointed. The 'Enlightenment', we argue (including one of its noted progeny: the discourse of 'analytic philosophy of religion'), is more double-edged in its implications for contemporary theological feminism than some would suggest.<sup>30</sup> The analysis in this section (see especially

<sup>27</sup> Post-colonial theorists tend to talk rather little of the deep religiosity of the cultures from which they spring, except where a *fracas* is caused over something like Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*. For sage comments on the clash of cultures involved here between religious traditionalism and an (assumed) secularized 'liberalism', see Asad, *Genealogies* (n. 4, above), Chs 7 and 8.

<sup>28</sup> See M. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* (Brighton, 1980), and the brief discussion of this in ch. 1, below.

<sup>29</sup> See ch. 4, below.

<sup>30</sup> This is the dominant theme of chs 5 and 6, below.