

Victimless Cruciformity:
Queering Submission through a Transgressive Reading of the Lord's Supper

Brandy R. Daniels
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“Male and female are created through the erotization of dominance and submission. The man/woman difference and the dominance/submission dynamic define each other. This is the social meaning of sex and the distinctively feminist account of gender inequality.” – Catharine MacKinnonⁱ

“...‘power’ is undeniably in vogue...‘submission’ most emphatically is not.”- Sarah Coakleyⁱⁱ

“ To deconstruct the concept of matter or that of bodies is not to negate or refuse either term. To deconstruct these terms means, rather, to continue to use them, to repeat them, to repeat them subversively, and to displace them from the contexts in which they have been deployed as instruments of oppressive power.” – Judith Butlerⁱⁱⁱ

Submission is not often discussed with high regard in contemporary Western culture. Submission, if discussed at all, is understood as something to be avoided – a risk to one’s freedom; to one’s sense of control and power. Much, however, has been written regarding power and its effects, with this idea of power rooted in agency and freedom.^{iv} Sarah Coakley correctly points out that the Enlightenment demand for autonomy, despite the intellectual criticism it has accrued in contemporary philosophical debate, “has in practice barely been softened by postmodernity’s more nebulous question for the state of agency.” She goes on to point out that neither in autonomy or agency “is any concomitant form of human ‘submission’ an obvious asset.”^v In other words, submission has been denounced by both modernity and postmodernity—considered an affront to freedom.

The denouncement of submission raises concerns for Christian theologians and practitioners who have to acknowledge Biblical motifs of submission, most notably in the life and crucifixion of Christ. Philippians 2:4-8, found in the Christian New Testament, is one of the most cited texts conveying the submission of Christ, and calling Christ’s followers to the same:

Let each of you look not to his own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.^{vi}

Because Christ is central to Christianity, those who view Christian Scriptures with some sort of authority cannot ignore texts such as this one; the question of submission’s role must be asked.

While some would argue that Christian submission is an entirely positive concept, others would note that there have also been many instances in which notions of submission have been used to women's harm, as well as harm to other oppressed and marginalized groups that feminist ideology seeks to support. Calls to submission such as those found in Philippians have been used to encourage women to stay in violent situations, to reprove slaves to stay obedient to their masters, and to silence voices that need to speak. Women, and other minorities throughout the centuries, have given up on Scripture, or chosen to ignore certain parts of it because of texts on submission. In her book, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*, Kwok Pui-Lan tells the story of Chinese women at the turn of the century who used pins to cut out the Bible verses where Paul instructed women to be submissive and remain silent in church.^{vii} Howard Thurman tells a similar story in *Jesus and the Disinherited*, explaining how his grandmother would not allow him to read any Pauline letters because her master so often used them to support her slave status.^{viii} Feminist theologian Daphne Hampson comments on this reality more explicitly in her book *Theology and Feminism*. "For women," she explains, "the theme of self-emptying and self-abnegation is far from helpful as a paradigm."^{ix} For many feminists, theological notions of submission are more of a source of grief and pain than Good News.

These opposing positions on submission place those of us who identify as Christian and feminist in a paradoxical conundrum. Are we to affirm equality and agency and undermine the authority of Christian Scripture, or so we risk harming marginalized people in order to uphold the integrity of the Biblical texts? Neither option seems appropriate on its own, but perhaps there is a way to, as the metaphor goes, "have our cake and eat it too." It is the goal of this paper to show how that might be possible. In this paper, I will argue that one can affirm *both* Scriptural accounts of submission and a feminist ideology that resists oppression by offering a "queer" reading of Christ's crucifixion and the events leading up to it. Using methodology made popular by critical theorist Judith Butler, I hope to construct a different reading of Christian Scripture, and more specifically, of the Lord's Supper--

suggesting that submission can be a form of agency, and volitional suffering as an act of desire. This, I believe, offers a way of reading the Christian narrative faithfully while still affirming feminist ideology.

This paper is organized into four parts: In part one, I explore the ways in which traditional Christian narratives of hierarchy and submission are problematic to feminist concerns. In this section, I discuss the ways in which notions of submission have been used to oppress women and other minorities. In part two, I explore traditional feminist responses to Christian notions of submission, seen primarily in the works of feminist scholars Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin. While it appears intuitive to respond to problems resulting from submissiveness, with a desire to disavow it and dismantle notions of hierarchy, I will argue that this is not the most theoretically or pragmatically effective.

Whereas parts one and two are primarily deconstructive, parts three and four are primarily reconstructive, and make up the most substantial section of this paper. In part three, I attempt to demonstrate how Christian feminists can “have their cake and eat it too,” by offering a reading of Christ’s crucifixion and the events leading up to the event in a way that views Christ’s action of submissiveness as a subversion of the notion that hierarchy is oppressive.

By reading Christ’s willfulness as an act of desire, and the scene at the Lord’s Supper as a subversive acceptance of submission, I hope to demonstrate a way in which submission can be seen as an act of agency instead of solely oppressive. Finally, in part four, I discuss the implications of reading volitional suffering as desire on Christian theo-praxis and feminist ideology. My hope is that this construction offers a way out of the feminist tendency towards a victim mentality and allows Christian feminists to remain faithful to Christian Scripture amidst seemingly competing ideologies.

Part One

“Theologians have always fantasized a female hanging on the cross...”– Mary Daly^x

“For the punishment that she is now subjected to the man was imposed on her after sin and because of sin, just as other hardships and dangers were: travail, pain, and countless other vexations. Therefore Eve was not like the woman of today: her state was far better and more excellent, and she was in no respect inferior to Adam, whether you count the qualities of the body or those of the mind.” – Martin Luther^{xi}

“A battering husband, in addition to physically beating his wife, also regularly raped her. She interpreted this pattern of abuse as God’s way of correcting her tendency to rebel against the authority of her husband.” – Marie Fortune^{xii}

“An abused God merely legitimates abuse.” – Sarah Coakley^{xiii}

The subjugation of women has too often been legitimated through use of Christian Scripture by both men and women. Historically, the church has predominantly read Christian Scripture in a way that requires the subordination of women. The history of the subordination of women in the church is extensive, and far beyond the scope of this paper.^{xiv} However, I will attempt to lay out an outline of the subordination of women in the church by looking at a smattering of works by various church Fathers, as well as some of the writings of Protestant Reformer Martin Luther and Reformed theologian Karl Barth.

In many ways, the Church Fathers laid the foundation for the submission of women in Christian thought. Alvin Schmidt, in his book *Veiled and Silenced: How Culture Shaped Sexist Theology*, shows in great detail how Christian history has legitimated the submission of women by painting them as evil, inferior, unclean, and unequal.^{xv} Much of the call for women to be submissive came from the belief that Eve was directly and solely responsible for the Fall. In *De Carne Christ*, Tertullian, who has been deemed by many to be the first real misogynist in the church, notes that Eve was the one who believed the serpent and thus brought evil into the world.^{xvi} While he goes on to cede that Mary believing Gabriel brought salvation to the world and therefore the destruction brought about by the female sex was restored to salvation by the same sex, he holds that this did not remove the shame and need for expiation on the part

of every woman alive, which he talks about at great length in his work *De Cultu Fem*, and which I will quote at some length here:

...no one of you at all, best beloved sisters, from the time that she had first “known the Lord,” and learned concerning her own condition, would have desired too gladsome a style of dress; so as not rather to go about in humble garb, and rather to affect meanness of appearance, walking about as Eve mourning and repentant, in order that by every garb of penitence she might the more fully expiate that which she derives from Eve, —the ignominy, I mean, of the first sin, and the odium of human perdition. “In pain and anxieties dost thou bear, woman, and toward thine husband they inclination, and he lords it over thee.” And do you not know now that you are an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age: the guilt of necessity live too. *You are the devil’s gateway; you are the unsealer of that (forbidden) tree: you are the first deserter of the divine law: you are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God’s image, man. On account of your desert—that is, death—even the Son of God had to die.*^{xvii}

Tertullian’s contemporary, Clement, appeared much less misogynistic in comparison. He seems to have admitted women into his lectures and showed appreciation for their capacity for wisdom.^{xviii} Yet, at the same time, Clement was cautious, and remarked that he believed women were likely to become sirens and sources of sin. He believed that their dresses should not be soft and clingy, and should be hemmed below the ankles. Women were to wear veils, but not circumvent their purposes by wearing purple ones, since colors attract attention and inflame the lusts.^{xix} In his discourse on the inherent manliness and importance of beards, Clement’s thoughts on the status of women are clear. He writes: “His characteristic is action; hers, passivity. For what is hairy is by nature drier and warmer than what is bare; therefore, the male is hairier and more warm-blooded than the female; the uncastrated, than the castrated; the mature, than the immature.”^{xx}

This perspective of women as passive, lustful, and immature has implications for the Church Fathers on how women were to live. Ephiphanius of Salamis, a bishop in the 4th century, taught that the devil was unable to tempt Adam because of Adam’s superiority, so he turned to Eve, who he was able to seduce because of her ignorance. This ignorance is not only a feminine quality, but also reason for women to be subordinate.^{xxi} Augustine also points to the required submission of women because of women’s intrinsic lustful nature. Ideally, women should remain virgins, for the marital act was seen as intrinsically

debasement to a woman. She could only be consoled for her loss of integrity by dedicating her daughters to virginity and thereby regaining in them what she has lost in herself.^{xxii} If she must sink to the lowest position of outright evil and become a “mere wife,” she is exhorted to be entirely meek and to submit herself, mind and body, to her husband who is her head, and who has complete proprietary rights over her body – even to the point of death.^{xxiii} For many (if not all) of the church Fathers, women were inherently inferior to men and therefore required to be submissive and subordinate.

This view of women’s inferiority extended far beyond late antiquity, and pervaded theological thought through the works of other key theological thinkers such as Martin Luther and Karl Barth. While Martin Luther undoubtedly had a higher view of women than most of his predecessors— he acknowledged and elevated the value of the woman’s role in matrimony, and called the Papacy “despisers of women” because of their negative view of marriage^{xxiv} —he still held a theology that painted women in the *lesser* role of the marriage union.^{xxv} While Luther honored wives for the tasks they perform, seeing them as part of the Christian vocation, it was strict obedience to the husband, along with caring for the children, that marks what Luther calls, “golden, noble works.”^{xxvi} Luther was clear that women were still in a place of subordination to men. “A man is nobler than woman,” he writes in a commentary on 1 Corinthians^{xxvii}, and in speaking of Eve, he hardly sounds different from the Fathers of the previous millennia, suggesting that “we can hardly speak of her without shame.”^{xxviii} Luther spoke of women more highly than his predecessors, but still viewed the female as subordinate and lesser than the male.

Karl Barth is an immensely influential figure within the history of Christian thought. In the scene of crisis after the First World War, Barth sought resources from within the Christian tradition in order to revitalize the Church. Barth articulated the failure of the tradition of Christian liberalism and looked for revitalization through a return to the Word, as revealed to the world through Christ and through the Christian Scriptures. Barth was deemed the most important theologian since Thomas Aquinas by Pope Pius XII, and considered the founder of neo-orthodoxy. He had transformed contemporary Protestant theology.

Despite the immense contributions Barth has made to Christian theological thought, his views on male/female relationships have perpetuated the subordination and subjugation of women. As Joan Arnold Romero remarks in *Religion and Sexism*: “Barth rejects any view that would make men and women equal, because the sexual differentiation itself is the sign of limitation proper to the creature.”^{xxxix} This position is necessary for Barth because of the way in which he believes that humanity images the Trinity. We are told that human beings were created in the basic form of the duality of man/woman, as the image of the God who is not solitary. But, whereas in man the I and the Thou are two different individuals, in God, the I and the Thou are the same individual.^{xxx} For Barth, the unity of the I-Thou relationship is in man and woman together. Where the relation is one of equality-of-oneness-in-being in the Trinity, in human beings—because human beings are differentiated from God—the relationship is one of inequality and duality. Barth explains that God did not create one sex alone, “but the unequal duality for man and woman in the basic form of duality.”^{xxxxi} For Barth, union is achieved by a relationship of superordination/subordination. Of course, it is the woman who is to function as the role of the subordinate.

For Barth, the qualitative difference between God and humankind is demonstrated in the difference between man and woman. Man is to honor the lordship of Christ and paralleled on the human level; whereas, woman is to honor Christ through her relationship to the man who functions as her lord to whom she is bound in obedient love.^{xxxii} Though acknowledging for the possibility that women may be oppressed, Barth exhorts women to remain subordinated. To be truly liberated she should not protest, for her rebellion may be an indication of the same contempt for divine order that man’s oppression of her would reveal. Her response of faith is to keep her proper place, to follow man’s initiative; in doing so, she might lead him to repentance.^{xxxiii} This call to subordination is one often used by pastors who have all too readily risked women’s harm – some even to the point of death. But for Barth, subordination is theologically merited and important, even in light of such risks.

Like those who have preceded him, Barth doesn't avoid outright misogyny. At one point in his work he rejects any artistic, literary, or theological representations of Christ that have added female elements, remarking that this is a falsification of the image of Christ, and that Christian art has wrongfully given Christ "that well known and frightful mixture of masculine and feminine traits...instead of honourably at least in the form of a man."^{xxxiv} Though Barth reformed Christian theology in significant ways, he did not seem to do much to improve the status or lives of women within the Church—instead, he reinforced thinking that has oppressed women and, in many instances, even risked their lives.

The view of women as subordinate and inferior has had deep impact on the lives of women in the church throughout the centuries. The silencing of women in the church gained momentum with St. Jerome. Jerome was the influential ascetic who popularized belief in Mary's perpetual virginity, and gave the church the Latin Vulgate. He was unequivocally opposed to hearing a woman's voice in public. In a letter to the Pelagians he writes:

And you are not content with having given your cohort a knowledge of Scriptures, but you must delight yourself with their [women's] songs and canticles, for you have a heading to the effect that 'Women also should sing unto God.' Who does not know that women should sing in the privacy of their rooms, away from the company of men and the crowded congregations? But you allow what is not lawful.^{xxxv}

Jerome was clearly appalled that the Pelagians would give women the right to sing in the presence of men.

Banning women from singing in church services evidently existed for centuries following St. Jerome. Some 500 years after Jerome, Pope Leo IV issued a canon that continued to bar women from singing in church.^{xxxvi} In the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas remarks in the *Summa* that "the voice of a woman is an invitation to lust, and therefore must not be heard in the church."^{xxxvii} While the church has certainly come a long way since the thirteenth century – today women are allowed to sing publicly even in ultraconservative and fundamentalist churches – the aftereffects of this thinking have not completely subsided. The Southern Baptist Church, America's largest Protestant body with over 16 million members and more than 42,000 churches, does not believe in the ordination of women. A section within their

statement of faith regarding the pastorate reads: “While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.”^{xxxviii} Other denominations, such as the Presbyterian Church in America, the Seventh Day Adventists, and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, also do not ordain women; neither does the Roman Catholic Church. While the barring of women from ministry, and thus from full equality in the Church, has certainly been harmful, far more devastating occurrences have resulted from the commanded subordination of women—most notably, domestic violence.

According to the most recent records from the American Bar Association Commission on Domestic Violence, one in four women have been victims of domestic violence at some point in their lives.^{xxxix} The Department of Justice reports that, on average, more than three women are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends every day.^{xl} There is no indication that these numbers differ within religious communities. A study by the Rave Institute has reported that over 83-percent of pastors counseled at least one abused woman during their tenure.^{xli} In many cases, pastors, because of their perspectives on women’s subordination and submission, have encouraged women to stay in violent situations.

In *No Place for Abuse*, a book about domestic violence in Christian communities, Catherine Clark Kroeger and Nancy Nason-Clark explain how this has impacted women in religious communities:

...some religious women feel that God does not permit them to leave, that marriage is forever no matter how cruel their husband’s treatment, that this may be their cross to bear, or that perpetual forgiveness of their husband for his repeated behavior is God’s expectation. For women such as these, it is often very difficult to sort out the difference between long-suffering in honor to Christ and to their marriage vows and actively contributing to the danger of their own lives.^{xlii}

Regardless of whether religious leaders really do encourage women to endure abuse, something in the church is causing women to believe they should endure it. For women who are suffering, this news is *not* Good News.

Kroeger and Nason-Clark are not the only ones to look at the impact of the church on women in domestic violence situations. In her book, *Sexual Violence: The Unmentionable Sin*, Marie Fortune

discusses the ways in which Christian theology and church policies have put women in harm's way. She tells us that even well intentioned pastors have caused women irreparable harm by encouraging women to be obedient and stay in relationships that are both abusive and harmful.^{xliii} Contemporary events explicitly elucidate this problematic reality: Rick Warren was president Barack Obama's choice to deliver the Inaugural Invocation. Warren is the pastor of Saddleback Church, one of the largest churches in the United States, and has noted that women do not have a right to divorce abusive husbands.^{xliiv} Posted in the "Biblical Questions and Answers" section of the Saddleback Family Website under question #32: "What should I do when abuse is happening in my marriage?" Warren instructs his parishioners that the Bible says physical abuse is no excuse for getting a divorce. Warren explains: "Having been involved as a pastor in situations of abuse, there's something in men that wishes there were a Bible verse that says if they abuse you in such kind of way, then you have a right to leave them."^{xliv} He then goes on to say that, though, unfortunately, the Scriptures do not have any such verses, "God hates divorce," regardless of the circumstance. For many in the church, a broken jaw or severed limb is not as bad as divorce.

This doctrine of, as one commentator calls it, "wifely submission," has naturally caused a feminist backlash. In the second section of this paper I hope to explore that backlash, as well how it has taken root in both Christian and secular settings. Though I will explore the work of a number of feminist authors, I will focus primarily on the texts of Catherine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin, two popular anti-hierarchy feminists known for their work in anti-pornography legislation. While I acknowledge the motive for backlash against the notion of submission, I hope to show why it has been problematic and ultimately ineffective in achieving full equality for women in the church.

Part Two

Men have defined the parameters of every subject. All feminist arguments, however radical in intent or consequence, are with or against assertions or premises implicit in the male system, which is made credible or authentic by the power of men to name. – Andrea Dworkin^{xlvi}

**“Man fucks woman; subject verb object.”
– Catherine MacKinnon^{xlvii}**

**“Torture for ‘higher causes has always been legitimized by cross-bearers.’
– Mary Daly^{xlviii}**

As I mentioned in the section above, doctrines of “wifely submission” have caused a great deal of response by both Christian and secular feminists. The first wave of feminism in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries brought with it an interest in women’s place in religion. Women who were campaigning for their rights in society also began to question their inferiority within the church.^{xlix} Women like Katharine Bushnell, Catherine Booth, and Frances Willard worked alongside the suffragettes, seeking equality for women not only in the voting booths, but also in the churches.¹ By the time of the second wave of feminism, more and more women scholars (and some men) were beginning to see the importance of feminist work in the field of religion.

While responses to Christian notions of oppression were varied, they always denounced the notion of submission. Some women, such as Rosemary Radford Ruether, Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, and Phyllis Trible, sought to read Scripture in a way that did not oppress women.^{li} These women believed that one could reconstruct Christian origins in order to support and affirm the full equality of women.^{lii} For these scholars, Jesus serves as the liberator – his self-emptying functions as a challenge to patriarchy, rather than a supporter.

Contrary to the likes of Ruether, Fiorenza and Trible, other feminist theologians and scholars have rejected notions that the Christian Scriptures can serve as a counter to patriarchy. They claim to have seen the upholding of its ideology as supporting submissiveness, subordination, and, ultimately, oppression.

Daphne Hampson, mentioned earlier in this paper, directly challenged Reuther's claim that Jesus counters patriarchy. For Hampson, "it is far from clear that the theme of kenosis is the way in which monotheism would need to be qualified in order to bring the understanding of God more into line with feminist values."^{liii} Feminist scholar/theologian Mary Daly has held the same position. "Torture for 'higher causes,'" she writes, "has always been legitimized by cross-bearers."^{liv} For Daly, Christianity is a religion of patriarchy, and will always oppress women.

Whether operating inside or outside of the Christian paradigm, feminist scholars and theologians have sought to answer the problem of women's subordination and oppression by decrying submission in all forms. While most scholars who reside within the second wave tradition of feminism have attacked notions of submission, as pointed out above, none have done so more pointedly or overtly than Catherine MacKinnon and her right-hand woman, Andrea Dworkin.

Andrea Dworkin is an American radical feminist known for her criticism of pornography, which she believed is linked with rape and other forms of violence against women. In 1977, Dworkin met Catharine MacKinnon, a feminist lawyer, and the two began working together, lobbying for anti-pornography ordinances. In 1980, Linda Boreman, who appeared in the pornographic film *Deep Throat*, stated that her ex-husband Chuck Traynor had violently coerced her into making *Deep Throat* and other pornographic films. Boreman worked with the group Women Against Pornography, and it was with the help of both Dworkin and MacKinnon, who both offered statements in support, that Boreman began to pursue charges against her husband. By 1983, the Dworkin and MacKinnon team taught a course on pornography at the University of Minnesota Law School, and successfully passed an anti-pornography civil rights ordinance in Minneapolis. Dworkin and MacKinnon worked closely together until Dworkin's death in 2005.

While Dworkin and MacKinnon undoubtedly accomplished much in the arena of women's rights and safety, I argue in this section that *the assumptions on which they based their arguments* are

problematic—both from a pragmatic perspective and a Christian theological one. MacKinnon and Dworkin’s positions are problematic because they assume that gender identity is formed by the imposition of male sexuality on women as forced sex.^{lv} In short, gender is the result of the objectification of women’s sexuality. This gendering, though constructed, is inevitable because of our gendered system. For MacKinnon, femaleness takes the form of however men view it; women are constructed by the male gaze. MacKinnon’s epistemology is that the world is a world of the male gaze. This male gaze objectifies women, reduces women to their sexuality, and then subordinates women as sexual beings for men. As MacKinnon explains:

We notice in language as well as in life that the male occupies both the neutral and the male position. This is another way of saying that the neutrality of objectivity and of maleness are coextensive linguistically, whereas women occupy the marked, the gendered, the different, the forever-female position. Another expression of the sex specificity of objectivity socially is that women have been nature. That is, men have been knowers, mind; women have been “to be known” matter, that which is to be controlled and subdued, the acted upon.^{lvi}

For MacKinnon, hierarchy is embedded into our social structure. In MacKinnon’s formulation, men’s power over women means that the way men see women defines who women can be. Such thinking means a feminine perspective is impossible. Feminism exists as the critique of male sexuality by exposing it as male; this male perspective constructs what women can be under the given gender hierarchy.

According to MacKinnon, we can only negate what we are. If we fail to do so, we affirm our reality as sexualized objects. Any attempt to affirm the feminine is, therefore, problematic:

Gender here is a matter of dominance, not difference. Feminists have noticed that women and men are equally different but not equally powerful. Explaining the subordination of women to men, a political condition, has nothing to do with difference in any fundamental sense. Consequently, it has a *lot* to do with difference, because the ideology of difference has been so central in its enforcement. Another way to say that is, there would be no such thing as what we know as the sex difference—much less would it be the social issue it is or have the social meaning it has—were it not for male dominance. Sometimes people ask me, “Does this mean you think there’s no difference between women and men?” The only way I know how to answer that is: of course there is; the difference is that men have power and women do not.^{lvii}

For MacKinnon, women are not defined apart from men, nor apart from subordination. As Drucilla Cornell puts it, for MacKinnon, “to be female is to be the one who is fucked,”^{lviii} and to be fucked is to be

oppressed. What women are, then, is oppressed; female values are a reflection of that oppression. The female sex cannot be separated from sexism.

The problem of the affirmation of female difference can only be eradicated once relationships between men and women are actually equal. Only once domination and subordination are over can it be possible to celebrate who and what women are, because women cannot know themselves as women in light of male power. This perspective is not unlike those of the feminist theologians spoken of at the beginning of this section. In both generations of feminists, submission is inherent in the worlds women inhabit – whether that world is society at large or the church. For both MacKinnon and second-wave feminist theologians, freedom is only possible when we are able to break down the hierarchical system that subordinates women. This is problematic for a number of reasons; some of which are: what are we to do with religious calls for submission? Must we throw them out entirely? Can we delete these from our holy texts and still be faithful Christians? Conversely, if we fail to distance ourselves from notions of submission, will we ever break free of the sexist system? The ideas purported by MacKinnon and Dworkin, as well as the majority of the second wave feminist theologians, offer no room for imagination, and no space for those who are forced to reside in the system to understand its meaning. In this system where masculinity is always on top, and femininity always on the bottom, the only alternative is a overt reversal of power. This ideology, simply put, produces victims instead of survivors: one is left to become either the victim or there victimizer, with no space in the middle.

As Cornell puts it, the central error in this way of thinking is “to reduce feminine “reality” to the sexualized object we are for *them* by *identifying* the feminine totally with the “real world” as it is seen and constructed through the male gaze.”^{lix} For MacKinnon, there is nothing outside of the “real world,” which she posits is lived out through the male gaze. If this is true, what does this mean for the woman who has no way out of a violent situation, or the woman who is deeply committed to the church, despite its flaws? Are these women just stupid; suffering in vain? Is the only role they can audition to play the role of victim? In the third part of this paper, I respond with a resounding “no!”

This next section aims to offer a third way – an alternative to an acceptance of subordination, as well as an outright rejection of it. In part three, I will revisit Christian narratives of submission, primarily the story of Christ's submission through his willingness to undergo crucifixion. This will occur through an examination of Christ's death, as well as the events leading up to it (the Lord's Supper). Using critical theorists Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, I hope to offer a way to subversively and theologically read submission as redemptive rather than oppressive. By viewing the Lord's Supper as an act of subversion, and the death of Christ as an act of desire, I hope to show a way in which submission, as a source of agency, can be liberative.

Part Three

As in Catholicism so in SM in that without consent, the act of submission is meaningless. The experience of emotional/physical pain is nothing unless given into gracefully. – Julia Collings^{lx}

“Clearly, the patriarchal stamp of scripture is permanent. But just as clearly, interpretation of its content is forever changing, since new occasions teach new duties and contexts alter texts, liberating them from frozen constructions.” – Phyllis Trible^{lxi}

“Constraints are not intrinsically inimical to our freedom, but are required for its actualization.” – Jeremy Begbie^{lxii}

In an essay entitled “Subject and Power,” French theorist Michel Foucault tells us that “While the human subject is placed in relations of production and of signification, he is equally placed in power relations that are very complex.”^{lxiii} For Foucault, power is not understood as something wielded by one person or group, but rather, it is an uncontainable complex force. As he writes in *The History of Sexuality, vol. 1*:

power must be understood...as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies.^{lxiv}

In his later life, Foucault introduced a new element to his understanding of power: freedom. “Power is executed only over free subjects,” he writes, “and only insofar as they are free.”^{lxv} In these notions of power, especially with the inclusion of freedom as a factor, Foucault provides us with a powerful model for thinking about how to combat oppression. He writes: “the analysis, elaboration, and bringing into question of power relations and the ‘agonism’ between power relations and the intransitivity of freedom is a permanent political task inherent in all social existence.”^{lxvi} While we, as subjects, are produced by power discourse, there is room *within* that discourse to create change.

This notion of power is one very different from that of Catherine MacKinnon and the feminist theologians recorded in part two of this paper. Whereas MacKinnon viewed power as something held by a certain few, and subsequently something to be dismantled or reversed, for Foucault, it is not quite that simple. In Foucauldian logic, everyone has some degree of power, for is impossible to escape the system in which power is produced. This means that one is not ‘powerless’ in the face of oppression. Whereas notions of hierarchical power require some form of possession of that power to incite change, a Foucauldian notion of power is that it is a political resource available to everyone.

Critical gender theorist Judith Butler embraced this Foucauldian notion of power and extended it to gender relationships. Butler explains gender as something that is performed: “That the gendered body is performative,” she writes, “suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality.”^{lxvii} Butler suggests that gender is part of a discursive system of power, and that it is one that can be subverted and opposed by the act of performance. An example she gives is that of drag. Women or men dressing in drag offers us a way in which to reframe “the relationship between primary identification—that is, the original meanings accorded to gender—and subsequent gender experience...”^{lxviii} Through the parodied imitation of gender—what Jameson marks as the pastiche—gender can be subverted. For Butler, gender is a stylized repetition of acts. By performing gendered acts differently, one can challenge and even change the discourse on gender.

Butler explains, with more clarity, the process of subverting gender from within the system, in her article “Contingent Foundations.” She writes:

To deconstruct the concept of matter or that of bodies is not to negate or refuse either term. To deconstruct these terms means, rather, to continue to use them, to repeat them, to repeat them subversively, and to displace them from the contexts in which they have been deployed as instruments of oppressive power.^{lxix}

Butler calls this action the paradox of subjectivation: the very processes and conditions that secure a subject’s subordination are also the means by which she becomes a self-conscious identity and agent.^{lxx}

In her own words, Butler writes:

The paradox of subjectivation is precisely that the subject who would resist such norms is itself enabled, if not produced, by such norms. Although this constitutive constraint does not foreclose the possibility of agency, it does locate agency as reiterative or rearticulatory practice, immanent to power.^{lxxi}

For Foucault, and for Butler, change occurs from within the system via repetitious acts that reveal critical difference.^{lxxii} The capacities inhering in a subject are the products of the operations of power, and therefore become a space for resistance to notions of subordination. What does this mean, then, for Christian notions of submission? Is there a way to deconstruct the notion of submission by repeating it, repeating it subversively, and displacing it from the contexts in which it has been deployed as an instrument of oppressive power?

In the next few pages, I revisit Christian narratives of submission with the hopes of subverting them from the inside. I will attempt to do this in three ways. First, I will explore the theme of submission as a mode of agency in Christian thought, looking at the works of Eastern Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas, as well as at the works of Sarah Coakley. In this section, I hope to demonstrate how Jesus served as an example of willful submission, and how we, as Christians, can follow in his example through prayer and other faith-oriented practices. Second, I will look specifically at the willful submission to suffering Christ underwent during crucifixion, through the eyes of another Eastern Orthodox thinker, Sebastian Moore. By offering the idea of crucifixion as an act of desire, I hope to show how submission does not necessarily oppose agency, but that a higher desire can serve as the impetus for undergoing suffering. Third, I will look at the sacrament of the Eucharist –specifically as it was instituted during the Lord’s Supper the night before Jesus was crucified. My reading of this event will juxtapose the notion of submission as chosen and desirous, revealing how submission can be performed as an act of subversion, and serve as a counter to the predilection towards victimhood.

In her work on the Islamic women’s movement, Saba Mahmood explores the notion of submission as an agentival function. For Mahmood, submission functions as a source of agency because it recognizes that freedom is not the only liberative *telos*. She explains as follows:

...If the desire for freedom and/or subversion of norms is not an innate desire that motivates all beings at all times...but is profoundly mediated by other capacities and desires, than the question arises how do we analyze operations of power that construct different kinds of desires, capacities, and virtues that are historically and culturally specific, and whose trajectory does not follow the entelechy of liberatory politics?^{lxxiii}

Mahmood sees a possibility for freedom as the choice to submit to the will or desire of a higher power.

“Viewed in this way,” she explains, “what may appear to be a case of deplorable passivity and docility from a progressivist point of view, may very well be a form of agency.”^{lxxiv} For those whose religious traditions have a call for submission, Mahmood leaves space for them to still embrace feminism.

Mahmood acknowledges the complex ways in which desire functions—with gender equality being only part of what is desired. She helps us understand the ways in which desire can be reconstituted beyond agency. This is also a theme significant for the Christian tradition, where not only those that “have been shaped by the nonliberal tradition” have been effected.^{lxxv} As noted in the first section of this paper, Christian tradition has a lot to say about the notion of submission.

Submission is viewed by most in the liberal West as the antithesis to freedom. But is this a notion of freedom? Are freedom and submission dichotomous? The notion of freedom in Western liberalism is dictated by a notion of individualism and autonomy. John Stuart Mill, the British political economist and classic liberal who influenced much of contemporary liberal Western politics, suggests that “the only freedom which deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to attain it.”^{lxxvi} Western liberal politics define freedom as extremely individualistic. Freedom, in this paradigm, is also defined *via negativa*—it is understood as a freedom from, a “freedom of opportunity.” This understanding of freedom is parasitic to Western capitalism. Theologian Richard Bauckham suggests that “freedom of opportunity in face comes down, more than anything else, to consumer choice, the freedom to take advantage of endlessly increasing opportunities to spend money.”^{lxxvii} Western notions of freedom may, perhaps, be more tied to consumerism than they are to notions of social justice and equality.

In his work on freedom and religion, Bauckham offers a different notion of what a Christian understanding of freedom might be. In Christian understandings, freedom is something that has been given and should be appropriated – first by God, then by man. Freedom, therefore, is not infinite and absolute, but finite and bestowed. In addition, Bauckham tells us that freedom is not the opposite of dependence, relationship, community, and belonging. The truly free person of modern society is sovereign and independent. “Belonging and freedom,” Bauckham insists, “are not exclusive opposites but reciprocal factors.”^{lxxviii} Belonging is different from ownership, for it requires a sense of mutuality. By examining Biblical covenant theology, we can further understand the notion of belonging as a notion of freedom.

The Biblical covenant between God and God’s people is not one of ownership, but of mutual belonging : “I shall be your God and you shall be my people,” functions as a relationship that enables freedom.^{lxxix} God’s covenant with Israel allows us to see submission as a site of freedom. The freedom found in the covenantal relationship is made clearer in the Gospel of John, when Jesus says, “very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.”^{lxxx} Within the context of these relationships of slave and son, the contrast is clear between oppression and freedom – freedom comes in belonging to God.

Eastern Orthodox priest John Zizioulas also explores the way in which freedom occurs through submission, understood as obedience and belonging to God. For Zizioulas, being does not exist without belonging. Central to Zizioulas’ theology is his ecclesiology. The church is “a way of being,” which is “deeply bound to the being of man, to the being of the world, and to the very being of God.”^{lxxxii} Zizioulas tells us that the Church Fathers sought to ground human personhood in a relational ontology that emerged from the Eucharistic experience of the early church. The ontological relationality of God, understood through the Trinity, necessitates communion. “In this way,” Zizioulas explains, “communion becomes an ontological concept.”^{lxxxiii} This is not a communion for its own sake, but a communion that originates with

a free person (God), and which is orientated towards free persons. The ultimate ontological category that makes something really be is neither an impersonal and incommunicable substance, nor a communion existing by itself or imposed by necessity, but rather, the person. Being is the consequence of a free person.

Being is wrapped up in freedom, in God, and in the Church. Through this complex formulation, Zizioulas is claiming that the theology of the person would not have been possible without the Church. Absolute freedom for humanity is impossible—our being is given to us. It is “the ecclesial being that ‘hypostatizes’ the person according to God’s way of being, only thus can the concrete, free person emerge.” Zizioulas asserts that this “is what makes the Church the image of the Triune God.”^{lxxxiii} Because God’s ontological freedom is grounded, not in God’s nature, but rather, because God’s “being is identical with an act of communion,” freedom is possible, and freedom is bound to take certain shape:

All this means that personhood creates for human existence the following dilemma: either freedom as love, or freedom as negation. The choice of the latter certainly constitutes an expression of personhood—only the person can seek negative freedom—but it is a negation nevertheless of its ontological content. For nothingness has no ontological content when the person is seen in light of Trinitarian theology.^{lxxxiv}

Freedom as love is only understood through submission to the divine—quite a different notion from agency as independence.

Agentival and loving submission can perhaps best be understood through a reading of Jesus’ willingness to undergo crucifixion as an act of desire, opposed to an act of self-denial. This is a reading done by Benedictine monk Sebastian Moore in his article “The Crisis of an Ethic without Desire.” Moore writes because he is astonished that “the cross of Jesus has been presented to us not as our liberation from this repressive mind, but as its endorsement.”^{lxxxv} Moore suggests that suffering has been misunderstood through “the failure to distinguish between the suffering we bring on ourselves by our refusal to grow...and the suffering that growth itself entails.”^{lxxxvi} This misunderstanding allows us to imagine that while we suffer deservedly for following our desires, Christ’s undeserved suffering came about through

his denial of desire, and willful acceptance of his own death. Moore rejects this notion, and suggests that Christ did suffer for following his desires:

The truth is surely that Jesus does suffer for following his desires. That is, what the cross is all about. His desire, totally liberated toward union with God, totally resonant with God's will, draws upon him the vengeance of an unliberated and fearful world. And he draws us to follow him on this via *crucis*, this way of liberated desire in an unliberated world. ^{lxxxvii}

Desire, Moore demonstrates, is not something to be denied, not even necessarily something to be transformed, but rather something to be excavated and attended to.

There is a difference between liberation *from* desire and liberation *of* desire from the chains of the ego. Christ, whose desire was perfectly in will with the Father, had, as ultimate desire, obedience to the Father, and therefore, the cross was not something to be dreaded. This is not to suggest that Christ's death was not suffering, but rather, suggests to us that suffering is not necessarily antithetical to desire—that it is perhaps simply an unfortunate side-effect of one's actions as an individual aims to fulfill desire. Desire, in the case of Christ and of Christ's followers, exists in submission to God the Father. Submission, then, is not stifling, but liberative.

What does liberative submission mean for feminism? What does it mean for issues of gender equality? Submission to God *can* be understood as liberative, but what happens when it is used by those in power to oppress women? In the final section of part three, I discuss how submission functions as resistance to powers that are not submissive to God, a God who is indeed a God of love, equality, and inclusivity.

At one point in her article on the Islamic women's movement, Mahmood discusses Butlerian methodology and the possibility of resisting submission by "queering" resistance. ^{lxxxviii} She critiques Butler, finding Butler's notion of resistance problematic inasmuch as it is located within the structure of power as the paradigmatic instance of agency. This notion is difficult for Mahmood because she is attempting to locate agency *within* submission, not necessarily as an act of resistance. While Butler is limited in her notion of agency, Mahmood is limited in her notion of submission. Why is it necessary for

Mahmood to dichotomize resistance and submission? Cannot submission, as a function of agency, *be* an act of resistance? If feminism ultimately seeks liberation for women, is it not liberating for women to have the freedom to make their own choices? Women's freedom of choice *is* an act of resistance! Could it be possible that both Butler and Mahmood are right, that by conceptualizing agency as a mode of resistance to notions of submission, submission is thus queered and can be reconstituted as liberative—insofar as it allows Christianity and feminism to coexist with one another?

For Christians, the Eucharist is primarily viewed as that which constitutes the church into being; however, it is also the embodiment of a Christian practice of the political, and a way of resistance. This is elucidated most clearly in William Cavanaugh's work, *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ*. Cavanaugh tells us that the Eucharist "is the church's response to torture, and the hope for Christian resistance to the violent disciplines of the world."^{lxxxix} For Cavanaugh, the Eucharist embodies Christian theo-politics because it constitutes the Church's act of remember Jesus' torture at the hands of the powers of the world. By exploring the role of the Catholic Church during the oppressive Pinochet regime in Chile, Cavanaugh argues that torture and the Eucharist are opposing disciplines, which use very different means and serve very different ends. While torture functions as a kind of liturgy for the realization of the power of the State over social bodies, the Eucharist functions as a resistance to power that runs counter to God's kingdom. "The Church and the Eucharist form the liturgical pair of visible community and invisible action or mystery... which together re-present and re-member Christ's historical body."^{xc} This Body disrupts and resists. It is through submission to Christ's body that one negates submission to other powers that are oppressive.

In the final section of his book, Cavanaugh discusses the Eucharist as "the true Body of Christ," a Body that is to be performed.^{xcii} Cavanaugh makes no allusion to Butler, but his notion of performing the Eucharist is strikingly comparable. Offering examples of how the Church in Chile functioned as resistance to Pinochet's reign, Cavanaugh gives us concrete examples of how the submissive participation of the Eucharist is indeed an act of resistance against the powers, and in this case against the State.

Cavanaugh shows us that submission to God does not mean victimhood. “Eucharistic sacrifice is the end of the violent sacrifice on which the religions of the world are based,” he explains, “for its aim is not to create new victims, but rather martyrs, *witnesses to the end of victimization*.”^{xcii}

In her book, *Saving Shame: Martyrs, Saints, and Other Abject Subjects*, church historian Virginia Burrus shows us just how the process of martyrdom differs from a notion of victimization. Through an analysis of early church documents, Burrus demonstrates how these martyrs queered victimization and shame by “demonstrating their defiance of political authorities, smuggling their witnessing bodies onto the ancient equivalent of prohibitive airwaves of network television.”^{xciii} These moments of martyrdom, Burrus suggests, are performative utterances, that function to reconstitute one’s identity. “Martyrdom is the initial site at which shame is converted into a defiant shamelessness, giving rise to a performatively queered identity that retrieves dignity without aspiring to honor.”^{xciv} Submission to the divine queers suffering, and demonstrates that one’s identity does not belong to the powers of this world, but to God. As Cavanaugh explains, through the Sacramental practice of the Eucharist, the “future Kingdom of God is brought into the present to bring the world’s time under the rule of Divine Providence, and thus create spaces of resistance where bodies belong to God, not the state.”^{xcv}

Participating in the Eucharist also functions to remind believers that Christ did not die with death—the resurrection, not the crucifixion, was not the final word on suffering. Theologian Graham Ward discusses this reality in his article on bodies, in *Radical Orthodoxy*. The Eucharist, Ward suggests that the Eucharist turns transfiguration into transposition. “It is the handing over of himself that is paramount,” Ward explains. “It is the surrendering that is important...these words perform the transposition. They set up a logic of radical reidentification.”^{xcvi} The Eucharist, then, serves as Jesus’ performative utterance—an act of resistance. Knowing that he was in fact going to be handed over to be crucified, this was his way of saying, “you cannot *take* my body, for I give of it freely to my disciples.” This radical gesture, now understood in light of the Resurrection is a magnificent picture of suffering converted to glory. By participating in the Eucharist, we are performing an identity not bound up in the

powers of this world, but bound to God. This is a performative remembering in which we recognize our own agency; submission to God is a subversive act of resistance in a world that uses power to oppress.

Sarah Coakley points out, in her book *Powers and Submissions*, that the intense cultural resistance to submission is at odds with lessons learned from sophisticated philosophical discussion. Hegel's Master/Slave parable is just one example of "how the subjugated other can nonetheless strangely have the edge on the Master's position of power."^{xcvii} We recognize submission as a source of agency by reading the Lord's Supper, and participate in an act of resistance through our participation in its liturgy. Therefore, we are able to read the Christian narratives of submission in a way that does not necessitate subordination and powerlessness. While this notion is exciting for Christian feminists, what does this mean for the lives of other women, and men, in the church? Does this alternate way of reading narratives of submission have any implications for ecclesial life?

Part Four

**Batter my heart, three-person'd God ; for you
As yet but knock; breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
That I may risk, and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
Your force, to break, blow, burn, and make me new.**

**I, like an usurp'ed town, to another due
Labour to admit you, but O, to no end.
Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,
But is captived and proves weak or untrue.**

**Yet dearly I love you, and would be loved fain,
But am betroth'd unto your enemy;
Divorce me, untie, or break that knot again,
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,**

**Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.**

– John Donne, *Holy Sonnets*, XIV

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Thus far, we have explored the ways in which the church uses notions of submission to oppress women, and examined the ways feminism has responded to that oppression. Hopefully, I have demonstrated the problematic elements of the traditional feminist response, as embodied in Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin, and offered a constructive notion of submission as a function of agency, and ultimately, as a performative act of liberative resistance. In this final section, I discuss ways in which this notion can actually *be* liberative for feminists within the Christian tradition.

At the end of *Torture and Eucharist*, William Cavanaugh offers some helpful examples of ways the church, through the partaking of the Eucharistic, functions as a counter-politic to oppressive powers. While Cavanaugh's examples are elucidating, they all function as opposition to the State. Cavanaugh's formulation of Eucharist-as-resistance, as well as Zizioulas' notion of the Eucharist, melds Eucharist with the institutional church. While I understand, and deeply respect the Mennonite formulation of church as opposition to the powers, there is something problematic that Cavanaugh, Zizioulas, and others fail to address: what happens when the institutional Church body is the source of oppression?

It is my belief that Christian feminists can use a Butlerian tactic to honor the church and still point out its errors. One can repeat submission subversively, queering submission, in order to displace submission from the contexts in which it has been deployed as an instrument of oppressive power. Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek offers an example of this strategy employed in what he calls “surplus-obedience.” In his text, *Plague of Fantasies*, Žižek explains that surplus-obedience is “a gesture of compliance...accomplished out of a pure *jouissance* provided by...participation in the oppressive...ritual.”^{xcviii} For Žižek, it is full-fledged obedience to the system that exposes and therefore subverts the problematic elements within it.^{xcix} Žižek suggests that mechanisms of censorship function as a mode of Foucauldian discourse; it is in the public rendering of an oppressive activity that it becomes a target of censorship, not simply the oppressive activity itself. Žižek offers tapes of U.S Marine hazing and Jesse Helm’s politics as examples in which he evaluates this targeting. Žižek actually critiques Butler in his work, attacking her notion of disidentification:

The difference is one between the two modes of disidentification, not between identification and its subversion. For that reason, an ideological edifice can be undermined by a too-literal identification, which is why its successful functioning requires a minimal distance from its explicit rules.^c

Žižek recognizes the ways in which ideological edifices actually obtain power through the practice of disidentification, and yet, as in the case for the comparison between Butler and Mahmood, cannot the notions themselves be subverted? Is it possible to apply a Butlerian method of subversion to Žižek’s notion of ideological disempowerment? Žižek’s notion of undermining an ideological edifice is consistent with the notion of queering. Is not the function of queering to expose the oppressiveness of the system? Žižek himself suggests that his notion of surplus obedience is “inherent transgression.”^{ci} To push the ideological edifice to its fullest extent is a submissive act of subversion.

So what might this notion of surplus obedience mean for oppressed women in the church? The answer to that question depends on the specific circumstances of individuals and communities. For example, a number of the denominations that suggest women shouldn’t be in leadership because of the

Scriptural text that states “women should remain silent in the churches.”^{cii} Recent studies have suggested that over 60 percent of church attendees are women, with even higher numbers in the Black church.^{ciii} In her book, *Plenty Good Room*, Marcia Riggs points out that women, though barred from official leadership and the benefits it confers, hold most of the responsibilities in Black Churches.^{civ} The statistics for most churches in America support Rigg’s conclusions, including those churches where women are not accorded formal leadership. This reality is already putting some denominations in precarious positions. For instance, the Roman Catholic Church is currently undergoing a priest shortage, and has been since 1960.^{cv} The number of parishes without a resident priest is now at the record high of 2,928. In spite of the fact that women comprise 80 percent of the workforce in the Catholic church, they are still barred from performing key roles, such as performing Mass.^{cvi} What would it mean for the Catholic church, as well as the church at large, if women “took their submission seriously,” and refused to serve as lay leaders? Perhaps the church’s (stained) glass ceiling would break more quickly if women utilized subversive and inherently transgressive tactics such as these.

Because the household is commonly thought of as the microcosim of the church, in his book, *Sex and Love in the Home: A Theology of the Household*, David Matzo McCarthy applies this same notion of inherent transgression to instances of domestic violence. The quote is of some length, but it is worth reprinting:

I am knocked down by a blow. Within the grammar of retaliation, there are two options. Either I can strike back and I do, or I cannot and I am victim. I am victim because I have no means to challenge the evil done to me. If I resist evil without returning it, on the other hand, the social possibilities are changed. Either I can strike back and I do not, or I cannot and I do not. The evil done to me no longer determines or negates my agency. Violence loses value as social currency, so that it cannot be justified (even for me). The abused wife can no longer justify the violence done to her, by blaming herself, imagining that it will not happen again, convincing herself that “he really loves me,” or attempting to change her own behavior as so to avoid his wrath and take on responsibility for the agency of his violence. Resisting evil is not being deferential to it. Violence itself becomes absurd and her husband’s violence is unmasked. It will become clear, at least to her, that either he must change or she must go. She has already inhabited a new language of social life. The challenge for the church is to provide the networks of support so that she has the means to enter a new life.^{cvi}

Domestic violence is a horrific injustice, and the following synthesis does not advocate abusive situations. I am primarily concerned with the question of desire, and pointed out the problematic of the notion of submission for this very reason. Women in these abusive contexts are often oppressed because they are encouraged by their spouses and church community to stay in relationship, because that is what God wants. I am in complete disagreement with this line of thinking, as is McCarthy, but the question remains: does the notion of ‘staying’ in an abusive home change when the motive is different; meaning, if the woman (or man) is guided by a particular desire (such as that for restoration of the marriage, reconciliation with the spouse, the family, etc...), does the abuse hold the same power, or can it possibly be subverted? When a woman becomes conscious of this violence and allows her husband to enact violence against her, she has the opportunity to become self-aware of her need to leave the situation, without ever having to question whether she “deserved” violence or not. As McCarthy points out, the absurdity of violence is revealed, and should not be tolerated. Like Zizek, the idea behind McCarthy’s notion of submission is indeed one of surplus obedience.

This notion of surplus obedience is rooted in Jesus’ own ministry, and can serve as a vital example and source of moral support for all of us, regardless of whether or not our situation involves domestic violence, for power takes on potentialities for violence in various forms. In his book, *Jesus and Nonviolence*, Walter Wink discusses the texts where Jesus commands his followers to turn the other cheek when struck, to give away the shirt when asked for a coat, and to walk two miles when commanded to walk one.^{cviii} Wink contends that Christ, through his submission, offered a non-violent way to resist the system, and commands his followers to do likewise; Jesus participated in surplus obedience, and serves as an example for us to do the same.

Jesus’ submission through the crucifixion and his subversion of that submission through the Lord’s Supper offers a template for the recognition of the good of our desires. As Moore explains in *The Crisis of an Ethic without Desire*:

So what we learn from the cross is, not to deny our desires, to push them down, but on the contrary to attend to them, to ask of them, what *do* I want? And hence to begin to learn the difference between the compulsive, unfree, addictive movements that go by the name of desire and give desire a bad name, and the *élan vital* in us of which these movements are the arrest, the deal-ending; the difference between the desire of the ego to stay where it is and simply to repeat past satisfactions, and the desire that can say, “I want to want more,” and that alone leads to suffering with Christ.^{cix}

It is our ultimate desire for Christ that allows us to endure the suffering that comes with subverting the distorted desires, of both ourselves, and the existing powers at large. We participate in that subversive submission through partaking in the Eucharist. It is my *argument* that Christian feminists can use the resources of Eucharistic theology and of Butlerian methodology to affirm both their faith and their status as women. It is, however, my *hope*, that through the performance of this affirmation women will someday obtain *full* equality in the Church.

Introduction:

- ⁱ Catharine A. MacKinnon, "Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: Toward Feminist Jurisprudence" *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 8, no. 4 (1983), 635.
- ⁱⁱ Sarah Coakley, *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), xii.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Judith Butler, "Contingent Foundations" in Seyla Benhabib, ed. *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 51.
- ^{iv} Power as a theme in contemporary critical theory is most notably discussed by French philosopher Michel Foucault. See, for example *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Random House, 1995); *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings* (New York: Random House, 1980); or *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* (New York: Random House, 1990). For good overviews of critical theory on power, see Stewart Clegg, *Power, Rule, and Domination: A Critical and Empirical Understanding of Power in Sociological Theory and Organizational Life* (London: International Library of Society, 1992), Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995), or Michael Kelley, ed., *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994).
- ^v *Powers and Submissions*, xii.
- ^{vi} All Biblical quotations will be taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), unless otherwise noted. This text will be revisited in greater detail in the third part of this paper. See also *Powers & Submissions*, Chapter 1: "Kenosis and Subversion: On the Repression of 'Vulnerability' in Christian Feminist Writing."
- ^{vii} Kwok Pui-Lan, *Postcolonial Imagination & Feminist Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 77.
- ^{viii} Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1981), 30-31.
- ^{ix} Daphne Hampson, *Theology and Feminism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 155.

Part One:

- ^x Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), 95.
- ^{xi} Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis*, Genesis 2:18, in *Luther's Works*, vol. 1, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), 115.
- ^{xii} Marie Fortune, *Sexual Violence: The Unmentionable Sin* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1983), 194.
- ^{xiii} *Powers and Submissions*, xv.
- ^{xiv} For more thorough accounts of the history of women's subordination within the church, see Rosemary Radford Ruether, ed. *Religion and Sexism: Images of Woman in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974); Alvin J. Schmidt, *Veiled and Silenced: How Culture Shaped Sexist Theology* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2000); and Rosemary Skinner Keller & Rosemary Radford Ruether, ed. *Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006).
- ^{xv} David Alvin Schmidt *Veiled and Silenced: How Culture Shaped Sexist Theology* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1989).
- ^{xvi} *Veiled and Silenced*, 134.
- ^{xvii} Tertullian, *De Cultu Fem*, 1.1, emphasis mine. Unless otherwise noted, citations of the Fathers will be from Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, the English translation (1885-1897 American reprint of Edinburgh, ed., 1867-1880), revised by A. Cleveland Coxe (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899).
- ^{xviii} Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 4,8 and 19.
- ^{xix} Clement, *Paed.* 3, 11.
- ^{xx} Clement, *Paed.* 3,3.
- ^{xxi} *Adversus Octoginta Haereses* 1.643, as cited in David Alvin Schmidt *Veiled and Silenced: How Culture Shaped Sexist Theology* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1989), 87.
- ^{xxii} Augustine, *De Bono Conj.* 3, 15.
- ^{xxiii} Augustine, *De Bono Viduit.* 8, 11.
- ^{xxiv} Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis*, vol. 2 of *Luther's Works*, trans. George Schick, Jaroslav Pelikan, ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), 43-46.
- ^{xxv} Luther's views on marriage differ immensely from the Church Fathers, in that he valued marriage as part of the Christian vocation. At one point, he tells his audience "You should be married, you should have a wife, you should have a husband." *Luther's Works*, vol. 2, 88.

- xxvi *Luther's Works*, vol. 2, 49.
- xxvii "Commentary on 1 Corinthians 7," *Luther's Works*, vol. 2, 8.
- xxviii *Luther's Works*, vol. 1, 118-119.
- xxix Joan Arnold Romero "The Protestant Principle" in Rosemary Radford Ruether, ed. *Religion and Sexism: Images of Woman in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974), 324.
- xxx Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), III/1, 196.
- xxxi *Church Dogmatics*, III/1, 288.
- xxxii "The Protestant Principle," 325.
- xxxiii "The Protestant Principle," 326. See also *Church Dogmatics* III/4, 171.
- xxxiv *Church Dogmatics*, III/4, 161.
- xxxv Jerome, *Against the Pelagians* 1.25, in *Veiled and Silenced*, 153.
- xxxvi *Leonis Papae Homilia* 34, in *Veiled and Silenced*, 153.
- xxxvii Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 14.89, in *Veiled and Silenced*, 153.
- xxxviii "The Baptist Faith and Message", Article IV, the Church. Found online at <http://www.sbc.net/bfm/bfm2000.asp>
- xxxix Patricia Tjaden & Nancy Thoennes, U.S. Dep't of Just., NCJ 181867, Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence, at iii (2000), available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/pubs-sum/181867.htm>.
- xl Callie Marie Rennison, U.S. Dep't of Just., NCJ 197838, Bureau of Justice Statistics Crime Data Brief: Intimate Partner Violence, 1993-2001, at 1 (2003), available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/ipv01.pdf>.
- xli The Rave Project (2004) available at http://www.theraveproject.com/index.php/resources/resource/looking_at_the_data_from_religious_leaders.
- xlii Catherine Clark Kroeger & Nancy Nason-Clark, *No Place for Abuse: Biblical and Practical Resources to Counteract Domestic Violence* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 36.
- xliii Marie Fortune *Sexual Violence: The Unmentionable Sin* (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1983), 47.
- xliv Saddleback Church's weekly attendance averages nearly 20,000, currently making it the eighth largest church in the U.S. "The Outreach 100: 100 Largest Churches" available at <http://www.sermoncentral.com/articleb.asp?article=Top-100-Largest-Churches>.
- xliv Available at <http://saddlebackfamily.com/home/bibleqanda/index.html>.

Part Two:

- xlvi Andrea Dworkin, available at http://womenshistory.about.com/od/quotes/a/andrea_dworkin.htm
- xlvii Catherine A. MacKinnon, *Towards a Feminist Theory of the State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 124.
- xlviii Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), 95.
- xliv Diane Capitani, "Imagining God in Our Ways: The Journals of Frances E. Willard." *Feminist Theology: The Journal of the Britain & Ireland School of Feminist Theology* 12.1 (2003), 57-88.
- ¹ For more on the work of the earliest feminist theologians, see Katharine Bushnell, *God's Word to Women* (Piedmont, California: Ray Collins reprint, 1976) and especially Catherine Kroeger "The Legacy of Katherine Bushnell: a Hermeneutic for Women of Faith." *Priscilla Papers*, Fall 1995.
- ^{li} See, for example, Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Books, 1993); Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2000); and Phyllis Trible *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (New York: Fortress Press, 1986). See also Elizabeth A. Johnson *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997).
- ^{lii} *Sexism and God Talk*, 137-138.
- ^{liii} Daphne Hampson, *Theology and Feminism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 154.
- ^{liv} Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), 95.
- ^{lv} Though MacKinnon and Dworkin worked closely together in their political projects, their scholarship was different in its goals and methods. From this point on, unless explicitly referencing one of Dworkin's works, I will only refer to MacKinnon, who, of the two, tends to do the more academic/scholarly work.
- ^{lvi} Catharine MacKinnon, *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 124.
- ^{lvii} *Feminism Unmodified*, 51.

lviii Drucilla Cornell, *Beyond Accommodation: Ethical Feminism, Deconstruction, and the Law* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 119.

lix *Beyond Accommodation*, 130

Part Three:

lx Julia Collings, "Closer to God," *Skin Two*, 27, Fall, 1991, 64.

lxi Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 202.

lxii Jeremy Begbie, *Theology, Music, and Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 186.

lxiii Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power" in James D. Faubion, ed. *Power: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, Robert Hurley, trans. (New York: The New Press, 2000), 327.

lxiv Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, volume 1: An Introduction*, Robert Hurley, trans. (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 92-93.

lxv "The Subject and Power," 342.

lxvi "The Subject and Power," 342.

lxvii Judith Butler, "Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions" in Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick, eds. *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 417.

lxviii "Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions," 418.

lxix Judith Butler, "Contingent Foundations" in Seyla Benhabib, ed. *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 51.

lxx Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

lxxi Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 15.

lxxii See also Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, Paul Patton, trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

lxxiii Saba Mahmood "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival," *Cultural Anthropology*, May 2001; 16.2, 212.

lxxiv "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent," 211-212.

lxxv "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent," 203.

lxxvi John Stuart Mill, quoted in A. Passerin d'Entreves, *The Notion of the State* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 204-205.

lxxvii Richard Bauckham, *God and the Crisis of Freedom: Biblical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 34.

lxxviii *God and the Crisis of Freedom*, 42.

lxxix Genesis 17: 8 Leviticus 26:12, Ezekiel 36:28. *God and the Crisis of Freedom*, 43.

lxxx John 8:34-36.

lxxxi John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 15.

lxxxii *Being and Communion*, 17.

lxxxiii *Being and Communion*, 19.

lxxxiv *Being and Communion*, 46.

lxxxv Sebastian Moore "The Crisis of an Ethic without Desire" in Gene Rogers, ed. *Theology and Sexuality: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 157-158.

lxxxvi "The Crisis of an Ethic without Desire," 158.

lxxxvii "The Crisis of an Ethic without Desire," 158.

lxxxviii I use the notion of queering here, because I think it is the most appropriate verb to describe what Butler is doing. David Halperin offers a definition of the notion of queering in his book *How to Do the History of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 24: "Queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers. It is an identity without an essence." Judith Butler is considered to be one of the founders of queer theory, alongside Teresa de Lauretis and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick.

lxxxix William Cavanaugh *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 2.

xc *Torture and Eucharist*, 212.

xc *Torture and Eucharist*, 205-281

- ^{xcii} *Torture and Eucharist*, 232, emphasis mine.
- ^{xciii} Virginia Burrus, *Saving Shame: Martyrs, Saints, and Other Abject Subjects* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 13.
- ^{xciv} *Saving Shame*, 8.
- ^{xcv} *Torture and Eucharist*, 275.
- ^{xcvi} Graham Ward “Bodies: The Displaced Body of Christ,” in John Millbank, Catherine Pickstock, & Graham Ward, eds. *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 167.
- ^{xcvii} *Powers and Submissions*, xiii, citing G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind* (New York: Routledge, 1967), ‘Lordship and Bondage,’ 229-40.

Part Four:

- ^{xcviii} Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies: Wo Est War* (New York: Verso, 1997), 54.
- ^{xcix} French philosopher Jean Baudrillard also utilizes this same technique in what is his idea of implosion—whereby hyper-conformist simulation of the very mechanisms of simulacra actually work to undermine the maximization of meaning in the hyper-reality. See Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation (The Body, in Theory: Histories of Cultural Materialism)* (Grand Rapids: University of Michigan Press, 1995).
- ^c *The Plague of Fantasies*, 22.
- ^{ci} *The Plague of Fantasies*, 25.
- ^{cii} 1 Corinthians 14:33-35
- ^{ciii} See, for instance, Marcia Riggs *Plenty Good Room: Women versus Male Power in the Black Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008); ; Gary Soulsman “In Church, Women Lead the Way,” *Deleware News Journal*, April 20, 2003; Pyong Gap Min “Severe Underrepresentation of Women in Church Leadership in the Korean Immigrant Community in the United States” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 47, 2, 225-41.
- ^{civ} Marcia Riggs *Plenty Good Room: Women versus Male Power in the Black Church* (:Wipf and Stock, 2008), 19.
- ^{cv} Suzanne Batchelor “Women Leave Church to Answer Call to Priesthood” *Women’s eNews*. December 24, 2002, <http://www.womensenews.org/article.cfm/dyn/aid/1156/context/archive>. Accessed April 21, 2009.
- ^{cvi} David DeLambo “Lay Parish Ministers” *National Pastoral Life Center*. <http://www.futurechurch.org/wicl/ministers.htm>. Accessed April 22, 2009.
- ^{cvii} David Matzo McCarthy, *Sex and Love in the Home: A Theology of the Household* (London: SCM Press, 2001), 266, footnote 26. McCarthy’s claim is no doubt controversial, and it is no surprise that it is ‘hidden’ in the footnotes of his text.
- ^{cviii} Matthew 5: 38-40. See Walter Wink *Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way* (Fortress Press: Minneapolis, 2003), 9-15. Wink does not call his work Butlerian or Žižekian, but his analysis is assuredly that.
- ^{cix} Sebastian Moore “The Crisis of an Ethic without Desire” in Gene Rogers, ed. *Theology and Sexuality: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 158.

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- Batchelor, Suzanne, "Women Leave Church to Answer Call to Priesthood" *Women's eNews*. December 24, 2002, <http://www.womensenews.org/article.cfm/dyn/aid/1156/context/archive>. Accessed April 21, 2009.
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