

Living It Out

LIBERATED THROUGH SUBMISSION?

The Worthy Woman's Conference as a Case Study of *Formenism*

Sarojini Nadar and Cheryl Potgieter

In this article, Nadar and Potgieter use the Worthy Women's Conference as a case study, describing and analyzing how this movement creates and maintains what they call the *formenist* position. *Formenism*, like masculinism, subscribes to a belief in the inherent superiority of men over women, but unlike masculinism it is not an ideology developed and sustained by men, but an ideology designed, constructed, and sustained by *women*. Like its phonetics suggests, this is a concept *for* men—that is to say, men are the chief beneficiaries of the hierarchical social positioning that it advocates. They conduct their evaluation of the movement through a feminist analysis of the discourses presented in various sources. Nadar and Potgieter argue that the complementarian “liberation through submission” discourse created through the *formenist* position seems palatable for at least three reasons: (1) because it relies on a power that is not forceful (sovereign) but disciplinary à la Michel Foucault's notion of power, (2) because patriarchal bargaining pays a dividend of increased responsibility for men that ultimately reduces the burdens of family life that women have traditionally carried, and (3) because it aids in the reduction of existential anxiety caused by radical changes in South Africa. Nadar and Potgieter assert that while the *formenist* discourse might seem liberatory and harmless, when one views it through a feminist lens, a number of drawbacks come into focus—drawbacks that can ultimately put women's well-being and fundamental freedoms at risk.

In her 2009 book, *Quiverfull: Inside the Christian Patriarchy Movement*, Kathryn Joyce describes how women and girls are subjected to various forms of oppression in parts of the United States through the Quiverfull movement.¹ This movement not only promotes the submission of wives to their husbands but also rejects birth control and insists that children be home-schooled to prevent them from being “contaminated” by liberal governmental policies. It further insists that daughters relinquish tertiary education to marry early and bear many children. The name of the movement is linked directly to the belief that “God’s army” needs many children (specifically sons) and is based on Ps 127: 3–4 NRSV, which states that “sons are indeed a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the sons of one’s youth.”

Joyce’s account seems to describe an extreme cult or religious sect, but in South Africa, “softer” versions of these religious movements whose leaders and followers are mostly white are growing and becoming more popular.² The growth of these movements, which support the sovereign “God-given” headship of men over women, is phenomenal (in 2010, for example, 350,000 men attended the Mighty Men’s Conference [MMC], a Christian gathering exclusively for men) and meets little opposition or critique, because the discourses of the “softer” movements, unlike the Malthusian extremities of a movement like Quiverfull, which seeks to restrict reproductive rights, seem both plausible and palatable.³

Notwithstanding that the messages behind religious movements such as the MMC and its recent parallel movement the Worthy Women’s Conference (WWC) are not as acutely extreme as the movement Joyce describes, they nonetheless promote a seemingly plausible position with regard to gender that

¹ Kathryn Joyce, *Quiverfull: Inside the Christian Patriarchy Movement* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009).

² Gretha Wiid, the leader of the WWC is Afrikaans speaking and herself admits that her gatherings attract mostly white Afrikaans women, while Angus Buchan claims that it doesn’t bother him that most of the people who attend his meetings are white farmers. “I’m preaching to South African people. I don’t care if I preach to 100,000 white people or 100,000 black people. . . . I preach Jesus, not politics,” Buchan said. “I speak for Jesus, not for or against the government. Change will come through the Lord. If people turn to Jesus, that will change our nation” (quoted in Wesley Richards, “Farmer Sees ‘Revival’ in South Africa,” *Charisma*, <http://www.kcionline.org/news/files/Charisma,%20Angus%20Buchan,%20December%202008.pdf> [accessed April 28, 2010]). Tickets to the “shows” are even sold on Computicket, an online ticket purchasing system in South Africa.

³ Sarojini Nadar, “Palatable Patriarchy and Violence against Wo/men in South Africa—Angus Buchan’s Mighty Men’s Conference as a Case Study of Masculinism,” *Scriptura* 102, no. 3 (2009): 549–59. In this article, Nadar has argued that the MMC presents a “palatable patriarchy”—in other words, men taking up responsibility in response to their wives’ submission and recognition of their male authority and leadership.

suggests “liberation through submission.”⁴ The discourse of “liberation through submission” can best be described as what we label *formenism*. In her study on the MMC, Sarojini Nadar shows how men promote and sustain forms of male power through an ideology of masculinism, which advocates that men are inherently and naturally superior to women. For example, the leader of the MMC, Angus Buchan, unambiguously believes that it is a man’s job to lead in all aspects of life, from the home to society.⁵

Defining *Formenism*

Formenism, like masculinism, subscribes to a belief in the inherent superiority of men over women (in other words, only men can be leaders), but unlike masculinism, it is not an ideology developed and sustained by men, but one constructed, endorsed, and sustained by *women*. Angus Buchan’s wife, Jill Buchan, in a television interview with Devi Sankaree Govender, aptly captured the *formenist* position, saying, “the church of God needs men. They need fathers, they need everything set back in order because it’s not in order, because the church is full of homes that are still struggling with headship and God says he’s going to sort out the church first. He has to re-instate the men, and when he does that, the women will be very happy.”⁶ Similarly, Gretha Wiid advises women to think of their husbands as kings and asserts that God has ordained that men be prophets, priests, and kings and women be their willing subjects.⁷ As its phonetics suggests, *formenism* is a concept *for* men—that is, men are the chief beneficiaries of the hierarchical social positioning it advocates. *Formenism*, however, leads women to believe that they too will benefit from increased male responsibility and leadership. Whereas the aim of feminism has been to deconstruct the ways in which patriarchy oppresses women and to reconstruct a more equitable society, *formenism* seeks to entrench and romanticize patriar-

⁴ We borrow this term from the title of Bunny Wilson’s book, *Liberated through Submission: God’s Design for Freedom in All Relationships* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1997).

⁵ In a television interview, Angus Buchan noted that “man’s masculinity in the world today, in this twenty-first century, is being eroded and broken down. And young men—some young men—don’t know what a man is supposed to be! There are no role models, no mentors to look up to. What is a man supposed to do? How is he supposed to act? . . . And so what we did was—I believe, not we, but the Lord—restored masculinity. They are men! You have got to stand up and be counted! You have got to represent your family, your business, your company. Stop walking around like a, you know, a whipped dog with his tail between his legs. That’s no use to anybody. . . . It’s getting back to basics. . . . And so that’s why we had the men’s conference, ok?” Angus Buchan, interview by Devi Sankaree Govender, *Carte Blanche*, January 18, 2009, <http://www.mnet.co.za/Mnet/Shows/carteblanche/story.asp?Id=3523> (accessed April 27, 2010).

⁶ Jill Buchan, interview by Devi Sankaree Govender, *Carte Blanche*, January 18, 2009, <http://www.mnet.co.za/Mnet/Shows/carteblanche/story.asp?Id=3523> (accessed April 27, 2010).

⁷ Gretha Wiid, “Worthy Women Conference 09,” DVD (Brits Productions, 2009). See www.grethawiid.co.za.

chy as a system of “natural order” that does not harm women and indeed betters their lives. Contrary to feminist beliefs that female submissiveness leads to oppression, the *formenist* position suggests that submission will actually lead to women’s liberation and to lifelong happy marriages.⁸

Our Question

As feminists, one of us a theologian and the other a psychology professor and an atheist, we are both equally concerned about the *formenist* discourse the WWC promotes because we believe it diminishes the gains made by movements for women’s liberation, and ultimately, put women’s lives at risk. To us, the *formenist* position is at best contradictory and at worst dangerous for women. Hence our main question is, Given that women have agency, why would they choose a *formenist* position, which endorses their submission and which research has shown contributes toward violence against them?⁹ Why indeed would women develop this *formenist* position? While Wiid and those women who attend her meetings may speak firmly and confidently about their motivations, a careful understanding of the “patriarchal bargaining” they engage in is needed in order to understand why they do not reject a discourse that robs them of rights and propagates sentiments reflective of the prefeminist era. Put differently, the question is, Why do individuals like Wiid and her followers continue to occupy subordinate space in marital relationships of power while claiming that this subordinate space is actually powerful? We want to understand why movements like the MMC and WWC preach what they do and why people accept their ideologies.

A Feminist Discursive Analysis of Formenism

A feminist discursive analysis draws on critical discourse studies and feminist theory and deals with a critique of a hierarchically gendered social order

⁸ Wiid’s aim in starting the WWC was “to fill the vacuum left by the fact that Angus Buchan speaks to men at his Mighty Men Conferences, while there is no one to deliver the complementary message to women. And yes, this means she will be talking to women about subservience. And no, according to Wiid, subservience has nothing to do with being subordinate or being a doormat. ‘Mighty men should have worthy women,’ she [Gretha Wiid] said” (quoted in Neels Jackson, “Women Get Own Mighty Men,” *News 24.com*, July 16, 2009, <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Women-get-own-Mighty-Men-20090716> (accessed April 27, 2010).

⁹ A great deal of research has been done on the link between patriarchal Christianity and abuse against women. Some examples are Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn, eds., *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: A Feminist Critique* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989); Anne L. Horton and Judith A. Williamson, eds., *Abuse and Religion: When Praying Isn’t Enough* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1988); and Sarojini Nadar, “Searching the Dungeons beneath our Religious Discourses: The Case of Violence against Women and the ‘Unholy Trinity,’” *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity*, no. 66 (2005): 16–22.

that is maintained through a particular discourse, or “language realised in speech or in writing.”¹⁰ Vivien Burr remarks that while it is difficult to provide a “watertight” definition of discourse, the term encompasses a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, and images that in some way produce a particular version of events.¹¹ Discourse is, quite simply, the things people write or say.¹²

In our analysis, we focus on the ways in which the WWC’s theological discourses contain complex performances of power and ideology, especially because they draw on a “higher power.” Specifically, we examine video recordings Gretha Wiid has produced of her teachings at WWC, a personal interview, and newspaper articles. We argue that social and theological assumptions of dominant power relations are simultaneously contested and reproduced via Wiid’s discourse of “liberation through submission.” As Teun van Dijk asserts, “Although there are many directions in the study and critique of social inequality, the way we approach these questions and dimensions is by focusing on the role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance.”¹³ We are also interested in how *formenist* discourse reflects, entrenches, and even justifies discourses of racism, sexism, and heterosexism through the media, academia, families, and religion.¹⁴ Essentially, we concur that “relations of domination”¹⁵ are produced through discourse and we recognize that religion has been one of the most powerful vehicles through which male dominance has been portrayed as the “natural order” of things, just as God intended.

Sovereign Power vs. Disciplinary Power

We would argue that a main reason the WWC’s ideology is so popular is that discourse is not only an instrument of communication but also is linked to power. The Foucauldian notion of power is not something some people have and some don’t, but rather is an affect of discourse.¹⁶ When people represent or construct discourse in a particular way, they are in fact producing a particular knowledge that in a sense “has power.” For example when Wiid constructs a “good wife” as one who is submissive to her husband (her “king”) and constructs a “bad wife” as one who is not, she is producing a particular “knowledge” and

¹⁰ John Thompson, *Studies in the Theories of Ideology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984), 133.

¹¹ Vivien Burr, *An Introduction to Social Constructionism* (London: Routledge, 1995).

¹² Cheryl Potgieter, “Black South African Lesbian: Discourses of Invisible Lives” (PhD diss., University of the Western Cape, South Africa, 1997).

¹³ Teun A. van Dijk, “Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis,” *Discourse and Society* 4, no. 2 (1993): 249–83, quotation on 249.

¹⁴ Norman Duncan, “Discourses on Racism” (PhD diss., University of the Western Cape, South Africa, 1993); and Potgieter, “Black South African Lesbian.”

¹⁵ Thompson, *Studies in the Theories of Ideology*.

¹⁶ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979).

creating a power inequality within the group “women.”¹⁷ This is knowledge as power—the power to define others.

Michel Foucault further pointed out that in recent history there has been a shift from sovereign power to disciplinary power.¹⁸ With sovereign power the individual is controlled by the sovereign—essentially by force. However, disciplinary power has the effect of individuals controlling and monitoring themselves and being monitored and controlled by willingly subjecting themselves to the control or scrutiny of experts (for example, religious “experts” like Wiid). In an interview with us, Wiid emphasized that women should “lovingly” submit to their husbands, and that they must do so willingly. She further emphasizes this point in one of her WWC DVDs, where she admonishes “*Moenie die baas van jou vrou wees nie. Net ’n hond het n’ baas!*” (Don’t be your wife’s boss! Only a dog has a boss!).¹⁹

Although he was writing in the nineteenth century, the words of philosopher John Stuart Mill can be used to understand how Wiid’s *formenist* position encompasses discourses of submission and ultimately supports patriarchal aims. Mill declared:

Men do not want solely the obedience of women, they want their sentiments. All men, except the most brutish, desire to have, in the woman most nearly connected with them, not a forced slave but a willing one, not a slave merely, but a favorite. They have therefore put everything in practice to enslave their minds. The masters of all other slaves rely, for maintaining obedience, on fear; either fear of themselves, or religious fears. The masters of women wanted more than simple obedience, and they turned the whole force of education to effect their purpose. All women are brought up from the very earliest years in the belief that their ideal of character is the very opposite to that of men; not self will, and government by self-control, but submission, and yielding to the control of others. All the moralities tell them that it is the duty of women, and all the current sentimentalities that it is their nature, to live for others; to make complete abnegation of themselves, and to have no life but in their affections.²⁰

The words of Mill and Foucault make clear that it is easier to accept subordination as a position when one is not feeling forced to adopt such a position (sovereign power) but when one is convinced through an institutional system (such as religion) that this position is the most desirable in terms of institutional requirements. Hence even though the patriarchy that underpins the WWC is

¹⁷ Wiid, “Worthy Women Conference 09,” DVD.

¹⁸ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

¹⁹ Gretha Wiid, unrecorded interview by authors, October 12, 2009, and Wiid, “Worthy Women Conference 09,” DVD.

²⁰ John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1869), 26–27.

not state controlled (sovereign power and punishment), women are still subject to disciplinary control (institutionalized religion).

Patriarchal Bargaining

A second reason that women accept and endorse the *formenist* position is through what William Bradford Wilcox calls “patriarchal bargaining.” In his book *Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands*, Wilcox argues that conservative Protestantism “offers men a ‘patriarchal bargain’ that accords men symbolic authority in the home in return for their exercise of greater responsibility for the well-being of their families.”²¹ “Patriarchal bargaining” is evidenced in the WWC’s discourses on headship and submission and contributes to *formenism* because a man’s willingness to participate in his family’s well-being depends entirely on him being recognized as the leader.²² A woman is therefore encouraged to allow her man to lead in exchange for his being responsible to her and her children. Women, however, are expected to be responsible without receiving any leadership role or function. In fact, a woman can only and indeed must be responsible from a submissive position, not only to her husband but also to God.

Tony Evans, a black Baptist minister who preaches to men at Promise Keepers gatherings in the United States, explains that one of the dividends a woman earns through patriarchal bargaining is that her husband will take more responsibility toward his family, looking after the house and paying the bills. Similar to Wiid, Evans also perceives that when the husband is not the leader of his home, a national crisis is not far behind. According to Evans,

The primary cause of this national crisis, that is the decline of the family, is the feminization of the American male. The first thing you need to do is sit down with your wife and say something like this: “Honey, I’ve made a terrible mistake. I’ve given you my role. I gave up leading this family, and I forced you to take my place. Now I must reclaim that role. Don’t misunderstand what I am saying here. I’m not suggesting that you ask to be given your role back. I’m urging you to take it back.”

If you simply ask for it, your wife is likely to say: “Look, the last ten years I’ve had to raise these kids, look after the house and pay the bills. I’ve had to do my job and yours. You think I’m just going to turn everything back over to you?”

Your wife’s concerns might be justified. Unfortunately, however, there can be no compromise here. Treat the lady gently and lovingly, but lead. To you ladies who may be reading this, give it back. For the

²¹ William Bradford Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 10.

²² Wiid, interview.

sake of your family and the survival of our culture, let your man be a man if he's willing.²³

Interestingly, men who do not take back this leadership role are considered to be “feminized,” thereby establishing women’s roles clearly as “not leaders.” The epitome of feminization is to be a submissive follower. The epitome of masculinity is taking control, and women who grant men this “natural” role, according to Evans, Wiid, and others who advocate *formenism*, will reap the dividends of having their men take on increased responsibility in the home and in society.

Patriarchal bargaining is consistent with the complementarian (as opposed to egalitarian) school of thought with regard to gender. Complementarian approaches to gender are palatable to the twenty-first-century ear because they do not promote inequality per se but are less radical than egalitarian approaches, which do not accept that equality can exist in a headship-submission paradigm. Oren Martin and Barak Tjader provide a helpful distinction between the two philosophies. A complementarian “recognizes the full personal equality of the sexes,” but couples that “with an acknowledgment of role distinctions in the home and church.” An egalitarian subscribes to “undifferentiated equality (in other words, they see no scriptural warrant for affirming male headship in the home or the church).”²⁴

Existential Uncertainty and Anxiety

A third reason why women accept a *formenist* position, we argue, is as a result of existential uncertainty in postapartheid South Africa. Existential anxiety is a “condition” wherein people are unable to predict or control their life trajectories from one moment to the next but also wherein every waking moment of one’s life is taken up by attempting to gain control and predict how life will essentially happen.²⁵ In apartheid South Africa, life was certain for white people—they could predict they would have state-sponsored education, state-sponsored healthcare, labor protection, and access to privileged neighborhoods. Postapartheid South Africa no longer guarantees these privileges to whites.

The existential anxiety that emanates from this loss of power in postapartheid South Africa becomes the vehicle for white Afrikaans men in particular to seek out power in relationships as a means of dealing with the deep-seated anxiety that is a consequence of the unsettling condition of having little control over

²³ Tony Evans, “Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper,” quoted in Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs*, 1.

²⁴ Oren Martin and Barak Tjader, “Annotated Bibliography for Gender-Related Books in 2005,” *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 11, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 137–46, quotation on 137.

²⁵ Jean Lipman-Blumen, “The Existential Basis of Power Relationships: The Gender Role Case,” in *Power/Gender: Social Relations in Theory and Practice*, ed. H. Lorraine Radtke and Hendrikus J. Stam (London: Sage, 1995).

such matters as employment.²⁶ One strategy for reducing existential anxiety is to submit to a sacred force or being.²⁷ So, religion becomes an obvious choice to resolve existential anxiety.

Reliance on religion to resolve existential anxiety is especially stretched when we consider Mercy Oduyoye's argument in her classical theological work, *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy*, that "women are religion's chief clients."²⁸ Given the well-documented patriarchal nature of traditional religions, especially Christianity, it is no surprise therefore that in order to maintain their allegiance to religion many women also feel that they have to maintain an allegiance to patriarchy.²⁹ However, this allegiance does not automatically thrive without challenge. In fact, it is constantly met with challenges particularly from secular society, which is generally ahead of religion when it comes to women's liberation. South Africa is a prime example. The change to a democratic order in 1994 did not only usher in changes with regard to race but also with regard to gender. Not only did the 1996 constitution guarantee women's rights but the government also put in special mechanisms, such as the Office of the Status of Women and the Commission on Gender Equality, to ensure public (at least, institutional) compliance with gender equality principles. The new constitution's discourse of radical gender equality and liberation squared up against religion's discourse of women's submissiveness to men.³⁰

Bear in mind that the provisions for gender equality that appear in the South African constitution did not appear there by chance. Rather, their presence was the result of the fight for racial equality and the recognition that racism and sexism are essentially two sides of the same coin. Theoretically, this has come to be known as intersectionality—the understanding that patterns of oppression within one sphere of society such as in the sphere of race usually

²⁶ Kobus Du Pisani argues that "the number of Afrikaner men in positions of public power is declining and men are not as dominant in the domestic sphere as before. . . . Afrikaner masculinity no longer prescribes ideals of masculinity to South African society at large, to white men in general, or even to Afrikaans-speaking white men. It is thus difficult both to conceive of, and detect a hegemonic masculinity" ("Puritanism Transformed: Afrikaner Masculinities in the Apartheid and Post-Apartheid Period," in *Changing Men in Southern Africa*, ed. Robert Morrell (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2001), 162

²⁷ Lipman-Blumen, "Existential Basis of Power Relationships," 128.

²⁸ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), chap. 5.

²⁹ Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968); Ursula King, *Religion and Gender* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995); Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa*; and Carolyn Osiek, *Beyond Anger: On Being a Feminist in the Church* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986).

³⁰ For example, Charles Sylvester Rankhotha shows through his doctoral research how the changes in the constitution with regard to gender equality have encouraged men to reconsider gender relationships and to construct more "egalitarian masculinities" ("The Construction of Egalitarian Masculinities in the Natal Midlands of KwaZulu-Natal [PhD diss., University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2002]).

replicate themselves in other spheres of society such as gender, class, and ethnicity.³¹ Gender equality had to be enshrined in the Bill of Rights because one cannot claim racial equality while only paying lip service to gender equality. At the same time, the constitution enshrines religious and cultural rights, so even though various religions may flout the Bill of Rights when it comes to gender equity, they are protected by the same Bill of Rights in terms of their cultural and religious convictions.

We wish to suggest that these seemingly opposite positions emanating from religion and secular life with regard to gender equity have necessitated a discursive change. The constitution of South Africa was clearly not going to change with regard to gender equality. And so religion had to respond. As Alan Wolfe notes of the situation in the United States, “when conservative Christianity clashes with contemporary gender realities, the latter barely budges while the former shifts ground significantly.”³² This “shifting ground” is evident in the discourses emerging from Wiid’s WWC, which give the impression of being different from the discourse of submission (or subservience) that the church has traditionally promoted. This new discourse had to be palatable to a gender equitable society that was emerging in workplaces, schools, and state institutions.

Wiid captures this reliance on a sacred power to reduce the existential anxiety that is currently being experienced when she says that women can nag and try to change their husbands but that only God can change them. She states, “We women stand in the path of God to change men.” Women become like Satan when they accuse and try to change their husbands.³³ Instead, she argues for women to recognize and submit to men’s role as head of the household. Again, she makes this more palatable perhaps by saying that women don’t need to be submissive to men in general, only their own husbands. In keeping with Foucauldian theory, we argue that this is a case where Wiid is using a “liberatory discourse” to entrench an oppressive ideology.

In this article, we have used the Worthy Women’s Conference as a case study, describing and analyzing what creates and maintains the *formenist* position. We have conducted our evaluation of the movement through a feminist analysis of the discourses presented in various sources. We have argued that the complementarian “liberation through submission” discourse seems palatable for at least three reasons: (1) because it relies on a power that is not forceful (sovereign) but disciplinary à la Foucault’s notion of power, (2) because patriarchal bargaining, according to Wilcox, pays a dividend of increased responsibility for men

³¹ Patricia Hill Collins, “Gender, Black Feminism, and Black Political Economy,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 568, no. 1 (2000): 41–53, esp. 42.

³² Alan Wolfe, *The Transformation of American Religion: How We Actually Live Our Faith* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 135.

³³ Wiid, “Worthy Women Conference 09,” DVD.

that ultimately reduces the burdens of family life that women have traditionally carried, and (3) because it aids in the reduction of existential anxiety caused by radical changes in the country.

While the *formenist* discourse might seem liberatory and harmless, when one views it through a feminist lens, a number of drawbacks come into focus—drawbacks that can ultimately put women's well-being and fundamental freedoms at risk. For example, a detailed study by Isabel Phiri was carried out in Phoenix, Durban, on domestic violence in (Pentecostal) Indian Christian homes. Eighty-four percent of the twenty-five women who were interviewed admitted to having experienced domestic violence. They were also all wives of leaders in the church. Her study concluded that it was biblical beliefs, such as those on submission, that made these women stay in abusive relationships.³⁴ Wiid's argument that women should not challenge men and that women are the healers of wounded marriages is a discourse that contributes to women staying in marriages where domestic violence is normalized.

Similarly, Mary McClintock Fulkerson observes the role of the "discourse of submission," asserting that "one of the most prominent oppressive outcomes of such discourse is the willingness of women to stay in battering situations. Women's willingness to be battered is often linked to the kind of ecclesiastically supported languages of submission that appear in Pentecostal women's stories."³⁵ Because Wiid claims that she speaks on behalf of God, she has a power over the women who listen to her that draws on their sense of "moral duty"—that it is their moral and God-given duty to submit to their husbands.

Given the unacceptably high levels of violence perpetrated against women in South Africa, the *formenist* position promoted by the WWC is dangerous for women. Anne Borrowdale aptly notes that "if submission continues to be the 'theory,' then abuse will inevitably continue to be the 'practice.'"³⁶ The constitutionally guaranteed rights of women in South Africa, will never be fully realized as long as the discourse of *formenism* continues to be endorsed.

³⁴ Isabel A. Phiri, "Domestic Violence in Christian Homes: A Durban Case Study," *Journal of Constructive Theology* 6, no. 2 (2000): 85–110.

³⁵ Mary McClintock Fulkerson, *Changing the Subject: Women's Discourses and Feminist Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 296.

³⁶ Anne Borrowdale, *Distorted Images: Christian Attitudes to Women, Men, and Sex* (London: SPCK, 1991), 61.

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