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Resistance through the Rise of Disciplinary Power  
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### **Abstract**

This dissertation is an analysis of the spread of Christianity in the first three centuries and the commensurate activation and development of what Michel Foucault calls disciplinary mechanisms of power. It sets out to answer two questions, first, what were the theoretical conditions that led to Christianity's rapid expansion? And second, what were the historical precursors to the mechanisms of disciplinary power? It then seeks to put these two questions together to propose that early Christianity was successful in overtaking the Roman Imperial government because it activated underlying disciplinary mechanisms of power in a world governed and controlled by sovereign power. Through this activation it created a space within which the Christian subject could be formed and envision life outside the sovereign power of Caesar.

To demonstrate this thesis, this dissertation begins with the claim that the idea of resurrection was inherently subversive in nature, and took on a significant, if not primary role in the formation of early Christian identity. Following this claim, it develops through four commensurate chapters that show how the idea of resurrection became instantiated in various material and textual forms, and how this instantiation activated disciplinary mechanisms of power. Namely, it looks specifically at the formation of the Christian calendar, adaptation of Christian architecture, theological development of the soul and the nature of the post-resurrected Jesus, and the construction of the Christian martyr. The collection of historically substantive

chapters, by necessity, function together. I propose that through their relation they demonstrate a coalescence of mechanisms of disciplinary power on the micro-level of force relations, which thereby constituted a system that was resistant to Roman sovereign power.

Throughout this dissertation, each point of historical evidence is connected to Foucault's mechanisms of disciplinary power to both demonstrate this coalescence and document the long history behind these techniques of power. Further, I demonstrate that each mechanism arises in connection with the idea of the resurrection. This connection, between the mechanisms of power and the idea of resurrection, provides the necessary theoretical foundation to the claim that the resurrection of Jesus is a subversive idea and can function as such. In short, this dissertation demonstrates that correlative with the rise of the Christian movement was the activation of disciplinary mechanisms of power which stood in contrast with Rome's sovereign power. It then proposes that this correlation contributes to the explanation for Christianity's early expansion.