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## Full Issue

# VERBUM

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Volume 15



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## Volume 15

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# Commemorative Issue

*Dedicated to Rev. Dr. Michael Costanzo*  
(1943-2017)



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## From the Editor

The first issue of *Verbum* appeared in the fall of 2003 as a joint publication of the Religious Studies Department and Religious Studies Club. Despite its association in the minds of its readers with Fr. Michael Costanzo, his name appeared only as its faculty advisor – that and his being the contributor of two prizes awarded to two of the student essayists. Over the years, *Verbum* grew beyond a student-directed publication to include articles by faculty and alumni, poetry, human interest stories, book and film reviews. As *Verbum* evolved so did Michael's role. Whether as faculty advisor or eventually as editor, he was always its ever-ardent inspiration. His untimely death nearly a year ago suspended publication until this final, commemorative, issue could appear. The quality of contributions makes it, moreover, an especially worthy and fitting tribute to *Verbum's* founder. I am confident he is smiling down on those who will take it up one last time.

*Rev. Dr. John Colacino C.P.P.S.*

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## Obituary

Father Michael Costanzo died on Wednesday May 24, 2017. He was 73 years old and had served as a priest for nearly 51 years. Father Costanzo was born and educated in Sicily, Italy, where he taught from 1962-1970. At the end of 1970 he came to the United States to join his parents and family, already living in Rochester, NY since 1962. After receiving a PhD in 1979 and a Doctorate in Biblical Theology in 1987 from the University of St. Thomas in Rome, Italy, he returned to Rochester and taught at St. John Fisher College, Nazareth College, MCC, and BOCES. Father Costanzo was ordained a priest by Bishop James E. Kearney in July 1966 at the age of 22 and was a member of the Diocese of Piazza Armerina in Sicily, and has served in the Diocese of Rochester, NY since 1971. During his many years of ministry, Father Costanzo served in parishes throughout Rochester including St. Jerome's in East Rochester, St. John of Rochester, Church of the Holy Spirit in Penfield, and St. Paul's in Webster. Father Costanzo is a published author of three books of poetry and one book of prayers. Father Costanzo loved teaching, music, reading, gardening, traveling, and enjoying a cup of espresso with family and friends.

He is predeceased by his parents, Francesco and Serafina Costanzo; brother-in-law, Croce Buscema; nephew, Francesco Buscema; cousins, Joseph Torregrossa and Serafino Pavone; and many aunts and uncles. He is survived by sisters, Concetta Buscema, and Josephine (Luigi) Cozzo; nieces, Lucia (Lillo) Giaccio, Serafina (Franco) Merlo, Rita (Jean-Jacques) Duboisdindien, and Cristina (Joseph) Picca; nephews, Paolo (Isabelle) Buscema, Sergio (Rita) Buscema, and Philip (Jennifer) Cozzo; and seventeen grand-nieces and grand-nephews.





## Words of Remembrance at the Time of His Death

(Based on the eulogy given at Father Michael's funeral, June 1, 2017)

On the anniversary of his ordination Saint Augustine, one of Father Mike's favorite authors from the early Church, spoke to the gathered congregation a sentence he took seriously and embodied. "For you I am your bishop; with you I am a Christian."

Father Michael was not a bishop nor did he ever aspire to be one, but he was a priest for many people in so many places. In his home diocese in Sicily where he was born, he obediently served as priest and teacher. Later, when he came to the United States to be with his parents who had emigrated here, Father Mike was a faithful priest at the parishes of Saint Jerome and Saint John of Rochester. He assisted in parishes like Holy Spirit, Most Precious Blood, Annunciation, Holy Trinity, Saint Paul's and also the Motherhouse of the Sisters of Mercy to name a few. Fr. Mike generously baptized, witnessed marriages, and was present at special events of family, friends, parishioners and former students. Members of the Italian community called upon Father Mike to preach or lead them in prayer for special occasions or to the bedside of a loved one to administer the sacrament of the sick. He committed himself to share with joy the gift of priesthood for others.

For Father Mike, a Christian was called to be fully human thus giving a face to Jesus' own attitude of loving service. With the community of Saint John Fisher College he was "the Christian" who served with a focused commitment to "goodness, discipline, knowledge." In addition to preparing his classes and meticulously correcting papers, Father Mike accomplished this with a ready smile, an invitation to enjoy a cup of espresso, and a humble silence as he listened to the "other" sitting with him in his office. His door was always open to a student, faculty or staff person with an occasional loud invitation from behind his desk to "come in, sit down, and I will prepare you a cup of espresso." More than once I listened to him encourage a wayward student to attend class, submit an overdue paper, or work harder while he was pouring the nervous student a cup of espresso or reaching into his desk drawer for a tin of cookies.

I was lucky enough to hear stories about his family young and old. He would eat with them each week; travel to see his sister and brother-in-law in Belgium each year; and just a year ago returned to home diocese in Sicily to celebrate his 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ordination. For them all he was a loving son, brother, uncle and great-uncle. Michael's face would light up as he told of the latest trick he pulled on them or when detailing the excitement of the birth of a new member to the family. With both family and his many friends the cup of espresso was ever present. It was a cup richly symbolic of a cup overflowing with Christian love and joy.

Personally, these days following his brief illness and death have presented an opportunity to ask myself why Fr. Michael was such a gift to me as priest and friend. We knew each other for nearly 40 years and have worked together part time and, later, full time as colleagues at Saint John Fisher for better than 25 of those years. Our almost daily cup of espresso provided time for wonderful conversations. We usually took care of business and current political and social issues in a few minutes. (He did not care to dwell too long on the latest political news items or social upheaval.) The rest of the time we talked about books and their authors. He was an avid reader (in English, French, and Italian) and read deeply in areas of interest. Once I let him borrow a movie about Oscar Wilde. For the next year he read all of Wilde's plays, books, and essays. We both enjoyed the works of Romano Guardini, a German theologian with Italian roots. Fr. Mike and I had read *The Lord* (a life of Christ) when we were preparing for priesthood. This forged another bond that prompted us to recommend to each other our favorite Guardini books. In the last year of his life, the three volumes of letters (in French) of Vincent Van Gogh was the focus of his readings and meditation. I knew of Van Gogh as a great painter, but Fr. Mike showed me that it was Van

Gogh, the inner man, who painted what he saw with his heart. I will miss those inspiring tutorials on art, music, and literature.

During the past few weeks I have been reading a book called *The Power of Silence*. As I thought about its deeper message, it struck me that it was Fr. Mike's gift. The power of his gentle silence allowed me and others to speak of our joys and our struggles. He was silent so he could listen with his heart. He often spoke of living alone so he could read, listen to music, and pray in the silence of his house. This prepared him, I believe, to listen better to those who sought out his advice and his company. We felt "listened to."

As a Scripture scholar, Fr. Mike knew well the Book of Proverbs. This collection of wisdom speaks of friends and friendship. A true friend, in time, becomes a brother or sister; a relationship forged in sweat and tears rooted in a willingness to love without condition or judgment. The one who finds such a friend has found a treasure.

Fr. Mike was such a treasure to so many: family, staff, faculty, students, parish members, friends! We will miss his gentle smile and listening heart.

*Rev. Dr. William Graf*  
*Chair, Department of Religious Studies*

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## **Faculty Essays**

### *The Trouble with Tribble: The Limitation of a Feminist Biblical Interpretation*

In her book, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*, Phyllis Tribble describes the story of the unnamed concubine in the Book of Judges as depicting "the horrors of male power, brutality, and triumphalism, of female helplessness, abuse, and annihilation" (65). While I understand and fully accept that there are patriarchal and misogynistic elements in the text, I find Tribble's feminist interpretation and assessment of the story problematic because it loses sight of one of the Bible's central revelatory messages; namely, that power, brutality, helplessness and abuse are not gender-specific; rather, they are the result of human selfishness and sin. From an ethics perspective, Judges 19-20 dramatically illustrates the random, chaotic nature of evil in the abuse of power and the damage to the victims regardless of sex. The distinction lies in how individuals deal with the threat and what their response tells us about their character.

The stage is set in the first verse of Chapter 19: "In those days, when there was no king in Israel..." Mulling over these few words, the imagination suddenly pictures what they could literally mean. Central authority is non-existent in Israel. The social order is crumbling, and, consequently, anything goes. Reflecting on our own time, that's a pretty scary thought. After setting the atmosphere, the narrative introduces the central characters: a Levite from the hill country of Ephraim and his concubine from Bethlehem in Judah (Judg. 19:1). The social status of the pair is significant. In ancient Israel, Levites served as priests and teachers at local shrines, indicating a superior rank and piety from ordinary Israelites. A concubine was a woman who lived with a man but had a lower social status than a wife; however, in the story the Levite is referred to as "the husband" of the concubine (19:3) and the "son-in-law" of the woman's father (19:5). Later in the story the Levite is also referred to as the woman's "master" (19:26), all of which confirm her inferior, subservient status to the man.

The initial conflict of the story is introduced when the concubine becomes angry with the Levite and returns to her father's house, where she stays for four months (19:2). Why the woman was angry and why she took such a drastic step is unknown. What is clear is that despite her social status, the concubine is hardly a weak-willed or passive female. On the contrary, this is a woman of decision and action. Perhaps she had suffered physical abuse (not an unlikely scenario) and wanted to escape the violence. Whatever the case, the fact that she stayed for such an extended period of time suggests that she intended to remain with her father. The time lapse is also significant for the Levite. If violence had been the cause of the concubine's flight, it would explain why it took four months for the man to go to Bethlehem. He may have wanted to delay a potentially difficult conversation with his father-in-law. Interestingly, the Oxford Annotated Bible points to a Hebrew translation which states that the woman ran away because she had "played the harlot" (319). If that were the case, it's doubtful the Levite would have waited four months to settle the score. Instead, he "arose and went after her, to speak kindly to her and bring her back" (Judg. 19:3). These are hardly the actions of a wronged husband, but rather those of a man who had greatly wronged his wife.

The next scene (Judg. 19:3-9) introduces the girl's father, who upon seeing his son-in-law, "came with joy to meet him" (3)—a strange reaction given the circumstances. Through clever persuasion, the father detains the Levite for five days. Trible asserts this was an exercise in male bonding, a competitive power struggle between the men which totally excludes the woman (68). Instead of the husband "speaking kindly to her" and making up with his wife, he ignores her (a timeless female complaint) and enjoys the company of another man. Trible laments that the woman suffers from neglect (69), but once again her interpretation limits the human drama. This is a story about victims and not all of them were female. A more sympathetic reading of the scene witnesses a father's futile attempt to protect his daughter the only way he can—through feigned and over exaggerated hospitality:

His father-in-law, the girl's father, made him stay, and he remained with him three days; so they ate and drank, and he stayed there. On the fourth day they got up early in the morning, and he prepared to go; but the girl's father said to his son-in-law, "Fortify yourself with a bit of food, and after that you may go." "So the two men sat and ate and drank together; and the girl's father said to the man, "Why not spend the night and enjoy yourself?" When the man got up to go, his father-in-law kept urging him until he spent the night there again. On the fifth day he got up early in the morning to leave; and the girl's father said, "Fortify yourself." So they lingered until the day declined, and the two of them ate and drank. When the man with his concubine and his servant got up to leave, his father-in-law, the girl's father, said to him, "Look, the day has worn on until it is almost evening. Spend the night. See, the day has drawn to a close. Spend the night here and enjoy yourself. Tomorrow you can get up early in the morning for your journey, and go home" (Judg. 19:4-9).

Hospitality was a central value in tribal societies, but the father's generosity and gaiety have a desperate edge to them while the Levite seems to half-heartedly participate in the festivities—all he wants to do is leave. In this light, Trible's competitive power struggle reads more like a calculated charade. The father knows he's sending her back to a dark existence. Perhaps by killing the Levite with kindness he can lessen any reprisals against his daughter. Although the father loses "the competition," he fights valiantly to appease the Levite, using every angle to delay the departure; however, when the end comes it is instantaneous with no time for goodbyes: "But the man would not spend the night; he rose up and departed, and arrived opposite Jebus (that is, Jerusalem)" (19:10). Father and daughter are severed forever, wounded by a system that regarded human beings as property.

The Levite's haste requires that they stay somewhere for the night. Gibeah, a town which belongs to the tribe of Benjamin, appears to be a safe harbor but the Levite, his concubine and servant are forced to camp in the open square of the city "for no man took them into his house to spend the night" (19:15). The lack of hospitality is ominous, but the narrative immediately heralds a rescuer in the guise of

an old man returning from the fields. Following the customs of hospitality, he opens his home to the travelers, joyfully taking care of all their needs. Suddenly events speed up and in a shocking and unexpected way. The men of the city, described as a “perverse lot,” surround the old man’s house, demanding that he “Bring out the man who came into your house, so that we may have intercourse with him” (23). The old man bravely confronts the group pleading for the life of the Levite, but in a moment his truer nature is unmasked. He tells them, “Here are my virgin daughter and his concubine; let me bring them out now. Ravish them and do whatever you want to them; but against this man do not do such a vile thing” (24). His reversal is chilling, heightening the terror. Evil lurks behind every kindness, every generous face. No one, not even a kinsman—or a father—can be trusted. A terrible sense of dread creeps into the scene. When the old man’s offer is rejected by the men, the Levite completes the betrayal by seizing the concubine and throwing her out of the house to the waiting mob (25).

The cold-blooded acts of these men demonstrate how the abuse of power destroys both the victims and the perpetrators. The old man and the Levite have become enmeshed in a patriarchal value system and power structure that conditions and dehumanizes them to the point where they are capable of committing such crimes. Rather than fight the brutality pounding at the door, their actions fuel and perpetuate it.

The gang rape of the woman is described with grim simplicity: “and they knew her, and abused her all night until the morning. And as the dawn began to break, they let her go. As morning appeared, the woman came and fell down at the door of the man’s house where her master was, until it was light” (19:25-26). In Tribble’s interpretation, the concubine is a beaten woman: “Now that they have raped and discarded her outside, she has no choice but to ‘fall down at the doorway of the house.’ Her physical state embodies her servile position.” (77). But Tribble misses a significant action by the woman. She overlooks the fact that this is a woman who has been tortured, raped, and betrayed by her master and her host and yet she got up and made the long, painful trek back to the house where she clearly wasn’t welcome. She may have known she was dying and was seeking a final place to rest from her abusers, but I don’t believe that was her only motivation. It’s also possible that she crawled back to the house to confront her “protectors” with their crimes. It was a final heroic act in the face of overwhelming injustice. Her body was broken, but not the strength of her character.

There is some question as to whether the woman died on the threshold of the house. The text is ambiguous on this point: “In the morning her master got up, opened the doors of the house, and when he went out to go on his way, there was his concubine lying at the door of the house, with her hands on the threshold. ‘Get up,’ he said to her, ‘we are going.’ But there was no answer (19:27-28). Tribble views the woman’s silence as a sign of utter defeat: “Oppressed and tortured, she opens not her mouth. Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep before its shearers is dumb, so she opens not her mouth” (79). But the woman was not silent, for she spoke her last with her hands across a doorway. Tribble sees this as a touching plea for mercy, but I believe her hands were clenched in defiance, condemning her master and forcing him—a Levitical priest and teacher—to acknowledge his crimes in the light of day. I believe that if she had been able to speak she would have.

The Levite, in a final act of barbaric ownership, takes a knife and divides the concubine’s body into twelve pieces and sends them throughout Israel as a witness to the abomination. The tribes quickly gather to hear his explanation (Judg.20:3-7).

And the Israelites said, “Tell us, how did this criminal act come about?” The Levite, the husband of the woman who was murdered, answered, “I came to Gibeah that belongs to Benjamin, I and my concubine, to spend the night. The lords of Gibeah rose up against me, and surrounded the house at night. They intended to kill me, and they raped my concubine until she died. Then I took my concubine and cut her into pieces, and sent her throughout the whole extent of Israel’s territory; for they have committed a vile outrage in Israel. So now, you Israelites, all of you, give your advice and counsel here.”

A coward to the end, the Levite conveniently excludes his part in the death of his wife and, instead, points an accusing finger at the Benjaminites. The result is a civil war that breeds more violence, rape, death, destruction, and the near extinction of the tribe of Benjamin. It is no coincidence that the final verse of the book of Judges echoes the verse that began the tragedy: “In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes” (Judg. 21:25).

Judges 19-20 graphically illustrates a humanity bereft of all compassion, mercy, and love, but unlike Tribble I can't reduce the problem to patriarchy and misogyny, for they represent variations on a fundamental abuse of power established in the Fall (Gen. 2) and perfected in a “might makes right” mentality that asserts itself at all times, at all levels of society, and against all human beings. In such a world, all are victims, all are violated, all become less than human. Consequently, the Levite and the concubine suffer equally but in different ways: The woman is brutally sacrificed and the man and his kinsmen go off to war to be slaughtered for the sake of power and their pride while the status quo remains the same. Centuries later this abusive mentality and its various manifestations (e.g., sexism, racism, homophobia) are still firmly in place and the destruction continues.

Ultimately, Phyllis Tribble's attempt at literary-feminist reading goes too far. Although there is great benefit in feminist readings of biblical texts, it is a mistake to perceive and interpret the Bible as a literary champion or apologist for a particular gender or worldview. The Bible is a mirror from which we come to understand basic truths about ourselves and the human condition, truths that both indict and inspire the human heart. The Bible was, for the most part, written, compiled, and edited by men; however, in all fairness, these were men who also included women's voices and who had some understanding of the suffering of women—as well as the suffering of slaves, the poor, the sick, and the widow, the orphan, and the stranger. Feminist writers like Tribble do a great disservice to the biblical writers when they overlook that fact. Tribble simply needs a lighter, more inclusive touch.

*Linda M. MacCammon, PhD*  
*Religious Studies Department*

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*A History of Slavery in Central Asia:*

*Shī'ī Muslim Enslavement in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Bukhara*

Despite more than a century of interest on the part of western scholars and historians in the region of Central Asia, in many respects our knowledge of many topics in Central Asian history remains limited. To date, when compared to the body of historical works treating the history of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and slavery in the Americas, or even the history of slavery within the Arab-Muslim world, the history of slavery in Islamic Central Asia has received little attention. Thus, it stands to reason that the history of the enslavement of Shī'ī Muslims in the early modern and modern eras has been likewise neglected, often being mentioned in passing or dealt with in a few pages within larger works. Considering the extent to which both Bukhara and Khiva depended upon Shī'ī slaves as agricultural workers, domestic servants, bureaucrats, and such, this history of slavery in Central Asia is a topic that demands closer scrutiny. This paper will therefore consider the history of the enslavement of Shī'ī Muslims in the Emirate of Bukhara during the nineteenth century. As an institution, slavery was ideologically rationalized and sanctified according to long-standing sectarian prejudices, in this instance those of the Sunnī Muslims towards the Shī'ī Muslims, in the Central Asian states of the nineteenth century. This can be verified by an examination of the extant sources; as a preliminary examination of

the topic, therefore, this study will draw primarily from nineteenth century travel accounts. By re-examining such works we can begin to fashion a more coherent narrative for the history of Shī'ī enslavement in Islamic Central Asia. However, before examining the travel accounts, the institution of slavery in relation to Islamic tradition must first be considered, as this will provide some perspective when we turn our attention to the enslavement of Shī'ī Muslims in Central Asia.

Since the emergence of Islam in the seventh century, the attitude of Muslims in general toward the institution of slavery has varied. According to the Qur'ān and Hadīth traditions, slavery was discouraged, not prohibited, and those who chose to keep slaves were urged, though not necessarily required, to treat them humanely as equals before God: one scholar, W. Arafat, informs us that there are some nineteen verses in the Qur'ān in which the manumission or emancipation of slaves is expressly recommended; the releasing of a slave from bondage was recommended as “expiation for a broken vow” or some other wrong, and slaves might also be manumitted by decree of their master’s will upon his death.<sup>1</sup> The conclusion reached by the nineteenth century Near Eastern scholar Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner, that while the Qur'ān and Hadīth allow for slavery as an inherited reality of the age, they often encourage the manumission of the slaves whenever possible, further supports ‘Arafat’s assertion.<sup>2</sup> In lieu of manumission, it is known that Muhammad himself encouraged the practice of *mukātabat*, whereby a slave – in agreement with his master – could work to buy his freedom.<sup>3</sup> If a slave were unable to save sufficient funds, money collected as *zakat* could be used to supplement, and thereby enable the slave to obtain his freedom. ‘Arafat further informs us that according to Hadīth, masters were encouraged to assist their slaves in their labor whenever possible.<sup>4</sup> Norms for the treatment of slaves espoused by the Qur'ān and Hadīth were predicated on the belief that the slave, just as the master, was possessed of a soul, and although he was by circumstance an inferior being socio-economically speaking, in the eyes of God the slave was every bit his master’s equal.<sup>5</sup> Thus in ‘Arafat’s estimation – and this conclusion is maintained by many other scholars as well – from the advent of Islam forward, the tendency was “towards the presumption of freedom.”<sup>6</sup>

Such is, of course, an ideal interpretation of some number of recommendations pertaining to the institution of slavery and the treatment of slaves as presented in the holy book and traditions attributed to Muhammad, and we might never be certain the extent to which such Qur'ānic instructions or examples of the Prophet were carried out or put into practice by ordinary Muslims on a day-to-day basis. Furthermore, as Bernard Lewis notes, “The Prophet Muhammad and those of his Companions who could afford it themselves owned slaves; some of them acquired more by conquest,” and “While maltreatment was deplored, there was no fixed *shāri’ah* penalty.”<sup>7</sup> Still, in the final analysis Islam did serve to raise the slave from the status of chattel to that of a “human being with a certain religious and hence social status...with certain quasi-legal rights.”<sup>8</sup> Islamic jurisprudence came to the conclusion that, while all human beings were free in nature, such was not the case in more complex societies.

While the institution of slavery may have theoretically been discouraged in Islam, it was by no means done away with, and persisted as a legal institution in some parts of the Islamic world until the twentieth century. The conclusion that all human beings were by nature free never reflected reality, and men, women and children continued to be enslaved by those in a position to do so. However, there were restrictions within the Islamic tradition regarding who could be enslaved. ‘Arafat tells us, “The two

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<sup>1</sup> W. ‘Arafat, “The Attitude of Islam to Slavery,” *The Islamic Quarterly*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (1966): 15.

<sup>2</sup> G. W. Leitner, “Mohammedanism and Slavery,” *The Athenaeum*, No. 2942 (1884): 346.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Arafat, “Islam to Slavery,” 15.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>7</sup> Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1990): 5, 7.

<sup>8</sup> Lewis, *Race and Slavery*, 6.

lawful sources of slavery are: to be born in slavery or to be captured in war...In the second category jurists emphasize that it must be a lawful defensive war declared on behalf of Islam.”<sup>9</sup> By this he means *jihād*, or holy war. One other important point to keep in mind is that after the establishment of Islam and the beginnings of a Muslim legal tradition, it became unlawful to reduce an Arab, or a Muslim, to slavery. This being the case, the main source of slaves in the Islamic world, including Central Asia, became the *Dār al-Harb*.

As most all of us know, the rift between Shī’ī and Sunnī Muslims has existed from the death of the Prophet Muhammad, and has occasioned a great deal of bloodshed since that time. Still, as the enslavement of fellow Muslims was prohibited, it remained uncommon for members of either sect to take the other as slaves – that is until the early modern era. From the creation of the Safavid state in 1501 and Shāh Ismā’īl I’s establishment of *Ithnā ‘Ashariya* or the Twelver brand of Shī’ī Islam as the state religion, Persia came to be seen as being part of the *Dār al-Harb*, and its inhabitants all potential slaves. This proved to be a significant development with regard to the continuance of the slave-trade in Islamic Central Asia.

According to Nikolai Veselovskii, the trend towards the enslavement of Shī’ī Muslims in Mavarannahr was encouraged by the conquest of the Shībānid Uzbeks at the dawn of the sixteenth century, an event which occurred simultaneously with the rise of the Safavids in Iran. Veselovskii states,

Having captured the settled population of Mavarannahr and settled in cities and towns, the Uzbeks had neither the desire nor the propensity for the hardships of settled living; it was necessary to work the land with slaves. This was only possible by increasing the number of slave hands.<sup>10</sup>

Obviously, given that they professed Sunnī Islam, the Uzbeks were prohibited from simply making slaves of the inhabitants of Mavarannahr, who were also primarily Sunnī. They were therefore compelled to look beyond their own borders for a sustainable source of slaves. Initially, the Uzbeks’ appetite for slave labor seems to have been satiated by a steady supply of Indian captives, infidel Hindus, who were traded primarily for Central Asian horses.”<sup>11</sup> As time wore on and Muslim armies continued their centuries’ long pacification of the Indian subcontinent, the reservoir of Indian slaves gradually dried up, prompting slave-traders to seek a new supply.<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, the Uzbeks set their sights south and west of the Amu Darya, towards the Safavid frontier. The province of Khurasan in particular continued to be the prime target of predatory Uzbek raids and Uzbek military ambitions. In order to justify their forays across the Amu Darya, the Uzbeks often employed the terminology of holy war, here directed against their heretical Shī’ī neighbors.

Veselovskii emphasizes the importance of the religious justification for the Uzbeks’ incessant warring against and subsequent enslavement of Persians, and traces the roots of this religious justification to the period just prior to the Shībānid conquest of the Tīmūrid realm.

He states:

Shortly before the invasion of the Uzbeks in Mavarannahr, the clergy of Central Asia, with Shams al-Dīn Herāfī at its head, promulgated the *fatwa* by which Shī’ī Muslims could be sold into slavery just as infidels. With this, it became fully possible to procure slaves from Persia, and the demand for them in Central Asia only increased. This came in very handy

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<sup>9</sup> ‘Arafat, “Islam to Slavery,” 16. In stating this, ‘Arafat cites one A. A. Jāwīsh, *al-Islām Dīn al-fitra*, p. 79.

<sup>10</sup> Н. Веселовский, «Русские невольники въ среднеазиатскихъ ханствахъ.» *Материалы для описания Хивинского похода 1873 года*, Вып. 5 (Ташкент, 1881): 1. Translation from Russian is my own.

<sup>11</sup> Scott Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and Its Trade, 1550-1900* (Leiden: Brill, 2002): 63-67.

<sup>12</sup> Levi, *Indian Diaspora*, 69.

for the Uzbeks; without this justification, they would have been unable to keep Persian slaves, since, according to the Qur'ān, every Muslim must be free.<sup>13</sup>

This fatwa and others like it essentially legalized the enslavement of Shī'ī Muslims in Central Asia – primarily Persians, although Shī'ī Kurds and Ismā'īlīs are also mentioned in various sources. Collectively, these fatwas gave greater license to both those who made a living capturing Shī'ī Muslims for sale as slaves and slave dealers.

Turgun Fayziev suggests that beneath the rhetoric of the fatwa and the language of *jihād* rested more fundamental political and economic concerns. He remarks,

Such *fatwas* were not issued on the part of the 'ulamā' solely with the intent of glorifying the religion of Islam and showing their sectarian support. Rather the purpose of such *fatwas* was rooted in aggressive and belligerent political-economic goals. While doing something for the general public, at the same time the above-mentioned *fatwas* no doubt served the interests of the khans, amirs, begs, and large land-holders. For example, one such *fatwa* was issued for the Shībānīd Khān of Bukhara, 'Abd Allāh Khān, in 1586. Before laying siege to the city of Herat, he had the 'ulamā' of Bukhara issue a *fatwa*, the contents of which stated "if the people of the city are Shī'ī, they should be taken and plundered."<sup>14</sup>

Here religion is used to sanctify and condone political and economic gain through plunder and violence at the expense of the Shī'ī inhabitants of Herat. In truth, it is likely that no one reason alone can sufficiently account for the expansion of Shī'ī enslavement during the early modern and modern eras into the nineteenth century. Rather, political, economic, and religious arguments in favor of plundering, capturing, and enslaving Shī'ī Muslims would all have been equally valid, given the right context at the right time. Thus, as time passed and the nineteenth century dawned, increasing numbers Shī'ī Muslims were taken prisoner and dragged to the markets of Qaraqol, Qarshi, Charjui, Bukhara, and so on,<sup>15</sup> to satisfy the growing demand for slaves.

The first travel narrative to be considered herein is that of Baron von Meyendorf who, as part of the Negri embassy sent to Bukhara by Tsar Alexander I in 1820, was tasked with compiling geographical and statistical records on the countries through which they would pass. Meyendorf realized almost immediately how widespread the institution of slavery was in Bukhara: he estimated the number of Persian slaves as being anywhere from thirty-to-forty thousand,<sup>16</sup> noting "Every wealthy and respectable inhabitant of Bokhara owns slaves, mostly Persians."<sup>17</sup> The average slave-holder maintained around forty slaves, while the Qosh-Begi himself, Meyendorf reports, retained upwards of one hundred; it is safe to assume these were mostly Persian captives, given their percentage of the slave population.<sup>18</sup>

Economically speaking, in Meyendorf's opinion, the Emirate was dependent upon slave labor for the fact that it was the slaves – Shī'ī Persians – who were responsible for "cultivation of the soil," the agricultural product of which brought in the bulk of Bukhara's revenue.<sup>19</sup> However, the use of Persian slaves was not limited to the agricultural sphere. According to Meyendorf, slaves played an essential role

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<sup>13</sup> Веселовский, «Русские невольники», 1.

<sup>14</sup> Т. Файзиев, *Бухоро феодал жамиятида қуллардан фойдаланишига доир ҳужжатлар* (Тошкент: Ўзбекистон «ФАН» нашриёти, 1990): 8-9. Translation from Uzbek is my own.

<sup>15</sup> Balfour, 676.

<sup>16</sup> Baron von Meyendorf, *A Journey from Orenburg to Bokhara in the Year 1820*, trans. Captain E. F. Chapman, R. H. A. (Calcutta: Foreign Department Press, 1870): 58, 61.

<sup>17</sup> Meyendorf, *Journey from Orenburg*, 36.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.



in the day-to-day operations of the Emirate's bureaucracy. This he noted while considering the nature of the Uzbek regime, stating:

...the spirit of the Bokharian Government is of a marked arbitrary character. Indeed, what else can one expect when...[the Amīr's] slaves, who have been bought with money, play an important part in possessing his confidence? The slaves of the Koosh-beghi hold important state offices, and it may be said that the whole of the administration is in the hands of the Koosh-beghi family and slaves.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, if we trust Meyendorf's account, and the vast majority of slaves in Bukhara were Persians, including those of the Amīr and the Qosh-Begi, then we might read here that the government of Bukhara was staffed by Persian captives. That being the case it seems that in some instances Shī'ī slaves were able, after enduring the horrors of being inducted into the slave community, to rise to positions of relative prestige within the Emirate. Of course, Meyendorf states further that "the mass of government *employés* in Bokhara must be looked upon as the scum of the population," revealing what little respect he had for the slaves-come-bureaucrats of the Bukharan state.<sup>21</sup>

Some years after Meyendorf completed his mission and returned home, Alexander Burnes, a British lieutenant serving in India, made his way overland to the emirate of Bukhara. His account of this journey provides us with a good deal of information with regard to the enslavement of Shī'ī Persians in Islamic Central Asia. As to the origins of Shī'ī enslavement, the story provided by Burnes is in line with the opinion of Veselovskii, stating that, "The practice of enslaving Persians is said to have been unknown before the invasion of the Uzbeks."<sup>22</sup> Burnes continues with an anecdote that provides a religious "justification" for the enslavement of Shī'ī Muslims, which must have been circulated throughout the Emirate: Burnes states, "A few Bokhara priests visited Persia, and heard the three first caliphs publicly reviled in that country; on their return, the synod gave their "futwa," or command for licensing the sale of all such infidels."<sup>23</sup> This fits in well with the explanation provided by Veselovskii and seconded by Fayziev mentioned earlier, that around the time of the Uzbek invasion of Mavarannahr the 'ulamā' of Bukhara, under the direction of Shams al-Dīn Herātī, issued a fatwa which allowed for the legal enslavement of Shī'ī Persians. Surprisingly Burnes, who throughout most of his narrative expresses nothing but sympathy for the Persian slaves he encounters, declares that as the Shī'ī Persians were in the regular habit of publicly denouncing the caliphs Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthman, and "the report of the Bokhara priests is true, the Persians have brought their present calamities upon themselves."<sup>24</sup> In his final assessment, however, despite his finding fault with the Shī'ī and their practices vis-à-vis the first three caliphs, Burnes roundly condemns the trafficking of human beings in Central Asia as an "odious violation of human rights and liberties."<sup>25</sup>

According to Burnes, Persian slaves were captured by and transported to the markets of Khiva and Bukhara primarily by Turkmen raiders, and that the markets of Bukhara were supplied in the main by Turkmen raiding parties loosely under the suzerainty of the khans of Khiva.<sup>26</sup> We learn from other sources that the slave-traders in urban areas were mostly Sarts or Tajiks, and in some instances Persians, and not Uzbeks themselves.<sup>27</sup> From Burnes' account, one can imagine how frightening this first step in becoming a slave, being stolen and spirited away by the Turkmen, must have been: while moving from Bukhara to Mashhad, Burnes and his caravan stopped at Charjui, where they encountered a troop of

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>22</sup> Alexander Burnes, *Travels into Bokhara*, Vol. I (London: John Murray, 1834): 343.

<sup>23</sup> Burnes, *Travels into Bokhara*, 343.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 344.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 344.

<sup>26</sup> Alexander Burnes, *Travels into Bokhara*, Vol. II (London: John Murray, 1834): 386-387.

<sup>27</sup> Balfour, 676.

Turkmen slavers with a handful of Persian captives en route to the slave markets of Bukhara. Burnes writes: “They had been seized by the Toorkmuns at Ghaeen, near Meshid, a few weeks before... They were weary and thirsty, and I gave them all I could, – a single melon; a civility, little as it was, which was received with gratitude.”<sup>28</sup> On the treatment of the Turkmen towards their chattel, Burnes tells us, “The Toorkmuns evince but little compassion for their Persian slaves... They give them but a scanty supply of food and water, that they may waste their strength, and prevent their escape.”<sup>29</sup> Mohan Lal, a companion of Burnes in his travels who produced his own travel narrative of their journey, goes into greater detail regarding the treatment that these Persians received at the hands of their captors, stating:

The poor souls were forced by the cruel Turkmans to walk on foot, without shoes, in such a fiery desert. Their hands and necks were fastened together in a line with a long iron chain, which was very heavy and troublesome to their bare necks. They were crying, and appeared to be exhausted with hunger and thirst, while their oppressive drivers were deaf to their entreaties. They were Shias, and inhabitants of Qayan, a place in Persia. They saluted us, shedding a flood of tears at the same time.<sup>30</sup>

Assuming these Persian captives survived their forced march through the desert, they would have next found themselves at one of a number of slave markets located in various cities north of the Amu Darya.

The city of Bukhara itself possessed such a market, which Burnes calls the slave bazaar. Burnes described the scene he witnessed: “Here these poor wretches are exposed for sale, and occupy thirty or forty stalls, where they are examined like cattle, only with this difference, that they are able to give an account of themselves *viva voce*.”<sup>31</sup> Burnes goes on to relate the steps of the transaction: first, the slave is asked whether or not he is a Muslim, and by Muslim the buyer would mean a Sunnī Muslim. Satisfied that the slave was not Sunnī, the buyer would then inspect the physical condition of the slave, to be sure he or she was free of any visible disease or infirmity, or that they were physically appealing. Following this, buyer and seller would haggle over a fair price for the slave. Predictably, the Uzbeks assured Burnes, who must have been visibly sickened by the scene of the slave bazaar, that all the Persian slaves within the emirate were treated humanely and that, moreover, in purchasing these poor Persians the Uzbeks were in fact doing them a favor, insofar as they were removing them from the path of heresy and bringing them into the true *ummah*.<sup>32</sup>

At another point in his narrative, the aforementioned Mohan Lal testifies to the animosity which existed among the people of Bukhara for the Shīʿī, stating that,

The Qizal Bash, or Shias, who follow the principles of Ali, and do not believe in the three friends of Mohammed, are treated with indignity by the Sunnis, who molest, and even sell them, at their pleasure. All punishments are inflicted by the Qazi, who is the head of the law. The people are very bigoted, and call the Shia by the name of kafar, and even think him much worse than Hindus.<sup>33</sup>

According to Lal’s account, the Shīʿī and their ways came to be so detested in Bukhara that to call someone a Shīʿī was among the worst insults one individual could hurl at another. Lal informs us that

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<sup>28</sup> Burnes, *Travels into Bokhara*, Vol. II, 12.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>30</sup> Mohan Lal, *Travels in the Panjab, Afghanistan, and Turkistan, to Balk, Bokhara, and Herat, and a visit to Great Britain and Germany* (London: Wm. H. Allen & Co., 1846): 154.

<sup>31</sup> Burnes, *Travels into Bokhara*, Vol. I, 281.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 282-283.

<sup>33</sup> Lal, *Travels*, 129.

such was the case with Hakim Beg, the Qosh-Begi of Amīr Nasrallāh Bahādur (r. 1827-1860), who was often referred to by the inhabitants of Bukhara as “a Qizal Bash slave, and not a real Uzbek” due to his favorable attitude regarding trade with Persia and the support he gave to the city’s merchants who handled such trade.<sup>34</sup>

The last narrative we will consider is that of the renowned scholar Arminius Vambery, who in the early 1860s travelled throughout Anatolia, Persia, and Central Asia disguised as a dervish, or Sufi mystic. Vambery first encountered Shī’ī slaves on Bukharan soil as he was near to death from thirst, having traversed the desert en route from Khiva to Bukhara. Having fallen asleep and, by his own account, expecting soon to die, Vambery awoke surrounded by a group of Persian slaves, shepherds who, although having next to nothing themselves, nursed the author and his companions back to health. Vambery tells us a rather poignant story of one of their number, a five-year-old child:

He had been, two years before, captured and sold with his father. When I questioned him about the latter, he answered me confidingly. ‘Yes; my father has bought himself (meaning paid his own ransom); at longest I shall only be a slave two years, for by that time my father will have spared the necessary money.’ The poor child had on him hardly anything but a few rags, to cover his weak little body; his skin was the hardness and colour of leather.<sup>35</sup>

One can scarcely imagine the hardship this child likely endured, or the heartbreak of his father who was compelled to leave without his son, and of his mother who may well have died without knowing her son’s fate. Of course, his character does not resurface at some later point in Vambery’s narrative; his story, like those of most Shī’ī slaves who lived and died in the Emirate of Bukhara in the nineteenth century, is lost to history.

Herein we have briefly considered four travel narratives which provide information relating to the history of the enslavement of Shī’ī Muslims in the Emirate of Bukhara in the nineteenth century. The sources examined confirm that the institution of slavery was ideologically rationalized and sanctified in accordance with sectarian prejudices harbored by Sunnī Muslims towards the Shī’ī Muslims in Mavarannahr. While this essay has shed light on the history of slavery in Islamic Central Asia, further investigation of this subject is warranted, both to expand our knowledge of the history of slavery in Central Asia and to bring this history fully into the broader narrative of the history of human bondage. Additionally, this highlights the persistence of the sectarian divide that has existed in Islam between the Sunnī and the Shī’a since the seventh century, a divide that a very small minority of extremists within the global Muslim community – both Sunnī and Shī’ī – have exploited and continue to exploit in order to justify oppression and violence.

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### *The Proverbs 31 Woman, Then*

Before she became a cultural icon of Christian womanhood, before she was invoked in funeral eulogies, and even before she was recounted by Jewish husbands to their wives on the Sabbath, the woman of Proverbs 31:10-31 represented an elite masculine perspective among the *golah* community

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>35</sup> Arminius Vambery, *Travels in Central Asia: Being the Account of a Journey from Teheran across the Turkoman Desert on the Eastern Shore of the Caspian to Khiva, Bokhara, and Samarcand; Performed in the year 1863* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1865): 198.

centered in Jerusalem during the Persian period.<sup>36</sup> The following paragraphs seek to offer the reader a glimpse into how Proverbs 31:10-31 reflects this historical context. In particular, the poem relies on economic activities and values of elite women and households then, which may be foreign to today's readers in the United States.

Proverbs 31:10 begins with a question: "A woman of *ḥayil* who can find? Her price is far above jewels." The romantic view of marriage that predominates in United States culture would be foreign to the Persian period concept of marriage informing Proverbs 31:10-31. Marriage then is better understood as an economic, or political, transaction between families. Among elite families, one would expect that a bride brought financial resources to the marriage, in the form of a dowry provided by her family as well as other assets. While the assets belong to the bride, the husband as guardian would have access to them. Thus, the worth of a bride is an economic value: the husband would expect to benefit financially from her economic value.<sup>37</sup>

Another issue the English-language reader of today faces is how to translate the word *ḥayil*. In classical Hebrew, the term had numerous options: substance; strength; an army; wealth, property, and profit from trade; and bravery.<sup>38</sup> Yet, when translators treat the word for the woman of the poem, there is a tendency to choose something like, as in the New Revised Standard Version: "capable." It is not unimportant that the woman is described with a Hebrew term that reflects both heroic valor and wealth. Throughout the poem, she is identified with warrior phrases and economic activities.<sup>39</sup> She is described as a hero typical of the aristocracy.<sup>40</sup>

For those who view marriage in terms of an intimate sexual relationship, it might be surprising to observe that sexual fidelity is not the primary concern when the women's trustworthiness is mentioned and when the terms good and evil are deployed.<sup>41</sup> The husband and wife relationship described in verses 11 and 12 concerns the woman's role in the management and economic activities of the household. She is trustworthy to oversee the booty or plunder (v. 11).<sup>42</sup> "To render good not evil" (v.12) is an idiom that is best understood in a commercial sense.<sup>43</sup> The husband is not mentioned again until verse 23, when the poem places him at the site of manly power: the city gates. Her husband's respected public status is

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<sup>36</sup> The *golah* community refers to the returnees (from among the Judahites exiled by the Babylonians) to Yehud during the early Persian period. The Persian period is the era from 538-332 BCE, during which the Achaemenid Empire was in control of southeast Asia, where the former kingdoms of Judah and Israel were located. The Persian province of Yehud roughly corresponds to the territory of Judah.

<sup>36</sup> Christine Roy Yoder offers a persuasive argument for the Persian period context. *Wisdom as a Woman of Substance: A Socioeconomic Reading of Proverbs 1-9 and 31:10-31*, BZAW 304 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), Chapter 1. As one will see throughout, Yoder's work on the socio-economic place of women in this period is important for understanding the historical context of Proverbs 31:10-31.

<sup>37</sup> Yoder, *Wisdom as a Woman of Substance*, 77-78.

<sup>38</sup> Christine Roy Yoder, "The Woman of Substance: A Socioeconomic Reading of Proverbs 31:10-31," *JBL* 122.3 (2003): 427n.1. Al Wolters argues that the poem is a heroic hymn, and that the woman of *ḥayil* is best understood as a female counterpart of the men titled *gibbōr ḥayil* "mighty men of valour." Al Wolters, "Proverbs XXXI 10-31 as Heroic Hymn," *VT* 38.4 (1988): 453.

<sup>39</sup> Wolters, "Proverbs XXXI 10-31 as Heroic Hymn," 453-456. For example, in Proverbs 31:15, the term *ṭerep*, "food" or "nourishment," carries the sense of "prey," invoking warlike imagery to the woman's activity (454). Likewise, the language of 31:17 is reminiscent of warriors (453). Wolters observes that in contrast to other ancient Near East poetry in praise of women that focuses on a woman's physical beauty or sex appeal, Proverbs 31:10-31 praises the woman for her actions (456).

<sup>40</sup> Wolters, "Proverbs XXXI 10-31 as Heroic Hymn," 455.

<sup>41</sup> This is not to say that a wife's sexual fidelity was not important in the Persian period, but it is not the concern in these verses.

<sup>42</sup> Wolters notes that the term *šālāl* provides warlike imagery, "Proverbs XXXI 10-31 as Heroic Hymn," 454.

<sup>43</sup> Richard J. Clifford, *Proverbs*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 274-75.

possible because of the household's wealth; and the woman's resources, economic activities, and household management skills allow her the resources to sit among the elders of the land (v. 23).

Women are far more involved in the economic life during the Persian period than readers today might presume. While a wife's responsibilities are focused on the family and household, women perform various kinds of work in a variety of contexts.<sup>44</sup> The woman in Proverbs 31:10-31 appears to be an amalgamation of elite women in the presentation of her economic activities.

The poem is focused on the woman as an active economic agent within the household (vv 13-22, 24).<sup>45</sup> Women were responsible for the education and care of their children and the management of the household's economic activities.<sup>46</sup> The Proverbs 31 woman provides care for her household, including the procurement of food (vv.14-15) and making their clothing (vv. 13 and 21).<sup>47</sup> Perhaps the poem also refers to her role in educating her children in verse 26.<sup>48</sup> Her task in managing the household is reflected in verses 15, 27. She also is in charge of managing her maiden-servants, *na'arot* (a term that might suggest they are of an upper class status).<sup>49</sup>

In the Persian period, the activities that a woman might do vary depending on the household and woman's wealth. Women work in the market places and in textile industries.<sup>50</sup> In Proverbs 31:13 and 19, the woman engages in making textiles. The woman in Proverbs 31 is not just active in making her household's garments, but also is involved in the market place, selling and trading garments and sashes (v. 24). Yehud enjoined "unprecedented growth in international commerce" during the Persian period.<sup>51</sup> The term translated traders, *kena'ani* (the word for Canaanites, but became synonymous with Phoenician traders) implies international trade.<sup>52</sup> The purple of the woman's clothes is the result of purple dye imported from afar. The imagery of bringing food from afar and merchant ships also reflect the international commerce of Yehud, in which the Proverbs 31 woman is operating.

As managers of the family business and agents of their husbands, women might engage in such activities as purchasing and leasing land.<sup>53</sup> She could purchase land from her own wealth. For royal women, land grants were an additional way she could acquire property.<sup>54</sup> These lands could be used to generate profit from their cultivation or from rents when land is leased out. Proverbs 31:16 imagines the woman purchasing a field and planting a vineyard. While the first part of the verse is ambiguous over whether she is buying a field as an agent of her husband or on her own account, the second half of the verse indicates she plants the vineyard "with the fruits of her hands." The verse suggests that the woman

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<sup>44</sup> Among the places and activities Yoder finds women working in the Persian empire include: in market places and textile industries; in royal stockyards and treasuries; working as scribes and tax handlers; making wine and beer; harvesting fields or shepherding livestock; working in armories or be members of garrisons; and working as artisans, stone workers, woodworkers, and goldsmiths. Yoder, *Wisdom as a Woman of Substance*, 59-61.

<sup>45</sup> It is misleading and anachronistic to apply the capitalist category entrepreneur to the woman. Nonetheless, some modern readers notice her economic activities and presume she embodied the entrepreneurial spirit, or point to this passage as support for entrepreneurialism as a biblical principle. See Peter Rios, "Wife as Entrepreneur: A Business View of Proverbs 31:10-31," *Journal of Ethics and Entrepreneurialship* 5.2 (2015): 71-76.

<sup>46</sup> Yoder, *Wisdom as a Woman of Substance*, 59.

<sup>47</sup> Verse 22 mentions her clothing was made of fine linens and purple. This suggests her elite status since the fabrics tended to be imported from abroad. Wolters, "Proverbs XXXI 10-31 as Heroic Hymn," 455.

<sup>48</sup> Although, Clifford suggests her wisdom is related to the art of governing the household and instructions refer to her treatment of her servants. Clifford, *Proverbs*, 276.

<sup>49</sup> Wolters "Proverbs XXXI 10-31 as Heroic Hymn," 455. See also, John MacDonald, "The Status and Role of the Na'ar in Israelite Society," *JNES* 35.3 (1976): 147-170.

<sup>50</sup> Yoder, *Wisdom as a Woman of Substance*, 59.

<sup>51</sup> Yoder, "The Woman of Substance," 440-443.

<sup>52</sup> Yoder, "The Woman of Substance," 441.

<sup>53</sup> Yoder, *Wisdom as a Woman of Substance*, 59.

<sup>54</sup> Yoder, *Wisdom as a Woman of Substance*, 65.

has sufficient wealth on her own to purchase and develop a vineyard – a labor intensive project that would not see an immediate return, an indication of the surplus wealth available to the woman. Elite women required sizeable workforces for their estates,<sup>55</sup> the *na 'arōt* for the woman may have been part of such a workforce for the woman in Proverbs 31 (31:15).

Women could also make money by providing loans to other people.<sup>56</sup> This activity might be reflected in Proverbs 31:20. While some readers might presume the woman is engaging in charity toward the poor and needy, I argue that charity is not necessarily an elite value but something they do to maintain the economic status quo. The verse might better be considered based the overall tenor of the poem which seems to be valorizing the woman's activities to strengthen and increase the household's wealth and status.<sup>57</sup> Read from this perspective, the woman opens her hands to the poor and needy through the giving of loans, which could generate substantial interest income for the woman and her household and could result in seizure of property if the terms of the loan were not met. Even if verse 20 is read more positively as the woman taking care of the poor and needy outside of the loan-game, it might still imply a patron-client relationship rather than an altruistic act of charity, one in which the patron bestows benefits to the poor in return for their loyalty and honors, a way of maintaining the economic status quo in society.

Finally, while the woman in Proverbs 31:10-31 can be understood as representing the activities of real women in the Persian period, she remains an impossible to attain ideal insider (i.e., not foreign) wife for elite men of the Judaeen community, not a normative prescription for all women. Contrary to the reading practice of some Christian women (and men) today, the Persian period scribe does intend the Proverbs 31:10-31 woman to be used by real women as an ethical model to embody; rather she serves as a pedagogical lesson for elite men, one “that furthers male objectives.”<sup>58</sup> Scholars suggest that the woman of Proverbs 31:10-31 is a symbol of Woman Wisdom.<sup>59</sup> As such, the elite man is to choose wisdom which will benefit him economically, like the wife's productivity that benefits the household without her husband's involvement: while one may not find a wife who can meet the standards of the woman in the poem, one can choose wisdom. This is to say, the elite patriarchal ideal for a wife as economic asset for the household in the Persian period, based on an amalgamation of real elite women, is used to persuade the male student of Proverbs to choose a life married to Woman Wisdom.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Yoder, *Wisdom as a Woman of Substance*, 65.

<sup>56</sup> Yoder, *Wisdom as a Woman of Substance*, 67; Yoder, “The Woman of Substance,” 439-440.

<sup>57</sup> Admittedly, many scholars see this verse as describing a virtuous act in terms of caring for the poor. For example, in his more positive reading of Proverbs 31, R.N. Whybray suggests, “It portrays a family which has achieved the worthy ambition referred to in such proverbs as 28.19, 20: of the blessings which will reward the honest and upright farmer and his family, who do not forget to be generous to those who are less fortunate than themselves.” *Wealth and Poverty in the Book of Proverbs*, JSOTSup 99 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 116. Further, Harold C. Washington argues, “In the book of Proverbs, the folk wisdom of Judean village society, which stressed hard work and communal interdependence, is combined with ancient Near Eastern tradition emphasizing care for the poor.” *Wealth and Poverty in the Instruction of Amenemope and the Hebrew Proverbs*, SBLDS 142 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 203-4.

<sup>58</sup> Yoder, *Wisdom as a Woman of Substance*, 106-9.

<sup>59</sup> For example, Thomas P. McCreesh, “Wisdom as Wife: Proverbs 31:10-31,” *RB* 92.1 (1985): 25-46. See also Clifford, *Proverbs*, 274; Roland E. Murphy, *Proverbs*, WBC 22 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 249-50; R.N. Whybray, *The Composition of the Book of Proverbs*, JSOTSup 168 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 154-161.

<sup>60</sup> If Michael and I had discussed this passage over espresso, I imagine he would have inquired why I do not make a point of what is seemingly the primary virtue of the woman, she “fears the LORD” (v. 30). Since the note is primarily concerned with economic activities of the woman, I did not want to obscure them in the end with what some might see as primarily a theological virtue. But, I think the fear of the LORD can be explained: by attributing her economic successes to her fear of the LORD, the poem inscribes an elite ideology that sees economic prosperity as a result of God's blessing, not a result of human factors. In such an ideology, the elite are God's chosen and maintain that status through their piety. The poor's economic hardship is implicitly the result of their impiety. Nonetheless, this argument is for a different sort of paper than this note.

By looking at the Proverbs 31 woman in the context of the Persian period, this paper sought to emphasize the economic activities of the woman and her household. The Proverbs 31 woman gives a picture of elite economic values and activities in the Persian period. A better understanding of the historical context helps to explain the imagery and activities of the poem. An understanding of the historical context also shows some of the differences between modern values and concepts that sometimes inform contemporary readers' interpretations of this ancient text.

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## **Alumnus Essay**

*Pro-Secular?*

*Luke's Relationship with Roman Imperial System and Culture*

*He has...rescued [us] from the hands of our enemies, [so that] without fear we might worship him in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.*

- Luke 1:74-75

This statement, spoken by Zechariah at the birth of John the Baptist, serves as a forecast of where the story of Jesus and his early community will end up. Acts 28:30-31 reports its accomplishment when, talking about Paul's lodgings in Rome, it says, "He remained two full years in his lodgings. He received all who came to him, and with complete assurance and without hindrance he proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ." The narrative of Luke-Acts begins in Jerusalem (Lk 1:5-25), moves to Galilee (Lk 4:14-15), returns to Jerusalem (Lk 19:28), then ventures throughout Asia Minor and ends in Rome (Acts 28:14). The movement of the story is also the movement of the church, at least the movement of the church as Luke wanted to present it. With the Gospel of Luke terminating in the heart of the Roman Empire and the missionary call strong in the hearts of his main characters, the question arises as to how Luke reconciles the demands of the Christ event with the reality of imperial rule. It will be the goal of this paper to suggest that Luke-Acts presents a view of Christianity relating to the Empire in a way that is mutually beneficial. Luke does not maintain anti-imperial sentiments, nor does he see the church as diametrically opposed to the surrounding culture.

I will begin by assuming that the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles were written by the same author and can be taken together to constitute one unified narrative. This position has been convincingly argued by Luke Timothy Johnson<sup>61</sup> and Robert Tannehill<sup>62</sup> and it well accepted in scholarly circles. I will then investigate the reason Luke wrote a gospel, his background, and the sources he utilized to create his composition. Next, I will ask if Luke had a political project in mind when writing his story. Was it the case that Luke's intention was to suggest subversive practices that would undermine the Romans? Questions such as this one will be weighed against claims that Luke's desire was to present a politically harmless Jesus figure. Following, I will focus on how Luke actually understood the Empire and how it works to advance the Christian community toward its stated goal that, "repentance, for the

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<sup>61</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991).

<sup>62</sup> Robert Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, vol. 1 & 2, *The Gospel According to Luke* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1986).

forgiveness of sins, would be preached in [Jesus'] name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Lk 24:47).

*Luke: Citizen of the Greco-Roman World*

Authorship of Luke-Acts has been attributed to someone who very well may have been a companion of Paul on his missionary journeys. Johnson relates that such a "supposition seems to find support in the so called 'we passages' of Acts...where the text shifts suddenly to first-person narration, suggesting the presence of an eyewitness to the events."<sup>63</sup> However, Luke does not seem to be aware of Paul's letters, or at least he never mentions them in his narration of events. This leads Johnson to conclude that Luke-Acts was probably written between 80 and 85CE. Powell, however, gives Luke more independence with regards to the non-use of Pauline theology or letters, when he suggests that, "there is no reason a companion of Paul's could not have been an independent thinker."<sup>64</sup> Luke, whether the "physician, a companion of Paul" (cf. Col 4:14; 2 Tim 4:11; Phlm 24) as church tradition informs, or somebody else, was most likely an educated Hellenized Gentile Christian, which is evidenced by the way he writes and his fluency with various styles of Greek.<sup>65</sup> This explains his desire to move the church toward a more inclusive stance vis-à-vis the Gentile Christians and Gentile culture.

The root reason for writing the Gospel of Luke is also a debated topic. "Hellenistic historiography" is often the label chosen for Luke-Acts as far as genre is concerned. Luke Timothy Johnson, while agreeing that Luke-Acts had some historical intentions, makes the case for "the first Christian *apologetic* literature."<sup>66</sup> He outlines the different opinions about how this apology could have been intended. One theory is that Luke-Acts served as "an apology for the Christian movement as such." This would mean that it was composed to prove to the Empire that the Way was not a political threat but really an ancient religion like Judaism (in like manner as Josephus in *The Jewish Wars*). Another way of looking at it finds that it was written as "an apology for Paul and his teaching, perhaps even for his trial."<sup>67</sup> As interesting as all of this is, Johnson reveals his own thoughts when he states:

To a possible outside Hellenistic reader, the Christian movement is presented as a philosophically enlightened, politically harmless, socially benevolent and philanthropic fellowship. But its more immediate purpose is to interpret the Gospel for insiders within the context of a pluralistic environment composed of both Jews and Gentiles...Luke's narrative, therefore, is expressly concerned with the fulfilment of God's promise up to his own day.<sup>68</sup>

It must then be admitted that the main thrust of the Luke-Acts is its desire to fortify the faith of those who have been shaken by the recent event of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. A common question during that period must have been, "If this new God of ours has not fulfilled his promises to the Jews, how can he be trusted to be faithful to the promises of Jesus Christ?" If this was true, the reason given in the introduction to Luke's Gospel makes sense: "so that you may realize the certainty of the teaching you have received" (Lk 1:4). Tannehill notes, "Through revealing this sort of order in the narrative—an order which nourishes faith because it discloses a saving purpose behind events—the narrator sought to create 'assurance.'"<sup>69</sup> This being the case, the narrative itself, not historical accuracy, would have been the primary concern. In the course of the meaning placed behind the events, certain attitudes toward the Roman Empire must have also been implicitly or explicitly present. The

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>64</sup> Mark Allen Powell, *What Are They Saying About Luke?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 17.

<sup>65</sup> Johnson, *Luke*, 3.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 8-9.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>69</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, vol. 1, 12.



assumption is that Luke is advocating for a more favorable view of Rome than the other Gospels. His lack of focus on the Parousia of the Lord leads Johnson to observe, “Luke-Acts is positive toward the world, not only God’s creation but also as the arena of history and human activity. It is perhaps the least apocalyptic of the NT writings, and the least sectarian.”<sup>70</sup> He goes on to suggest that, “Human symbols are adequate vessels of the Good News about God,” and, “The Roman Empire does not appear as the instrument of Satan, but as the condition for the safety and spread of the Gospel.”<sup>71</sup> It is this point that the current project is concerned with.

Insofar as influences for Luke-Acts are concerned, there are the obvious ones from the two source hypothesis of Mark, the Q document, and other specifically Lukan material. There are, however, other sources that may not have contributed so much to the content as to the form of Luke-Acts that are seldom mentioned. Greco-Roman legends, religious myths, and literature have also influenced how Luke presents his material as a way of being more inclusive of the Hellenized world. Defending the opinion that one of Luke’s desires in writing a Gospel was to attract new Greco-Roman converts, Mark Kiley suggests that, “in a way unique to his work [Luke sees] that [the] good news of ‘the reign of God and the Lord Jesus Christ’ has an appeal for the Roman world as such.”<sup>72</sup> Kiley sees parallels to the stories of Roman gods in Luke’s presentation of Jesus and his healing miracles. He states, “In the independent healing ministry of Jesus in Luke 4-8, we find him healing in twelve or thirteen settings....At the end of Jesus’ healings, the Twelve are sent on their mission. In these twelve labors, as well as in the sayings about fire and being constrained, we have clear parallels to Hercules.”<sup>73</sup> While some of what Kiley proposes is reasonable, he tends to stand on less firm ground when he makes other interpretations. An example of one that is particularly far-fetched is his comparison of Decius to Jesus:

There are thirteen occurrences of the number 10 in the Gospel. And this “Ten” is present in the dek-root of the name Decius. P. Decius Mus is famous for making a *devotion*, a vow to *sacrifice himself for the good of Rome*, before he went into battle. The first occurrence of ten in Luke, in chapter 14, involves Jesus imagining someone going into battle with 10,000 troops, and having to gauge the chance of success against a numerically stronger opponent. This saying is embedded in a series of reflections on ordering one’s priorities and denying one’s self as a disciple. I would suggest that the redaction of these sayings is guided in part by the memory of Decius.<sup>74</sup>

He also see parallels between Titus Flaminius, Plutarch’s Cicero, and Paul the apostle. One of the more reasonable similarities is found when Kiley considers Maryann Bonz’s book *The Past as Legacy*<sup>75</sup> which explores the relationship of the journeys of Paul in Acts to the *Aeneid*. In drawing this comparison, he summarizes, “She asserts that they both contain a small *remnant who leave their homeland under divine guidance in order to form in Rome the nucleus of a universal community*.”<sup>76</sup> Other parallels include the journey to Rome by way of stops and adventures (cf. Ac 28:1-10). Although Aeneas and Paul did not follow identical courses, it seems as if some influences are probable here. Kiley, feebly, reverts to numerical “parallels” and states that the recorded number of people on the ship with Paul, 276, is a reference to *Aeneid* 2.76 which recounts a story of false accusation that Luke’s readers would have been able to pick up on.<sup>77</sup> This assumes that the *Aeneid* was numerated as we have it today when Acts was written which, unfortunately, it was not.

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<sup>70</sup> Johnson, *Luke*, 21.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>72</sup> Mark Kiley, “Roman Legends and Luke-Acts,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 39 no. 3 (2009), 135.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Maryann Bonz, *The Past as Legacy: Luke-Acts and Ancient Epic* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000).

<sup>76</sup> Kiley, “Roman Legends,” 139.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

Peter Scaer also finds interesting similarities in Luke-Acts and Greek culture but in a more responsible way than Kiley. Insofar as the *Aeneid* is concerned, Scaer also notes the journey motif as Paul travels to Rome and adds, “The climax of Luke-Acts is summarized in the simple words, ‘and so we came to Rome’ (Acts 28:14). As Aeneas finally brought his gods to the land of the Tiber (*Aeneid* 1), so also does Paul proclaim his unknown God to Rome.”<sup>78</sup>

But Luke does not stop at general journey imagery that calls to mind Aeneas’ founding of the great civilization out of the ashes of Troy. More specifically, Luke actually bases some of the scenes from Acts on the well-known Greek literature of the time. Dennis MacDonald asks the question, *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer?* His book, subtitled *Four Cases from the Acts of the Apostles*, argues that in some scenes of Acts there are obvious imitations of Homer’s great epics. MacDonald proposes six criteria for determining if a Homeric source could have been used by New Testament authors. “Accessibility, criterion one, pertains to the dating of the proposed model relative to the imitation and its physical distribution and popularity in education, art, and literature.”<sup>79</sup> The *Iliad*, he claims, was one of the most widely distributed and taught classics of the ancient world. Even the Jews would not have been able to escape its influence. The “historian Josephus,” MacDonald says, “frequently imitated Homer when narrating Jewish themes.”<sup>80</sup> The next criterion is “analogy.” This “asks if other ancient authors imitated the same model.” Third is “destiny” which looks at the quantity of similarities between the works in question. Fourth, “order,” considers “the relative sequencing of motifs in the two works.” Fifth comes “distinctive traits.” This focuses on the distinctiveness of genre type in the possibly imitated section versus the work as a whole. Lastly, “interpretability” is understood as asking the question of whether or not an imitated section would have been able to be easily interpreted by its intended readers.<sup>81</sup> MacDonald, utilizing these criteria, concludes that the Acts of the Apostles does in fact imitate Homer in four locations: Peter’s meeting with Cornelius (Ac 10:1-11:18); Paul’s farewell to the Ephesian leaders (Ac 21:7-14); the selection of Matthias to replace Judas (Ac 1:15-26); and Peter’s escape from Herod (Ac 12:1-23). All of these stories, MacDonald argues, are closely related to similar tales in Homer that would have been widely accessible. So widely accessible, in fact, that they would also be easily interpretable. This leads him to conclude that there can be no mistake in their being imitations of the great Greek author. The implications of such a claim include Luke being sympathetic to Greco-Roman culture to such an extent that he found it useful for conveying the new things of Jesus Christ. Such a situation is in some ways analogous to the way that the author(s) of the Noah story took ancient Near East mythology and reorganized it to serve as a vehicle for talking about YHWH. MacDonald puts it in the context of an ancient “culture war” saying:

Ancient evangelism was, to a large extent, a *mythomachia*, a battle among competing factions. Luke was engaged in a literary battle on at least two fronts: Jewish scriptures in the rear, and Greek poetry up ahead. The principle virtues of his compositions reside not in his linear continuity with historical events or traditions but in his strategic transformation of ancient narratives.<sup>82</sup>

With Luke’s sympathetic view of Greco-Roman culture and his ability to use it to say something true about God’s revelation in the person of Jesus Christ in mind, one must now consider how Luke actually related to the Roman Empire as an all pervasive cultural backdrop.

### *Luke’s Political Project*

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<sup>78</sup> Peter Scaer, “The Greco-Roman Savior: Jesus in the Age of Augustus,” *Logia* 21 no. 2 (2012), 8.

<sup>79</sup> Dennis MacDonald, *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer? Four Cases from the Acts of the Apostles* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 2.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 4-6.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

The question of whether or not Luke-Acts is anti or pro Empire is one of great debate. Are there subversive texts and practices that go in the face of Imperial rule? Or is there more material that highlights the good points of the Roman system and laud its achievements? In looking at linguistic systems in Luke-Acts one notices the use of terms like “the Son of God,” “Lord,” and “Son of the Most High.” Adela Yarbro Collins writes about the understanding of such terms among Greeks when they are used in the Gospel of Mark. Being that Mark was also written for an audience under the same Imperial yoke, what she says in her article is directly related to the readers of Luke-Acts. The term “Son of the Most High” (υιος του θεου υψιστου) taken in non-Jewish, non-Christian contexts, “occurs as a divine name for Zeus.”<sup>83</sup> This leads her to conclude that, “For members of Mark’s audience familiar with [the cult of Zeus], the demon’s address of Jesus [Mk 1:24] is equivalent to ‘son of Zeus.’”<sup>84</sup> Collins traces the imperial use of “son of god” as it came to be used among the emperors. Beginning with Julius Caesar’s deification after his death, “it came to mean a god who had previously been a man.”<sup>85</sup> After Julius, both Augustus and Tiberius assumed the title υιος θεου in their addresses. Thus, when such titles are applied to Jesus in Luke-Acts, they would immediately recall imperial imagery. Is this what is intended when Peter is mistaken for a god in Acts 10:25 and Paul and Barnabas in Acts 14:11?

At first glance these mistaken identities might seem like a counter-claim to the ability of any human being to be worshiped as a god. Acts 10:25 has Cornelius “falling at his feet [and paying] him homage.” “Homage,” here, is one translation for the word προσεκυνησεν. Fitzmyer informs the reader that another possible translation is “adore, or worship.”<sup>86</sup> If it is the case that Luke wished to convey worship and then had his character respond by saying “Get up, I myself am also a human being (ανθρωπος)” (Acts 10:26), it is possible that this correction was meant for all human beings, none of them are worthy of “worship.” Paul’s experience of being worshiped yields similar themes. In Acts 14:11-18 the men (ανδρες) at Lystra want to offer sacrifice to Barnabas and Paul whom they have mistaken for Zeus and Hermes “in human form.” This assumption throws the two missionaries into a rage and they respond by saying, “We are of the same nature (ομοιοπαθεις) as you, human beings (ανθρωποι)” (Acts 14:15). While there is the possibility of anti-emperor cult sentiments here, neither Fitzmyer nor Johnson pick up on it.<sup>87</sup>

Luke has used the titles “king” and “Lord” to describe Jesus more than any other Gospel. This is so much the case that John Navone notes, “Luke stresses that Jesus is ‘Lord,’ especially after the resurrection and also programmatically in the birth narratives (Luke 2:11), to the extent that we may see this as Luke’s standard way of describing Jesus’ present position.”<sup>88</sup> This, he thinks, evidences Luke’s desire to make “a counterclaim for Jesus over against Caesar.” Navone also cites the use of “king” and “savior” not only as language that echoed Caesar but as “an encouragement to Luke’s readers to keep trusting in God, confident that God’s purposes will come to fruition in spite of human oppression.”<sup>89</sup> Such a radical view of the intentions of such language is not universally shared. Christopher Bryan, for example, explores the possibilities and concludes:

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<sup>83</sup> Adela Yarbro Collins, “Mark and His Readers: The Son of God among Greeks and Romans,” *Harvard Theological Review* 93 no. 2 (2000), 90.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>86</sup> Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 461.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 532; and Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 249.

<sup>88</sup> John Navone, “Luke-Acts and the Roman Empire: God and Caesar,” *Bible Today* 42 no. 4 (2004), 233.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

Thus, as we have already observed, Romans spoke of living emperors as “son of god,” “lord,” and “savior.” Paul and other Christians did the same for Jesus. Does it follow, as Crossan and Reid claim, that for Christians “to proclaim Jesus as Son of God was deliberately denying Caesar his highest title, and that to announce Jesus as Lord and Savior was calculated treason”? No, it does not.<sup>90</sup>

He continues to say that even though the words used are the same, their context is different and they cannot be understood to be about the same thing. Seyoon Kim identifies this mistake as “parallelomania.” Indeed, he says very clearly that in the application of these words to Jesus, “there is neither an anti-imperial polemic nor any intent to subvert the Roman Empire.”<sup>91</sup> This, however, is only when Kim is speaking about how Paul has used the words in questions in his letters. Coming to Luke-Acts, Kim sees a different story. He constructs his theory around the *inclusio* of Luke 2:1-14, the birth narrative, and Acts 28:30-31, Paul proclaiming the kingdom of God without hindrance. Within this he claims:

Luke deliberately contrasts Jesus the Messianic king/lord to Caesar Augustus, and implicitly claims that Jesus is the true *kyrios* and *sōtēr*, the true bearer of the kingship of God, and that he will bring true *pax* on the earth, replacing the false *pax* brought by the military conquests of Caesar, a false *kyrios* and *sōtēr*.<sup>92</sup>

Focusing on the use of *κύριος* in Luke-Acts, C. Kevin Rowe makes helpful observations when taking on the interaction of Peter and Cornelius in Acts 10. He notes that the Roman official, his Gentile audience, and the whole scene taking place in a city “founded in honor of Augustus” creates such a situation that “an ethos in which the presence of the Roman Empire is keenly felt.”<sup>93</sup> He continues saying that, “It is into this setting that Peter introduces the crucified Jesus—*οὗτος*—as the *κύριος πάντων*.” This must, however, be held in contrast with the other times Luke uses *κύριος* in reference to temporal lords. Acts 25:26, when Felix is writing to King Agrippa about Paul, reads, “But I have nothing to write about him to our sovereign (*τῷ κυρίῳ*.)” If Jesus is “Lord” and temporal rulers can be “lord,” is it the case that the same use of the word is meant in all situations? Rowe would say no. At the very end of his study he states, “Put in Lukan language, Christians may refer to the *κύριος καίσαρ* as *κύριος*, as indeed Luke himself does (Acts 25:26), but Jesus *κύριος* is the *κύριος πάντων* (Acts 10:36).”<sup>94</sup> Thus the different uses of “lord” are not necessarily contradictory because they are talking about different ways of being “lord.” In this estimation, Luke does not see Jesus as taking over the temporal lordship of the Roman leaders but as the background to all creation as “lord of all.”

But what did this mean for how Luke envisioned the political potency of the Jesus movement? While one scholar has gone so far as to suggest that the whole of Luke-Acts is aimed as a threat against Rome which holds the destruction of the Temple as an example of what God (Jesus) does against his enemies, more mainline views tend to find that Luke’s presentation of Jesus and his followers takes pains to come off as non-political.<sup>95</sup> An instance of debate in this area is the story of Jesus healing a demonic at Gerasene in Luke 8:26-39. This story has been adapted from Mark and has only undergone slight changes in language and structure when adapted by Luke. Norman Beck interpreters an anti-Roman cryptogram in the account given the use of “Legion” to name the demonic presence. He says, “Perhaps the use of the

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<sup>90</sup> Christopher Bryan, *Render to Caesar: Jesus, the Early Church, and the Roman Superpower* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 90-91.

<sup>91</sup> Seyoon Kim, *Christ and Caesar: The Gospel and the Roman Empire in the Writings of Paul and Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 30.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>93</sup> C. Kevin Rowe, “Luke-Acts and the Imperial Cult: A Way through the Conundrum?” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 27 no. 3 (2005), 292.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 300.

<sup>95</sup> As an example of proponents of the “threat to Rome” theory, see Charles Giblin, *Destruction of Jerusalem according to St. Luke’s Gospel*, *Analecta Biblica* (Rome, Italy: Biblical Institute Press, 1985).

word 'Legion' here...was a cryptic way to communicate that the reason this man was so thoroughly deranged was that he was cooperating totally with the Romans, he was 'living among the dead.'"<sup>96</sup> The use of "pigs" is also, according to Beck, a sort of insult against the occupying Roman forces. In discussing the risk involved in publishing such cryptograms, he says, "Within such cryptograms, if they were well crafted, it was possible even to express triumph over the Roman forces."<sup>97</sup> Joseph Fitzmyer, on the other hand, does not see anything in this passage beyond the meaning that, "Demonic force in the world is brought to an end by Jesus' word."<sup>98</sup> H. Preisker likewise notes that, "in the NT the word *λεγιων* is not used for the military world, as elsewhere. It is used to denote transcendent forces."<sup>99</sup> Johnson also agrees when he states, "One must, however, strain to find a political statement embedded in the name."<sup>100</sup> Thus, in the case of the use of "Legion" to name the demonic presence in Luke 8:30, implicit anti-imperial rhetoric simply is not there.

In point of fact, Kim finds nothing in the Gospel that would indicate a call to be anyway involved in politics. "Evidently Luke," Kim remarks, "does not think that the redemption that Jesus has brought has to do with overthrowing the Roman imperial system or replacing it with a politically independent government of Israel."<sup>101</sup> Bryan falls in line with this thinking and observes:

Luke's Jesus is not a rebel seeking to replace one *polis* with another, nor is he a Gandhi, counseling nonviolent noncooperation with imperial authorities. On the contrary, when confronted with a Jew who collects taxes for the Romans, Jesus rejoices in the man's almsgiving and his acts of penitence for extortion, but notably does *not* tell him to stop working for the empire (Luke 19:1-10).<sup>102</sup>

One of Bryan's most convincing arguments for this is the way that Mary and Joseph behave vis-à-vis the Empire when the census is called. He states, "Luke here shows Mary and Joseph loyally obeying Caesar Augustus' decree, and in so doing, *identifying* themselves with the Roman Empire...Mary appears to see no contradiction between God's power over such 'mighty ones' and her own obedience to Caesar's decree."<sup>103</sup> Also at the scene of the Last Supper, Jesus makes a seemingly revolutionary statement about the purchase of swords for those who do not already have them (Lk 22:36). Those present locate two swords in the room to which Jesus says, "It is enough!" (Lk 22:38). Most commentators find it clear that Jesus was here talking in "a symbolic sense." The apostles "miss the point of what he was talking about" which is evidenced by Jesus' harsh reaction to one of them still being armed in the garden in vv. 49-51.<sup>104</sup>

### *The Lukan View of Empire*

If Luke does not present overly anti-imperial themes in his Gospel, the next inquiry must be as to his outlook towards the Empire. Ultimately, "coming to terms with the Empire is part of the reality of dealing with the delay of the Parousia."<sup>105</sup> The world of the ever-present Empire was the one in which Christianity was born. Luke realized this and tried to demonstrate how it was not such a bad situation.

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<sup>96</sup> Norman Beck, *Anti-Roman Cryptograms in the New Testament: Symbolic Messages of Hope and Liberation*, The Westminster College Library of Biblical Symbolism (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), 107.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>98</sup> Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1970), 739.

<sup>99</sup> H. Preisker, "λογιων," in *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 4, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1967), 69.

<sup>100</sup> Johnson, *Luke*, 137.

<sup>101</sup> Kim, *Christ and Caesar*, 95.

<sup>102</sup> Bryan, *Render to Caesar*, 99.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>104</sup> Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 1432-1433.

<sup>105</sup> Navone, "Luke-Acts and the Roman Empire," 232.

The Roman system ensured the *Pax Romana* which included the security and infrastructure to travel freely. Saul of Tarsus would not have become Paul the apostle to the Gentiles without the achievements of the Roman Empire. Navone, however, observes, “Luke never explicitly mentions the benefits of the *Pax Romana* or the Roman road system. If this is a significant sign of Luke’s positive view of the Empire, he has not gone out of his way to draw attention to it.”<sup>106</sup>

One aspect of Luke-Acts that is noteworthy is that Luke never blames Rome for the death of Jesus or any of the misfortunes that befall the Christian community. For him, it is always the Jews who stir up trouble, not the Romans. The Romans who are somehow implemented in the mistreatment of Jesus or his followers only do so because they are not being true to their own consciences, are persuaded by others, or are not following their own laws. “Luke,” Bryan states, “wants to suggest that hostility to the Christians invariably arises from one of two causes, ‘pagan greed’ or ‘Jewish jealousy,’ and *not* from imperial suspicion or disapproval.”<sup>107</sup>

A look at the character of Pilate will help to illustrate this point. In the account of Jesus’ trial, it is the Jews who bring charges against him, not the Roman official Pilate. The Sanhedrin bring Jesus to Pilate and tell him that “he opposes the payment of taxes to Caesar and maintains that he is the Messiah, a king” (Lk 23:2). At this point, the reader knows that Jesus does in fact approve of the payment of taxes to Caesar because he has no problem with Zacchaeus’ profession in 19:1-10 and said so himself in 20:25. As to the accusation of being a Messianic king, Pilate asks him for confirmation, gets it, and then declares him innocent. He repeats his ruling of “not guilty” three times and even has it reaffirmed by Herod (23:15). In the end, however, Pilate allows “their voices [to prevail]” and hands down the verdict “that their demand should be granted” (23:23-24). Pilate was known in the ancient world as being a violent man. Earlier in Luke, there is a story about having “mingled [the blood of Galileans] with the blood of their sacrifices” (13:1). Josephus reports that Pilate had a potential riot put down by disguising his soldiers in the crowd and then giving them the order to use lethal force when the crowd became rambunctious.<sup>108</sup> On another occasion, Pilate killed a number of Jews on pilgrimage to Mount Gerizzim whom he had forbidden to go. This resulted in him being called back to Rome and Marcellus being put in his place “to take care of the affairs in Judea.”<sup>109</sup> Pilate, then, was a known offender of good Roman conduct and his allowing of Jesus to be killed can be seen as another example of what happens when those in power abdicate their responsibilities.

In the case of Paul, Roman law never actually convicts him of anything. He is arrested only once in Philippi because he cast a fortune-telling spirit out of a slave, which caused her masters to lose their source of profit. The imprisonment only lasted a day and the magistrates released them saying, “Now then, come out, and go in peace” (Acts 16:36). Bryan observes that Paul is “*once* taken into protective custody by the Romans, without which it seems likely he would have been lynched (21:27-40).”<sup>110</sup> Bryan continues to summarize Paul’s interactions with Roman authorities:

The quotation from Acts that is offered as Roman “grounds” for arresting the apostles is actually presented by Acts as a summary of *Jewish* charges, which the “Roman officials,” for their part, pretty well ignore (17:8-9). The last part of Acts (24-28) shows Paul being repeatedly examined by Roman tribunals and repeatedly acquitted, so that the climax, with Paul teaching in Rome “without hindrance,” is not unexpected (Acts 28:31).<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 231.

<sup>107</sup> Bryan, *Render to Caesar*, 104.

<sup>108</sup> Josephus, “The Antiquities of the Jews,” in *The Works of Josephus*, trans. William Whiston (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987), 480.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 482.

<sup>110</sup> Bryan, *Render to Caesar*, 104.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

In fact, the chance to be questioned in a court situation the way Paul was at the end of Acts was not a disaster but “an unrivaled opportunity to ‘go public,’ to make a definitive statement of [his] beliefs before the wider world.”<sup>112</sup> It was a risk, no doubt, but “Luke the narrator...makes sure that readers know the charge was unfounded....This assessment is endorsed by the judgement of Festus and Agrippa: Paul has not committed any offense under Roman law, and could have been released if he had not appealed to Caesar (25:18; 26:31-32).”<sup>113</sup> Loveday Alexander does not view this as a wholesale acceptance of the Empire on the part of Luke or Paul but rather envisions Paul as one who knows his way around the complex legal system of the Empire and is “streetwise” enough to use it for his own purposes.<sup>114</sup>

Luke-Acts can also be seen as a critique of the Roman use of power. Whereas Rome is a large military superpower, Christianity presents a model of authority that does not share the same thoughts on power. It has been stated that both Rome and Christianity have similar goals of “conquering” the world by “negotiating happiness with insiders and outsiders....Both develop a presence everywhere and both extend citizenship to new groups.”<sup>115</sup> Where they differ is in how this is accomplished and what the authority structure looks like. “It is remarkable,” Richard Cassidy exclaims, “that Luke’s Jesus repeatedly instructs his disciples on the topics of service and humility.”<sup>116</sup> These teachings consistently come up as juxtapositions to temptations to power on the part of the disciples (cf. 9:48; 22:24-27). When Jesus is tempted in the desert, Satan offers him control of the “kingdoms of the world” (4:5-6) if he but worship him. Here Kim, resisting the temptation to interpret this as meaning that Satan’s power is what lies behind the kingdoms of the world (the Romans), states:

So Jesus saw Caesar and other pagan rulers exercising their authority in a Satanic way and for the Satanic purpose, i.e., for the kingdom of Satan. But having rejected at his temptation by Satan the exercise of his authority for his own good as a diabolic temptation and having resolved to follow only God’s word, Jesus embodies ‘as one who serves’ the conception of leadership befitting the Kingdom of God (cf. also Luke 12:37).<sup>117</sup>

It is not that Satan = Roman but that the present Roman way of exercising authority is antithetical to the correct way of God which focuses on service and humility. Thus Luke’s intention is not to overthrow Roman rule or even to replace it. Luke is rather interested in offering a critique of how power can be abused and voices the concerns of the poor and lowly who he sees as ones needing special care. Thus Navone can say, “The Christian stance is twofold: to call the state back to its former ways, and to be a faithful witness to Jesus.”<sup>118</sup>

Luke’s critique, however, has a limit. When given the opportunity to condemn violence to the level of pacifism, Jesus passes it up. Luke 3:10-14 recounts a crowd of people asking Jesus who each should do to live like repentant believers. Some in this group are soldiers who receive only the instructions “Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages” (3:14). From this, one can reasonably conclude that Jesus did not see the occupation of being a soldier as an obstacle to Christian life. Beyond that, Luke 19:11-27 has Jesus telling a parable about a nobleman lending coins to his servants that were meant to be invested. One of the servants simply kept his share stored in a handkerchief which resulted in his being stripped of what was entrusted to him. 19:27, the last verse, seems strange here. It goes: “Now as for those enemies of mine who did not want me as their king, bring them here and slay them

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<sup>112</sup> Loveday Alexander, “Luke’s Political Vision,” *Interpretation* 66 no. 3 (2012), 284.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 287.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> Navone, “Luke-Acts and the Roman Empire,” 234.

<sup>116</sup> Richard Cassidy, *Christians and Roman Rule in the New Testament: New Perspectives*, Companions to the New Testament (New York: Crossroads Publishing, 2001), 20.

<sup>117</sup> Kim, *Christ and Caesar*, 90.

<sup>118</sup> Navone, “Luke-Acts and the Roman Empire,” 234.

before me.” Such a case is spoken of by Josephus in *Antiquities of the Jews*. Here Herod has a number of people murdered because “they did not want me to rule...over them.”<sup>119</sup> This, as Johnson points out, demonstrates “the *realpolitik* of the ancient world.”<sup>120</sup> As much as Luke desires to distance himself from the abuses of power typical in the Roman Empire, he is still, to some extent, a product of his environment. Indeed, Warren Carter, who here speaks about a similar passage in Matthew, finds just the words to convey this reality:

The word of God comes to the gospel’s readers, as it always does, in cultural garb. There is no language for this gospel to employ other than the one that pervades and dominates its world. The gospel attests, then, the power of the imperial paradigm, the deep level at which it has been internalized, absorbed, and assumed by this gospel’s traditions, communities, and author—members of the imperially-controlled society who nonetheless criticize...it!<sup>121</sup>

### *Conclusion*

In conclusion, while Luke-Acts cannot be claimed as a 100% pro-Roman document or apology, there are several instances where the Empire is viewed in a positive light. At the end of the day, the Empire composed the reality in which Christianity existed and the government structure with which the church had to contend. Luke-Acts avoids easy temptations to pit the Jesus movement against the dominating imperial power of Rome. In fact, if one read Acts, it is *because* of the Roman Empire that the church survived the first few decades. While it does critique the way in which Rome uses its power, it nowhere suggests that the Empire is on its way out, or that it must be (actively or passively) subverted by Christian believers. Bryan offers the conclusion that “in Luke’s view, nothing that comes from *outside* the church can really damage the church. But the church *can* be damaged from within, when it fails to listen to the call of God’s grace.”<sup>122</sup> He justifies this position with the accounts of what befalls Annas and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11 when they lie about the funding they provide to the common pot.

Even the way in which Luke has chosen to write his two-volume work demonstrates his acceptance of imperial rule. By allowing “lord” to take on different meanings, he is able to respect temporal leadership while maintaining the absolute Lordship of God. Luke has found a way to be both citizen of the Empire and citizen of heaven. This is also evidenced by his incorporation of Homeric style into Acts. Luke truly must have been a very educated man, educated enough not to fall into the sectarian temptation of reducing the world to “us versus them” or “secular versus religious” understandings. Luke sees the Empire not as an enemy but as a structure that Christians can cooperate with and participate in.

*Rev. Mr. Peter Santandreu ThM*  
*Class of 2009*

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<sup>119</sup> Quoted in Johnson, *Luke*, 291-292.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.

<sup>121</sup> Warren Carter, “Resisting and Imitating the Empire: Imperial Paradigms in Two Matthean Parables,” *Interpretation* 56 no. 3 (July 2002), 272.

<sup>122</sup> Bryan, *Render to Caesar*, 101.



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## Appreciations

### *Michael Costanzo, A Genuine Mentor*

“Where the priests feed the flock committed to them both by their word and by their example the people are preserved from many errors.” From *Defense of the Catholic Priesthood* by St. John Fisher (1525; translated by Philip Hallet, 1934).

Father Michael Costanzo was a man who wore his learning lightly. He was constantly reading and reflecting. I had many fascinating conversations with him over the years regarding his views on such figures as Edith Stein, Vincent Van Gogh, Oscar Wilde, and Simone Weil, all of whose complete works he had immersed himself in. He was eager to share what he had learned from them, and encouraged me to read them as well.

But Mike was never one to put on airs or try to dazzle people with his erudition. Instead, he was fully other-directed: he always wanted to know what his friends were reading, watching, or thinking about. And the number of his friends were legion, and I am honored to say that I was one of them. He welcomed me to St. John Fisher College when I first arrived in 2004 and it was as if we had known each other for decades. When he learned that my eldest brother John was a priest he was delighted, and always asked me about him. John, a member of the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate order, based in Belleville, Illinois, came to visit the campus in 2008 and Mike concelebrated mass with him at the Coleman Chapel. Like myself, John was devastated to learn about Mike’s untimely death, and has nothing but fond memories of their time together.

Mike’s office in Pioch Hall was a genuine sanctuary. Everyone who entered there felt welcome. He would insist upon your having espresso with him, and would have a hurt look in his eyes if you didn’t also take a cookie or a chocolate as well. He was the perfect host. I once tried to reciprocate by inviting him to my office for coffee. He demonstrated true Christian charity by praising my coffee-making abilities, but also made it clear that there was no need to do so again—he was perfectly happy to act as host (and he no doubt realized how much better his espresso was than my Tim Hortons mix!).

There was usually a flock of faculty, staff, and students coming in and out of Mike’s office. Everyone felt welcome, and knew that they could drop in at any time and engage in the various discussions going on without feeling presumptuous. Egos were checked at the door. There was a real communal feeling in Mike’s office. This reminded me of my visits to my grandmother’s home when I was a child. I knew that, no matter what turmoil may have been going on in my own home or in school or anywhere else I’d been, I could go over to her house at any time. I’d find a flock of cousins, aunts, uncles, church friends, and sometimes perfect strangers there, gathered around the kitchen table where my grandmother held court, always making sure our coffee or tea cups were filled as the conversations continued until, properly replenished, we ventured back into our hectic lives. My grandmother and Mike were *simpatico*—both understood the importance of sanctuary places.

I often observed how much Mike loved interacting with his students, and how he made it clear to them that he was learning as much from them as they from him. His genuine interest in their lives and their aspirations was fully evident. He was a mentor to them in the true meaning of that term.

Mike was also a superb colleague and a mentor to me as well. To give just one example, In the Spring of 2015 he and I realized that we were each teaching a course at the same time and in the same

building, and we talked about guest lecturing in each's other class. Mike was teaching a Religious Studies course on "The Problem of Evil" and I was teaching "Introduction to Philosophy." Since we were both going to be discussing Voltaire's famous work *Candide* around the same time, we "switched classes" for the day. Mike taught my class about the theological implications of the Problem of Evil, and I taught his class about the influence of the philosopher Leibniz on Voltaire's book. This was highly successful and well received in both classes, and we continued to coordinate our schedules in subsequent semesters. In fact, the last time I saw him was when I lectured to his "Problem of Evil" class in the spring of 2017 about Oscar Wilde's work *De Profundis*. This was right before Spring break—when we returned, Mike was scheduled to come to my Introduction to Philosophy class to talk about the Book of Job. Sadly, he went into the hospital before then and died shortly thereafter. I still miss our cooperative interactions.

One other way in which Mike was a mentor to me was his constant encouragement that I should contribute articles to *Verbum*. Over the years I wrote on a variety of topics, including *The Need for Civility in Contentious Times*; *A Philosopher in the Locker Room: Sportsmanship and the Honorary Coach Program at St. John Fisher College*; *O Captain, My Captain: Teaching Empathy*; *Remembering Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980): The Medium and the Message*; *Developing One's Character: An Aristotelian Defense of Sportsmanship*; *You're a Good Man, Charles Schulz* and *What was Sherlock Holmes' Alma Mater? Elementary: St. John Fisher College.* Some of these were serious, others more tongue-in-cheek, but writing them helped me to develop my ideas and to get feedback from those who read the pieces, quite a few of which I later expanded into book chapters. I can attest that many others also benefited from Mike's encouragement to put their thoughts on paper, and from his sharp but charitable editorial eye.

It's not surprising that Mike was so enthusiastic about *Verbum*, since he was a writer himself. He was at heart a poet, and I believe that the creation of poetic works was central to his sense of self. He was rightly proud of the poetry collections he published over the years. Here is just one example of his creative talents:

*Sunrise*

Inevitable as this morning's sunrise  
And the evening's melancholy sunset,  
My spirit's longing for a misty dream  
Hides in the curves of wavering clouds,  
White in their beauty as they come and pass.  
What happened to the delicate flowers  
Some hand had placed on my writing desk?  
The vase is empty and shrouded in mist.

*(From Water Lilies, FootHills Publishing 2010)*

Father Michael Costanzo was an inspirational figure. I very much miss my conversations with Mike, and the sense of sanctuary he provided me, but I am comforted by the knowledge that his influence lives on in the hearts of all of us who had the privilege to know him and to call him "friend."

*Tim Madigan PhD  
Department of Philosophy*

# Water Lilies



2010

Michael Costanzo

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## *Remembrance of a Friend*

I do not propose that my authorship of this reflection on my friend Michael places me in some sort of place of privilege among those who were fortunate enough to cross paths with him at some point in their academic, artistic or faith journeys. No, this is not a case of one who knew him better rising above others. In fact, it may be the opposite: I suspect that my commentary on our friendship might be indistinguishable from the observations of others. That seems a fitting epitaph for one who made you feel as if you were his only friend in the world. We know that this is not the case. C.S. Lewis notes in his work *The Four Loves*, that when it comes to friendship “two friends delight to be joined by a third, and three by a fourth...” (p. 61). This was how I knew Michael Costanzo, the CEO and chief creative officer of a massive network of friendship.

I actually first met Fr. Costanzo as a boy. I grew up in East Rochester and at the Church of St. Jerome; the parish was then staffed by the late Fr. Anthony Calimeri and later by the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. Fr. Costanzo was, as he so often was, “around.” These were the days when there was still Mass said in Italian at the parish and, of course, who better than Michael to preside? My interaction with

him at the time was minute, only to be remembered later when I was his student here at the College. Our recollection of those days in the early to mid-1980's was foggy and limited to trading back and forth the names of other people from East Rochester whom we mutually knew.

It was here at St. John Fisher where the "opera" my wife and I call our friendship with Michael began and flourished. I took his course "Love in the New Testament." Little did I know that this course was less about its "cute" title and more an in-depth exploration of the various ways the concept of love and its various words and metaphors are manifested in the New Testament. He had me hooked. I was no scholar of scripture at that point (nor at this) in my life, but he almost made the words jump out of books and come to life.

Thought I will be honest. Sometimes back then I had a hard time understanding him because of his accent. I frequently gave him playful jabs about his accent saying that he's been here in the States so long that he should have a nice "Rochester Rah" by now. It was through this language barrier, however, that I started to pop into his office to ask clarifying questions, to learn more about a topic, and to help rekindle my own faith which, at that time, was smoldering.

Two things happened in those visits. First, it was where I fell in love with theology and ministry. More importantly, I was introduced to espresso. I suppose some of you reading this just laughed out loud at that previous statement, but it's very true. Through the sharing of coffee and the ongoing conversations, I see and understand now that Michael was acting completely *in persona Christi* to me. He was personifying the type of incarnational Gospel hospitality that Jesus himself demonstrated and demanded. This is no easy task, mind you, and many churches today sit and scratch their heads in wonder, "How can we reach the lost?" My answer was and continues to be, "Get a little Italian guy and an espresso machine."

My wife, Jodi Rowland Schott (Class of '04), also experienced this same type of relationship with him as a work-study student in his office, through the work she did with *Verbum*, and through her own conversion experience when she entered the church at the Easter Vigil in her senior year. It was Fr. Costanzo, of course, who then drove Jodi around from store to store searching for a graduation present for me, which was--yes--an espresso machine!

As the years flew by, Michael was never far away--an email, a phone call, or a short drive away. He was there on the altar on June 2, 2007 to co-preside at our wedding. He was there in February of 2012 to baptize our first child. He was there to stop by the house and bless our second, and then our third child, as we are sure he did for so many of you who are reading these fond words. He supported us in our graduate studies. He supported me and prayed for our family as we entered formation for the permanent diaconate program. As you can guess, he was there when he needed "something small" written for this publication. He was never far away.

That is until he became ill. He did not show it nor did he ask for space, but there was a distance there when I arrived back at Fisher to work in the Office of Campus Ministry. I eagerly popped over to the office, had an espresso, and he told me he was going to be out for some time for "something minor, Jonathan, no need to worry about it." That was that. We still chit-chatted for several weeks—mainly as he told me what I needed to do in my job--and then, he was gone.

I am not, nor is my wife and family, overly sad about that. It would be very easy to look in hindsight and say "I should have done this" or "We should have had him over to the house more" but in the end, the friendship was good. It was very good. It was, as Pope Francis notes in *Amoris laetitia*: "...in general, times of illness enable...bonds to grow stronger" (no. 277.) To go back and recall something from that first course I first had with Michael, our relationship was one of *storge* love: an affectionate love that slowly develops from friendship.

To those reading this, I hope your friendship with Michael was as personal and life-giving as mine and my family's was. We believe, as children of God, that death is only the end of earthly life, and in that brief time we have to be physically present to one another, we have a limited opportunity to bring our families and friendships to fulfillment using the best of our abilities. Michael did so much of that for me, for my wife, and for our family. It is with these memories and in this joy that I pray my friend Michael has been delivered into the Father's hands.

*Jonathan Schott MA  
Class of 2002  
Office of Campus Ministry*



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*Tribute to the Poet:*

*Fr. Michael Costanzo, Cri de coeur*

“And then He said ‘Let Flowers Be!  
To bring these worlds to stillness  
Dances of life, reflexes of me.’

And the Almighty created man.

He walked the earths and conquered stars -

Shelled in his ego he trod on lilies.” -- *Michael Costanzo, Whirlwind, Section one, no. 2*

Anyone who had the pleasure of conversing with Fr. Michael, either over coffee in his office or at the various little cafes he favored, knew him to be a very complicated man. My favorite conversations were about his love for opera (for which I remain only a neophyte) and his poetry. Ultimately, our talks led him to give me the privilege of writing the forward to his collection of poems *Water Lilies*. This is what I best remember of Fr. Michael and can think of no better tribute to him than to examine the complexity of his thoughts found in this particular work. Written over three decades, do not be tempted to see the change in voice as an evolution of spirit, his reflections changing with age. It is, rather, much like his beloved opera -- images of life filled with joy, despair, hope, and redemption.

Man cannot see beyond everyday experience, a failure to recognize the transitory nature of his very life, leading him to forsake the beauty of creation. The balance between the search for wisdom and experience is tempered by the realization that death is always present as the ultimate end. The collection is divided into four sections and spans his work from 1979 – 2010.

*Whirlwind* is filled with trials of lassitude and the death of spirit. We witness an empty shell waiting in vain to be of use once more. The soul is laid bare shut within a life of solitude. There is the embrace of death, sorrow, and despair with a deeper question of whether the cup of sorrow truly makes better the saddened heart.

*No. 5*

I am desolate

My mind is a gray sky

on a snowy day

My heart a bundle of emotions

I'm soaked under a deluge



of passions

Will this night of darkness  
swallow the remnant of my  
dreams?

*Desolation the queen*

And I...

I long to be free

*Vanitas* reverberates with the echo of Ecclesiastes (1:1-18). If all is vanity, should we despair of our daily life? Where is hope and solace? Can there be consolation in faith alone? With the presence of doubt and sorrow, where are we to find our source for renewal?

*No. 5*

Bathe this slowly decomposing spirit  
in the scarlet blood of your living son,  
Mother of Sorrow who stand by his cross.  
and free this son from the guilt of sin.

Let the angel of sorrow help to beat  
his repenting breast and cancel  
from his bowed head the mark of guilt

And make him an instrument of love.  
From the burning despair of his heart  
let spring a song of comfort and peace

In *χλοροφιλλα* we feel the breath of Dante, we gaze upon the work of Vermeer, every poem a still life. We witness within each a snapshot of womanhood; at once both Dante's Francesca, as lover and muse, and woman as the giver of light and harmony.

*No. 11 Rita*

lines for her painting “Larmes de la Mer”

La cathédrale de mon âme -  
fatiguée jusqu’ à la mort -  
engloutie, les flots noirs  
sur mon corps, sur ma vie

Je suis dans le ventre énorme  
de la mer, ma mère inconnue;  
je cris mon anguisse, je vois mes larmes  
qui montent à haut, du fond -  
vide et blanc

The poems in *Sunrise*, *Sunset* reflect on the beauty and simple intricacies found in everyday life, whether whimsically reflecting on preparing a cup of espresso, momentary solace in an airport chapel, or marveling as a baby sleeps in the poet’s arms. Yet, there is still the melancholic voice.

*No. 9 Horizon*

I see the sky and the sea  
unite as one  
from the parapet of my vessel  
in the elusive distance  
we call horizon,

Fr. Michael – a very complicated man, indeed. In this collection, there is almost a longing for death -- not as an escape from life, rather as a chance to return to the his childhood vision of Eden. The human as ego confronts death as the enemy. The human as spirit accepts death as the lover. Both lead to oblivion; the former returned to earth, the latter enveloped in the embrace of eternity.

*Dan Edes*

# OUT OF PARADISE

41 poems of  
distress, humor, and hope



Michael Costanzo

# A Vision of Beauty



Michael Costanzo

