

# LUKE THE JEW?

by Avram Yehoshua

[THE SEED OF ABRAHAM](#)

The racial lineage of Luke, the writer of the Gospel and also the Book of Acts that bear his name, has been seen as Gentile by most Christians because of what Colossians 4:7-14 states, but there are some who oppose this and teach that Luke was a Jew.<sup>1</sup> Thomas McCall is one such person and he bases his fanciful position on the amount of pages that Luke writes in the New Testament (in other words, Luke has more pages than any other NT writer, amassing about 27% of the NT), and so McCall asks, ‘How else could Luke have written that much if he were a Gentile?’ With a few more superficial rhetorical, but fact-less questions like that, some arguments from silence, and a highly imaginative interpretation of Colossians 4:11, McCall concludes;

“we must infer that Luke was a Jew. The idea that he was a Gentile appears to be based on nothing more *than wishful thinking and tradition*. The *biblical evidence* strongly supports the position that Luke was a Jew, and we should *always believe the Scriptures over tradition*, when there is a conflict between the two.”<sup>2</sup> (emphasis in *italics* are mine noted for further discussion)

I strongly agree that we should ‘*always believe the Scriptures over tradition*,’ but after reviewing McCall’s article it appears that he has absolutely no understanding of what constitutes biblical evidence to support his position. Colossians 4:7-14 is the scriptural foundation for understanding that Luke was a Gentile, and there’s nothing in Scripture to support that Luke was a Jew. As a matter of scriptural fact, just the opposite is seen in Colossians 4:7-14.

As Paul ends his letter to the Colossians (58-62 AD) he specifically writes in Col. 4:10-11, of those who are his “*only fellow workers for the Kingdom of God who are of the circumcision*” (i.e. the three Jewish believers with him; cf. Eph. 2:11), but doesn’t include Luke among them. He mentions Luke later, with other Gentiles. This simply means that Luke was a Gentile, *not* a Jew:

<sup>7</sup>“Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. <sup>8</sup>I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts, <sup>9</sup>with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, *who is one of you*. They will make known to you all things which are happening here.”

<sup>10</sup>*Aristarchus* my fellow prisoner greets you, with *Mark* the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him)<sup>11</sup> and *Jesus* who is called Justus. *These are my only fellow workers for the Kingdom of God who are of the circumcision*—they have proved to be a comfort to me.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>12</sup>Epaphras, *who is one of you*, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

<sup>13</sup>For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis. <sup>14</sup>*Luke the beloved physician* and Demas greet you.” (Colossians 4:7-14)

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<sup>1</sup> See [Was Luke a Gentile?](#) by Thomas McCall.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> See Acts 10:45; 11:2; Gal. 2:12; Titus 1:10 for ‘those of the circumcision’ being Jews.

In 4:9, 12, Paul speaks of Onesimus and Epaphras, respectively, as *one of you*, most likely meaning that they were either Colossians themselves and/or that they were Gentiles who had come out of paganism and were now Christians.<sup>4</sup>

In 4:10-11 Paul writes of Aristarchus and (John) Mark (the cousin of Barnabas)<sup>5</sup> and a certain Jesus who was known as Justus. Paul says in v. 11 that these three “are the *only* fellow workers for the Kingdom of God *who are of the circumcision*” (i.e. they were Jewish).

In 4:14 Paul mentions *Luke, the beloved physician*, and Demas. With Paul singling out the three Jewish men (4:11-12), and then speaking of a Gentile (Epaphras; 4:12-13), *and then after that* of Luke (4:14), it seems obvious that Luke wasn’t a Jew, but a Gentile.

This passage of Scripture is why Christian scholars rightly believe that Luke was a Gentile. McCall, though, calls this ‘slim evidence,’<sup>6</sup> and unsuccessfully tries to dismantle it. He states that Luke was excluded from Paul’s list of *those of the circumcision* because Luke *wasn’t a preacher!* McCall writes:

“Paul is speaking of his fellow workers *in the preaching ministry*. However, Luke was not ever described as being actively involved in the work of preaching, but was rather Paul’s personal physician and historian. It would not be appropriate to put Luke in the list with those who were active in the preaching ministry, regardless of background.”<sup>7</sup>

The problem with McCall’s point is that Paul didn’t say that he was speaking of only his fellow Jewish workers *who were involved in a ‘preaching ministry,’* but of his fellow workers who were of *the Kingdom of God*. Paul states that the three men listed as *fellow workers* were the **only** men...*of the circumcision* who were with him. Paul never points out that any of them were preachers, yet McCall thinks that Aristarchus was a preacher.

Aristarchus is mentioned five times in the New Testament, but all the New Testament says of him was that he was a Thessalonian, traveling companion and fellow laborer of Paul’s, who also spent time in prison with Paul.<sup>8</sup> As for John Mark and Justus, there’s nothing in Scripture that speaks of either of them being a preacher.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, McCall’s position, that Luke isn’t mentioned with those three Jewish men because they were preachers, and Luke wasn’t, is not supported by Scripture. McCall is reading or projecting into the text what he wants there.

McCall, now, thinking that he has cleared the way for Luke to be Jewish, presents further arguments for Luke’s Jewishness, but before going on to them, it’s interesting to note that N. T. Wright, from a different perspective on the passage, theorizes that the three Jewish men that Paul spoke of may have been part of an *unmentioned* ‘cooperation’ that Paul had with the heretical ‘circumcision party,’ and who were now

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<sup>4</sup> Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1998), p. 58. Witherington states that the phrase, ‘one of you,’ suggests that Epaphras (as well as Onesimus) had been pagans who had turned to Christ.

<sup>5</sup> Acts 12:25; 15:37, 39; Col. 4:10.

<sup>6</sup> McCall, [Was Luke a Gentile?](#)

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> In Acts 19:29 Aristarchus is spoken of as one of Paul’s ‘traveling companions.’

In Acts 20:4 it speaks of him accompanying Paul to Asia.

In Acts 27:2 Luke writes of Aristarchus being with them, and that he was from Thessalonica, a Macedonian city.

In Col. 4:10 he’s Paul’s ‘fellow prisoner.’

In Philemon 1:24 he’s listed as one of Paul’s ‘fellow laborers,’ along with Luke, Demas and Mark.

<sup>9</sup> John Mark is mentioned in Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37, 39; Col. 4:10; 2nd Tim. 4:11; Phlm. 1:24; 1st Pet. 5:13. Although the name Justus is mentioned three times in the New Testament, it seems that only here in Colossians 4:11 is the ‘Jesus who is called Jusus’ (Acts 1:23; 18:7).

part of Paul's entourage.<sup>10</sup> This way, Wright says, Luke could have been a Jew, but just not one affiliated with the 'circumcision party.' Wright realizes the problem of Paul associating with the 'circumcision party,' and in the end, doesn't think that it's believable. He writes:

“But in light of Galatians, and of 2:8-23 of our present letter, it seems difficult to take the phrase ‘those...of the circumcision’ to indicate a party within the church without at the same time expressing Paul’s disapproval of it.”<sup>11</sup>

In other words, Paul's use of 'circumcision' (not circumcision party) was his, and many others' way of referring to the Jewish people.<sup>12</sup> Wright, in relating that the three Jewish men were of the 'circumcision party' expands beyond recognition the term used by Paul, who used it to denote that they men were 'just' Jewish (believers). In other words, Wright is saying that those who stretch the definition of the *circumcision* to mean the *circumcision party* (those who advocated faith in Jesus plus circumcision for salvation; cf. Act 15:1, 5) were wrong in their appraisal. This is especially apparent when Paul has nothing but praise for Aristarchus, in the sense that he was actually in prison with Paul, and it's very unlikely that "Mark, the cousin of Barnabas" was of the circumcision party because Paul wants the Colossians to treat him with respect, not saying to watch out when he might speak to them of the major heresy of Gentile circumcision).<sup>13</sup> Paul also says the Colossians had already "received instructions" about Mark, and that they were to "welcome him,"<sup>11</sup> and there isn't anything to suspect that Jesus who is called Justus is of the circumcision party, either.

Be that as it may, Wright isn't endorsing Luke as a Jew, but rather expressing how some might wrongly think that if the three were of the circumcision party, that's why Paul didn't include Luke in their group. Wright states that 'most commentators' interpret Luke as a Gentile and they 'may well be right.'<sup>14</sup>

It's also interesting to note, as Curtis Vaughan brings out, that Paul says that those three Jews 'have proved to be a comfort' to him (v. 11), hardly something Paul would say about anyone in the circumcision party. Vaughan states that the word *proved*, being in the aorist tense, 'may point to a particular crisis when they stood by Paul.'<sup>15</sup> He goes on to say that the word *comfort*, 'used only here in the NT...denotes relief of pain.'<sup>16</sup> Being 'a comfort' to Paul certainly can't be construed to mean that they were preachers.

Vaughan also gives an added insight of the Apostle's use of *only* where Paul says, 'These are my *only* fel-

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<sup>10</sup> N.T. Wright, author; The Rev. Canon Leon Morris, M.Sc., M.Th., Ph.D., General editor, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Colossians and Philemon* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), p. 157.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Acts 10:45; Rom. 2:27; 3:1; 4:12; 15:8; Eph. 2:11; Titus 1:10. Paul makes a distinction between "his countrymen" and "fellow workers," and the Gentile believers: Paul writes in Rom. 16:3 of Priscilla and Aquila as 'my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,' and we know from Acts 18:2 that they were Jews and had no affiliation with the circumcision party. In Rom. 16:7 he speaks of "Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the Apostles, who also were in Christ Jesus before me," which implies they were Jews, too. In Rom. 16:11 he says, "Herodian, my countryman," and finally, "Timothy, my fellow worker (see Acts 16:1-3 for Timothy being a Jew), and Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my countrymen." The letter to the Romans was written about six years before Colossians. There are some who think that Timothy was not a Jew, but a Gentile. This teaching is dismantled in [Gentile Circumcision?](#), p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> See [Gentile Circumcision?](#) for why the (biblical; Gen. 17:10-14) circumcision of a Christian Gentile is a gross heresy.

<sup>14</sup> Wright, *Colossians*, pp. 157-158.

<sup>15</sup> Curtis Vaughan, *Colossians (Expositor's Bible Commentary, vol 11; ed. Frank E. Gaebelin and J. D. Douglas; Accordance electronic ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), n.p.* This (that they stood by Paul in a particular crises) is seen of Aristarchus in Acts 19:29; 27:2; and in Col. 4:10, where it speaks of him as being Paul's fellow prisoner. Some take that in the figurative sense, meaning that he was a 'prisoner of Christ,' but most rightly conclude that he was in prison with Paul.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

low workers for the Kingdom of God who are of the circumcision' (4:11). He says,

'There is a note of pathos in Paul's remark about these three' Jews because Paul '*felt keenly* his alienation from his (Jewish non-believing) countrymen.'<sup>17</sup>

In other words, the Apostle would have loved for his Jewish people to recognize him as a minister for God, but in fact, many hated him and came against him, both in and outside of Israel. This adds another valid perspective as to why Paul spoke of those three being Jewish, and obviously, if Luke had been a Jew he would have certainly been included among the three, Paul speaking of Luke as 'beloved.'

A. S. Peak writes that the phrase, 'Kingdom of God' (v. 11) 'is intentionally chosen,' because these three 'Jews were devoted to the kingdom.'<sup>18</sup> All this undermines McCall's point that Luke was listed separately from the three Jews because he wasn't a preacher (or in Wright's possibility, that Luke wasn't of the circumcision party, that is to say, the Judaizers). Of course, what makes McCall's point superfluous and without any biblical value is the fact that he doesn't present any Scripture to support that the three were preachers and that was why Paul listed them separately from Luke. Peak goes on to specifically state that Luke "was clearly not one 'of the circumcision' (v. 11),"<sup>19</sup> that is to say, Luke was not a Jew.

John MacArther, in speaking of Luke in Col. 4:14, says that Luke "was a physician...a beloved physician," and that Col. 4:10-11 mentions,

"those who are from the circumcision.' Paul had some companions who were Jewish. He names them, v. 10, Aristarchus, Mark, (and) a man in v. 11 named Jesus Justus, but he says there, 'These are the only fellow workers for the Kingdom of God who are from the circumcision.' That is they were the only Jewish ones, so we therefore conclude that the rest are...Gentiles. And he names them, v. 12 is Epaphras who would have been a Gentile, and v. 14, Luke the beloved physician...So we know this, he was a physician, he was a Gentile physician. There are...other indications of that."

1. "His writing language and style...is distinctively Greek and it is that of a Greek with a high level of education; it is a vocabulary similar to classic Greek writers."
2. Furthermore, in writing his gospel, Luke...avoids common semitic or Hebraic expressions and substitutes for them expressions out of the Septuagint, which is a Greek translation (of the Old Testament). So, he's much more at home with Greek than he is with Hebrew. And even when there is a Hebrew or semitic expression, Matthew, Mark and John would use the Hebraic version where Luke would use the Greek version of that same expression."
3. "Also, he makes a major point out of showing how God's salvation reaches Gentiles, both in the book of Luke and the book of Acts. He reveals his concern for...the Gentile people. So, we conclude then that he was a Gentile...a Gentile physician trained in some Gentile environment. We don't know where he came from although there are some traditions back to Eusebius and Jerome...that he came from Antioch."<sup>20</sup>

MacArther further helps us to realize that Luke was a Gentile by speaking of Luke's learned Greek writing style, his use of Greek expressions rather than Hebraic, and Luke's concern for the Gentiles. Luke, the beloved physician and traveling companion of the Apostle Paul, was a Gentile.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> A. S. Peak, M.A., author; W. Robertson Nicoll, editor, M. A., LL. D., *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, vol. three: *The Epistle to the Colossians* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), p. 546.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> See [MacArther](#).

Ben Witherington III states that Luke's Greek "is clearly the best Hellenistic Greek in the NT."<sup>21</sup> In other words, Luke's Greek is far ahead of all the Jewish writers of the Greek NT.<sup>22</sup> He adds,

'It has also been argued on the basis of Col. 4:11 when it is compared to 4:14 that this text makes clear that Luke was *not* among the circumcision, that is, that he was not a Jew" (emphasis Witherington's). "In addition, it is contended that since in the intervening verses reference is made to Epaphras, who is apparently one with this audience in being a convert from paganism, the drift of the text would suggest that Luke is also a Gentile."<sup>23</sup>

Witherington also presents historical evidence that speaks of Luke being a Gentile Syrian of Antioch. He writes,

"an ancient prologue to Luke's Gospel (SQE, 533), from perhaps the end of the second century AD...says that Luke was a Syrian of Antioch, a physician, a disciple of the apostles, and later a companion of Paul."<sup>24</sup>

## *McCall's Arguments for Luke Being a Jew*

The next point for McCall's Jewish Luke is Luke's name, which McCall says, being a Gentile name, doesn't mean that Luke was a Gentile. This is correct because many Jews, like Paul (and 'Jesus, who is called Justus), had both a Jewish and a Gentile name.<sup>25</sup> The problem with McCall using this concept for Luke, though, and using Paul as an example, is that Paul (Saul) *is presented* in Scripture as having two names (one Jewish and one Gentile),<sup>26</sup> whereas Luke is only known by his Gentile name. This is McCall's second point from silence, meaning that he has nothing to support his view except silence and conjecture that Luke may have had a Jewish name.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, p. 52.

<sup>22</sup> There were nine writers of the New Testament including Dr. Luke. Six of them knew Yeshua before His crucifixion: Matthew, John, Peter, Yeshua's two half brothers, Judah (Jude), and Yakov (James, or more properly Jacob), and John Mark (the Gospel of Mark; see Acts 12:12). The six who knew Yeshua before His resurrection wrote three Gospels, seven letters and the Book of Revelation, while the three men who didn't know Yeshua before His resurrection (Luke, Paul and the author of Hebrews) wrote one Gospel, the Book of Acts, 13 letters (of Paul: Romans to Philemon), and the Book of Hebrews. Paul wrote 13 of the 20 letters of the New Testament. There are the four Gospels, the Book of Acts, 20 letters, the Book of Hebrews and Revelation in the New Testament.

<sup>23</sup> Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, p. 58. "See the careful analysis of Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, pp. 43-44."

<sup>24</sup> Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1998), p. 56. "See the discussion in Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, pp. 38-39, and more recently his reflections in *Luke the Theologian*, pp. 1-26." This prologue to Luke's Gospel would have been written around 180-200 AD, 'the end of the second century AD.'

<sup>25</sup> "Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him" (Acts 13:9). McCall also speaks of Simon Peter having two names, but doesn't seem to realize that neither one is a Gentile name. Simon (*Shimon* in Hebrew) was his Jewish name, while Messiah Yeshua gave Simon the other name (Cephas in English; Kayfa in Aramaic), which is also Semitic. Jews born outside Israel are generally given a Jewish and a Gentile name.

<sup>26</sup> Acts 13:9:

**Saul:** Acts 7:58; 8:1, 3; 9:1, 4, 8, 11, 17, 19, 22, 24, 26; 11:25, 30; 12:25-13:2; 13:7, 9, 21; 22:7, 13; 26:14.

**Paul:** Acts 13:9, 13, 16, 43, 45-46, 50; 14:9, 11-12, 14, 19; 15:2, 12, 22, 25, 35-36, 38, 40; 16:3, 9, 14, 17-19, 25, 28-29, 36-37, etc.

<sup>27</sup> Also interesting to note is that in Col. 4:11 Paul speaks of one Jesus (Yeshua; his Jewish name), who was also known as Justus (*Yustos*; his Gentile name).

McCall then goes on to interpret Romans 3:1-2, which speaks of the ‘oracles of God’ (i.e. the Word of God, the Old Testament),<sup>28</sup> to mean that *only Jews could write Scripture*. He got this view from his own interpretation of Romans 3:1-2, which states:

“What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to *them* were committed the oracles (words) of God.”

McCall then builds on his idea that since only Jews were given the Word of God, Luke must be a Jew!

“This was the rule: that Jews were the vehicle for revelation. If Luke was an exception, the burden of proof is on those who would claim that he is an exception.”<sup>29</sup>

No one claims that Luke was ‘an exception’ because interpreting the verse the way McCall does has no merit. Romans 3:2 states that the Jews *were given* the ‘oracles of God.’ Paul was speaking of the past; what God *had given* to Israel, that is to say, the Old Testament. Of course the New Testament is also the Word of God, but with the New, interestingly enough, comes the whole hearted inclusion of many Gentiles, the wall that God made having been broken down between the Jewish believer and the Gentile believer (Eph. 2:14). There’s *nothing* written by Paul, however, nor anyone else in the New Testament, that states that *God must always use a Jew to pass His Word on*. Could not God have used a Gentile to write some of His words? Of course He could have, and He did, with Luke. Romans 3:1-2 certainly doesn’t support what McCall would have us to think, that Luke *had to be* a Jew *because* he penned his Gospel and Acts, and only Jews wrote Scripture.

McCall then states the fact that it was Trophimus the Ephesian, and not Luke, that got Paul into trouble at the Temple when some non-believing Jews from Asia thought that Paul had brought a Gentile into the Temple area that (wrongly)<sup>30</sup> prohibited Gentiles (Acts 21:27-29f.). McCall asks how this could be, that Luke wasn’t the one that got Paul into trouble?! Of course, we don’t know where the good doctor was at the time, for Scripture is silent, but McCall uses this silence to further build his ‘Jewish Luke,’ implying that Luke, because he was Jewish, wasn’t seen as a threat to the non-believing Jews from Asia. Here we have to ask, were the non-believing Jews from Asia always monitoring Paul and his companions when Paul went to the Temple. Of course, Scripture is again silent in this area, but it’s most likely that their paths only intersected at that one time when Trophimus was with Paul.

McCall then presents what must be for him a major reason why Luke was a Jew, stating that he had an ‘intimate knowledge of the Temple,’ stating that of the four Gospels, only Luke describes Gabriel coming to Zechariah, and then suggests, because of that ‘inside’ knowledge of Luke’s, that Luke might even have been a Levite! There is no end to McCall’s imagination. Aside from Luke knowing many Jewish believers in his congregation in Antioch (the city where he most likely was born and raised),<sup>31</sup> who would know a

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<sup>28</sup> Only the letter of James (48 AD), and five letters of Paul had been written when Paul wrote Romans (54-57 AD). In other words, the Old Testament was Scripture when Paul wrote Romans, and much of the New Testament hadn’t been written, yet (cf. 2nd Timothy 2:15; 3:16-17; 2nd Peter 3:15-16).

<sup>29</sup> McCall, *Was Luke a Gentile?*

<sup>30</sup> There is nothing in God’s Word that prohibits Gentiles from entering into the Temple compound past where the High Priest had prohibited them.

<sup>31</sup> F. F. Bruce writes, “the Western text of 11:28, telling of an incident at Antioch...soon after the founding of the church there, has the form of a ‘we’ section (‘when we were gathered together’), implying that the narrator (Luke) was an Antiochene, and thus confirming the tradition to this effect in the anti-Marcionite prologue.” F. F. Bruce, author; Gordon D. Fee, general editor, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1988), p. 7.

The earliest account of Luke, outside of Scripture “is in the [Anti-Marcionite Prologue to the Gospel of Luke](#), a document once thought to date to the 2nd century, but which has more recently been dated to the later 4th century. Helmut Koester, however, claims that the following part—the only part preserved in the original Greek, *may have been composed in the late 2nd century.*” This is most likely the prologue that Witherington refers to. It

lot of the events of Messiah Yeshua's life, Luke most likely met Saul (Paul) when Barnabas brought Saul into the congregation in 42 AD<sup>32</sup> (Acts 11:25-26). Also, with Luke writing of knowing these things from the first (Luke 1:1-3), he probably came to believe in Yeshua about 40 AD, when the Jewish believers who, due to persecution (by Saul!), had been driven out of Judah and some came to Antioch and preached salvation in Yeshua to the Gentiles (Acts 11:19-22f.).<sup>33</sup>

Six years later, in 48 AD, Luke was probably part of the delegation of those sent with Paul and Barnabas from the congregation in Antioch to Jerusalem. Antioch wanted to ascertain what the requirements were

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reads, "Luke, was born in Antioch, by profession, was a physician. He had become a disciple of the Apostle Paul and later followed Paul until his (Paul's) martyrdom. Having served the Lord continuously, unmarried and without children, filled with the Holy Spirit, he died at the age of 84 years." (*A Commentary on the Original Text of the Acts of the Apostles*, Horatio Balch Hackett, 1858, Gould and Lincoln; Sheldon, Blakeman & Co., pp. 12, 335.) Because of those two texts, "It is believed by many scholars that Luke was a Greek physician who lived in the Greek city of Antioch in ancient Syria."

Church History also speaks of Luke coming from Antioch, due in no small part, most likely, to those two texts above, and other information. Around 325 AD Eusebius (260-340 AD), a church historian and bishop, wrote, "Lucas, by birth, an Antiochian, by profession a physician, for the most part accompanied Paul; and being diligently conversant with the rest of the Apostles, has left us two books, written by divine inspiration, lessons medicinal for souls, which he procured from them. The one is the Gospel, which he professes to have written as they communicated it to him; the other, The Acts, not of such things as he had received by report, but of what he had seen with his eyes' (*Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 3, chap. 4)." (It's now understood that most of Acts 1-14 were accounts that were given to Luke, but 15-28 were mostly eye witness reports or later related by Paul.)

About 405 Jerome (347-420 AD) picks up on what Eusebius wrote and adds to it, from gleaning accounts in Judah about Luke: "Jerome studied for some time in Rome, and afterwards repaired to Palestine (Judah) where, in a monastery at Bethlehem, he prepared, by request of Pope Damasus I, a new version of the Bible for the Latin Churches. He also compiled a 'Catalogue of Ecclesiastical Writers,' which supplies prefaces to several books in some editions of the Latin Bible" (i.e. the Vulgate). He wrote, "Luke, a physician of Antioch, as his writings indicate, a follower of the Apostle Paul, and his companion in all his travels, wrote a Gospel, of which Paul spoke saying, 'We have sent with him the brother whose praise is in all the churches' (2nd Cor. 8:18), and to the Colossians, 'Luke, the beloved physician, salutes you!' (Col. 4:14), and to Timothy, 'Only Luke is with me' (2nd Tim. 4:11)...And not only from Paul did he derive his Gospel, who was not with Christ in the flesh, but from the other Apostles, as he declares in the beginning of his Gospel; and the Acts of the Apostles, (which) he composed as he saw them. He lived 84 years and had no wife." See the [quotes](#).

Some teach that Luke was actually the same person as the 'Lucius of Cyrene' (Acts 13:1). Even though it seems fairly certain that Luke came from Antioch, and so, Lucius of *Cyrene* wouldn't fit him, the names are the same (in Greek). Lucius of Cyrene though, is listed as either a prophet or a teacher, and while Luke was certainly knowledgeable, Scripture never calls him a prophet nor a teacher, but a doctor, and we know he was an historian, but we never see him teaching or it being said of him that he was a teacher. Also, it's very uncharacteristic of Luke to name himself (he never mentions himself by name in either his Gospel or Acts), but if he were going to do so, one would think that he would place himself last in any list, but this isn't the case for the Lucius of Acts 13:1, as "Manaen, who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul," are listed after Lucius of Cyrene. The seed of the understanding, that Luke was a Gentile, was planted in antiquity, and even if some of the words of Eusebius and Jerome about Luke aren't 100% accurate, the seed would never have germinated and flowered if Luke had been a Jew.

<sup>32</sup> Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 25th printing, 1976), pp. 486-488.

<sup>33</sup> In this passage it speaks of the Hellenists, even though the two passages before this (Acts 6:1; 9:29) are seen as *Hellenistic Jews* (Jews having been born outside the land of Israel; i.e. Greek speaking). Here in Acts 11:20, though, it seems to indicate Gentiles because of what 11:18 says, which reflects the first Gentiles coming to Christ (Cornelius, his family and friends), and 11:19, which speaks of the Jewish believers from Judah being scattered and preaching Christ *to only the Jews* in Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, but then 11:20, which begins with a 'but,' *to counter what has just been said about preaching only to Jews*, it states, "But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the *Hellenists*, preaching the Lord Jesus." This strongly implies that those Jewish believers from Cyprus and Cyrene spoke to Gentiles (Hellenists), of which Luke could very well have been one, for the good doctor states that he "had perfect understanding of all things from the very first" (Luke 1:3).

for a Gentile to come into the Kingdom (Acts 15:2-4).<sup>34</sup> Immediately after the Apostles and Elders, etc. met to hear the concern, Luke writes of Paul and Barnabas, etc., returning to Antioch and then spreading the decision of Acts 15 to all the assemblies in Turkey, and of being one of them (Acts 15:37–16:10f.).

From that time on Luke lived and traveled much of the time with the highly educated Jewish Apostle Paul until Paul's death, around 65 AD. Therefore, Luke knew Paul for about 23 years (65 AD minus 42 AD). Much of the last 17 years (48-65 AD) Luke was Paul's fellow traveler and companion.<sup>35</sup> Paul was intimately aware of the Temple and its rituals, from both his Jewish education and having grown up in Jerusalem,<sup>36</sup> and he also would have known many things of the life of Messiah and Mary because he was privy to the Jerusalem based Apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and the Elders in Jerusalem, as well as others, like Barnabas and John Mark. Luke, therefore, had access to the knowledge and understanding of all those people of the Jewish faith when in Jerusalem with Paul (Acts 9:26-30; 15:1f.; 18:21-22; 21:15, 17f.), and in Antioch, etc.

*The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, spring-boarding off of Col. 4:10, 14, says that Luke's relationship with Mark was not only literary (they both wrote Gospels), but also personal.<sup>37</sup> Many think that Mark wrote his Gospel by being 'a scribe' for the Apostle Peter. At the very least, Luke and Mark, traveling together, meant that Luke also had indirect access to Peter through John Mark. This was yet another resource for Luke's Gospel and Acts. Therefore, Luke's account of Zechariah, etc., doesn't prove that Luke was a Jew, and it certainly doesn't mean that he was a Levite.

McCall concludes his forced and unbiblical teaching with 'Luke's intimate acquaintance' of Mary by asking how could Luke get 'so close to Mary' that he could write of things that were "'in her heart' (Luke

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<sup>34</sup> Was the requirement faith in Yeshua, or faith in Yeshua plus the keeping of Mosaic Law symbolized in physical, covenantal circumcision? It was the former, but that didn't cancel out Mosaic Law for Christians. See [\*The Lifting of the Veil—Acts 15:20-21\*](#) by Avram Yehoshua for why those verses are the New Testament foundation *after* the resurrection, that declares Mosaic Law is for every Christian.

<sup>35</sup> It seems that Luke traveled with Paul for about 17 years, on and off, from Acts 15 (48 AD) to Paul's death (about 65 AD). Luke is seen as having written both his Gospel and Acts about 64-67 AD (although he may have begun writing when Paul was in prison for two years at Caesarea; Acts 23:33ff.). All those years would certainly have given him much time to gather his information, from many sources, about Zechariah and Mary, etc., without him having to have been a Jew. Besides, just because one is a Jew it doesn't mean that he would automatically have had that kind of information about Gabriel coming to Zechariah, etc. This is information that was passed on from one person to the next, and as Luke was privy to all the Apostles, etc., he heard many things of interest that he would write about, and most likely knew Mary, too.

There are some who teach that Luke wasn't always with Paul from Acts 15 on, but rather only during the 'we' sections of Acts (Acts 16:10-18; 20:5–21:18; 27:1–28:30), but that theory doesn't seem to be solid because there are many detailed accounts in the 'in-between sections' that Luke writes of Paul that more than suggest that Luke was an eye witness to the event (e.g. Acts 17:1-2, 14-16, 22, 32; 18:5-7, 14, 18-19, 20-21; 19:1, 5-6, 8-9, 21-23; 20:1-5, etc.). Even though the 'we' pronoun isn't in those passages or sections of Acts, the *kind* of detail that Luke presents lends itself to him being there. Of course, he may not have been, but one wouldn't expect to hear such things from someone who had gotten the information second-hand, even from Paul (e.g. Acts 17:22, where Luke writes, 'Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said...', which is something that a reporter would write, seeing Paul standing 'in the midst;' and also, Acts 20:1-5, where Luke 'suddenly appears,' after allegedly not having been with Paul for some time, with absolutely no 'introduction' of how he came to the Apostle). Because of the three 'we' sections in Acts, some teach that Luke wasn't with Paul in those two 'in-between' sections where Luke doesn't employ 'we.' This is possible, but there doesn't seem to be anything that proves that Luke left Paul during those two 'in-between' times. Luke probably didn't stay in Jerusalem while his buddy Paul was languishing for two years in prison in Cesarea (the first 'in-between' time), nor that he stayed away from Paul for a number of years during the last 'in-between' time at Philippi. be that as it may, Luke certainly knew Paul very well.

<sup>36</sup> Acts 26:4; cf. 23:16f; 7:54f; 9:1, 26f; 15:2, 22, 25; 21:18, 26, 29; Gal. 2:9.

<sup>37</sup> Charles F. Pfeiffer, Old Testament; Everett F. Harrison, New Testament, *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), p. 1345.

2:19, 51)”? McCall even goes on to say that ‘Luke might have served’ as Mary’s ‘personal physician’! With these far-fetched and ridiculous points from silence McCall ends his whimsical presentation. Thus, with no Scripture, positions from silence, and absurd misinterpretations of the Word of God, McCall gives us his ‘Jewish Luke,’ but the Apostle Paul, Church history and modern scholarship<sup>38</sup> clearly reveal that Dr. Luke was a Gentile. Taking what McCall wrote earlier, and correcting it by placing ‘Gentile’ where McCall has ‘Jew,’ and modifying it, I conclude by saying:

“we must infer that Luke was a Gentile. The idea that Luke was a Jew appears to be based on nothing more *than wishful thinking*...The *biblical evidence* and Church History strongly support the position that Luke was a Gentile, and we should *always believe the Scriptures over man’s thinking* when there is a *conflict* between the two.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> See p. 6 note 31.

<sup>39</sup> Taken from McCall’s words in the first quote of this article, which begins with, “we must infer that Luke was a Jew,” p. 1.

This article was revised on Saturday, April 18, 2020.