

# THE WHO, WHOM, AND WHEN OF LUKE-ACTS

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## *Introduction*

As the title suggests, this paper will seek to examine the two-volume work of Luke-Acts by treating three fundamental and significant areas of historical-criticism, namely the authorship, the intended audience, and the date of composition of Luke-Acts. In the first section, attention will be devoted to examining both the internal and external evidence that weigh in favor and against Lukan authorship. This will be accomplished primarily through a careful investigation of the earliest extant manuscript titles and the legacy of the early Church fathers—mostly Ante-Nicene—regarding the tradition left to us by them. This will then be followed by an analysis of the intended audience/readership of Luke’s two-volume work by a critical treatment of the prologue (Luke 1:1-4), especially in relation to the name, “Theophilus,” which concludes with whether or not Luke’s targeted audience was Jewish or Gentile, or perhaps both. Finally, attention will be devoted to fleshing out the date in which Luke-Acts was written, via benchmarking key scriptural references against the historical events of that period.

With respect to the plethora of scholarship concerning Lukan studies, it is my hope that this paper will serve as another resource, perhaps inroad, or more importantly, a map-guide to the already trodden and widely debated Lukan themes that deal with authorship, audiences, and dates of composition for Luke-Acts. My hope is to contribute another layer of text that both the novice and advanced biblical exegete will find beneficial in their pursuit of Lukan studies.

### *Early Manuscript Titles*

The problem with ascertaining the authorship of Luke-Acts is the anonymous nature of the two-volume work. There is nothing in the text-tradition that reveals the identity of the author. The titles of the canonical Gospels (including the NT letters) were not fixed until mid to late second century C.E., which makes it rather difficult to postulate with any degree of certainty who wrote the two-volume work. Although a small paraphrase unit exists in a commentary of an Armenian translation written by Ephraem of Syria on the subject of Acts 20:13: “We-I, Luke and those with me—entered the boat,”<sup>1</sup> it is a rather late date that depends on existing church tradition. The oldest extant manuscript that depicts Luke, as author, dates between the second and third century C.E. 175-225, which bears the title: “*euangelion kata Loukan.*”<sup>2</sup> The problem is a glaring one; the earliest known manuscript that alludes to Lukan Authorship was not written until the late second to early third century. Thus an entire one-hundred-year gap exists between the time the author penned the original manuscript (Luke-Acts) and the earliest fragmented copy was unearthed.<sup>3</sup>

### *Early Church Tradition*

Fitzmyer rightly points out that, “A reason for the identification of the author as Luke is the long-standing church tradition.”<sup>4</sup> The Muratorian Canon (C.E. 170-180), Irenaeus, the anti-Marcionite Prologue to Luke, Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Tertullian all specifically state

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to Luke, (I-IX)* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1981), p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> See Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX)*, p. 36, extrapolated from the Papyrus Bodmer XIV (eds. V. Martin and R. Kasser; Cologne-Geneve: Bibliothek Bodmer, 1961), pl. 61.

<sup>3</sup> The earliest extant non-fragmented manuscripts, codex Vaticanus, a fourth-century manuscript originally containing the entire Bible and codex Sinaiticus, another fourth-century manuscript of the entire Bible; see P. J. Achtemeier, *Harper's Bible Dictionary* 1st ed., (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), p. 700.

<sup>4</sup> Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX)*, p. 37.

that Luke was the author not only of the Gospel but also of the Acts of the Apostles.<sup>5</sup> Although the Muratorian fragment, both by H.J. Cadbury and E. Haenchen deny uncritically that the fragment can be used to support Lukan Authorship, it is also respectively maintained that their findings do not invalidate the entire evidence process either.<sup>6</sup>

Irenaeus puts weightier emphasis upon the “We” sections of the Acts of the Apostles to demonstrate candidacy for Lukan authorship. He says that “Luke, too the companion (*akolouthos, sector*) of Paul, set forth in a book the gospel as preached by him (Paul)...that Luke was inseparable from Paul and was his collaborator in [preaching] the gospel...We came to Troas (Acts 16:8)...We set sail from Troas...We spoke to the women...We sailed from Philippi...We stayed seven days...”<sup>7</sup> According to Irenaeus Luke was inseparable from Paul, a constant companion, and thus a likely candidate for authorship of the two-volume work.

Further attestation for Lukan authorship comes from the Marcionite Prologue, dating no later than the time of Irenaeus (C.E.160-180), which, again, depicts Luke as the companion of Paul and the author of the Gospel of Luke.<sup>8</sup> Tertullian, writing (C.E. 207-208) against Marcion characterizes Luke as Paul’s companion and calls Paul Luke’s “inspirer” and Luke’s Gospel “the

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<sup>5</sup> Others from the tradition such as Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Jerome, Ephraem Syrus, and Epiphanius continue to name Luke as author of the two-volume work. See Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1970), p. 114; and Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, p. 40.

<sup>6</sup> See H.J. Cadbury’s article on “The Tradition” in Foakes Jackson-Lake’s *The Beginnings of Christianity: The Acts of the Apostles, Vol II*, London: Macmillan and Co., 1922), pp. 209-264; and E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), pp. 3-14.

<sup>7</sup> Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX)*, pp. 37-38, quoting Irenaeus’ *Adversus Haereses*, 3.14.1.

<sup>8</sup> Although the prologues are not uniformly anti-Marcionite in nature, they do possess anti-Marcionite characteristics. This case was first made by De Bruyne in his 1907 article, “Biblical prologues of Marcionite Origin,” *The Expository Times* (Jan. 1901) pp. 1-16, as recorded by A. Von Harnack, “We have indeed long known that Marcionite readings found their way into the ecclesiastical text of the Pauline Epistles, but now for seven years we have known that Churches actually accepted the Marcionite prefaces to the Pauline Epistles! De Bruyne has made one of the finest discoveries of later days in proving that those prefaces, which we read first in Codex Fuldensis and then in numbers of later manuscripts, are Marcionite, and that the Churches had not noticed the cloven hoof,” A. Von Harnack, *The Origin of the New Testament and The Most Important Consequences of the New Creation* ([trans. J.R. Wilkinson] New York: Macmillan, 1925).

gospel of his teacher,” or a “digest” of Paul’s gospel.<sup>9</sup> Fitzmyer rightly concludes that, “Once Luke is recognized as the companion of Paul, he became to him what Mark was believed to have been to Peter, a compiler of his preaching.”<sup>10</sup>

It appears that Irenaeus’ claim to Luke as Paul’s companion set a trend in the ancient tradition for Lukan authorship. Without Irenaeus implicating Luke as Paul’s companion one wonders if the tradition would have gone in another direction altogether. In this regard, Irenaeus not only contributed to the tradition for Lukan authorship, but paved the way and earned the title of a so-called *tradition-trend-setter* for the Church that was then, and now.

Thus, although the tradition-evidence does not emphatically prove Lukan authorship, it does not deny it in any sense either; conversely, the evidence seems to support and weigh in favor of Paul’s companion, Luke, as the author of the two-volume work. G.B. Caird confirms this through the testimony given by the early Church fathers: “Granted that an ancient scholar might have deduced from the prologue to the Gospel that the author was not an apostle and from the ‘we’ sections of Acts that he was a companion of Paul, he still would have had no means of putting a name to the author if there had not been a valid tradition connecting the books with the name of Luke.”<sup>11</sup>

### *Objections and Responses to Lukan Authorship*

One objection to Lukan authorship is the argument that the “we” passages in the book of Acts do not necessarily imply that Luke was Paul’s companion, and that the passages could simply be a literary convention used by the author to give force to the narrative.<sup>12</sup> And that the

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<sup>9</sup> Referenced from Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, p. 40, in relation to Tertulian’s comments against Marcion.

<sup>10</sup> Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX)*, p. 38.

<sup>11</sup> See G.B. Caird, *Saint Luke*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), p. 17; and J. .M. Creed, *The Gospel according to St. Luke* (London: Macmillan, 1930), pp. 23-24

<sup>12</sup> E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 490-491.

author used an earlier source written in the first person, a diary or itinerary of some sort, in which some scholars have attributed the entire book of Acts to this source.<sup>13</sup> However, against this theory stands the marked style and language of the “we” passages which agree so closely with the style and language of the rest of Acts that it can hardly be maintained to have been composed by a so-called primary separate source. It is more plausible that the we-sections support the testimony of an author who was a companion of Paul than to any other.<sup>14</sup>

Next, W.K. Hobart and some earlier supporters, including A. Von Harnack,<sup>15</sup> assumed that Paul’s description of Luke as “the beloved physician” (Col. 4:14) made him a likely candidate for Lukan authorship, not only because the author was highly-cultured,<sup>16</sup> but also because his vocabulary was thought to be of a type which a physician might be expected to use. H.J. Cadbury, however, has pointed out that most of the examples cited could be paralleled in other educated Greek writers of that time.<sup>17</sup> Much of the language could be found not only in the Septuagint (LXX)<sup>18</sup> but also “in Hellenistic non-medical writers such as Josephus, Lucian, and Plutarch.”<sup>19</sup> However, it is undeniable that the author of the two-volume work uses a higher degree of medical terminology in comparison to the other evangelists (e.g., Lk 4: 18, 38, 8:43; Acts 10:38) -- thus confirming Paul’s description of him as “Luke, the beloved physician” (Col

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<sup>13</sup> Dupont, J., *Les Sources du Livre des Actes* ([trans. Bruges], Desclee de Bouver, 1960), pp. 76ff.

<sup>14</sup> This theory is strongly maintained by Harnack in *Luke the Physician* (London: Williams & Norgate, New York: G.P. Putnam, 1909), pp. 1ff.

<sup>15</sup> See microfiche documents from W.K. Hobart, *The Medical Language of St. Luke*, (Dublin:Hodges, Figgis ; London:Longmans, Green, 1882); and A. Von Harnack, *Luke the Physician* (Eng. tr.), 1907, pp.1ff.

<sup>16</sup> The author of the Prologue, in conformity with the literary customs of the time, through employing what is commonly called a “period” is quick to let us know of his apt intellectual status as a erudite literary artisan (Lk 1:1-4). Of the four evangelists he has the best control of Greek, and in the book of Acts he exhibits knowledge of the rhetorical conventions that Greek historians utilized.

<sup>17</sup> H.J. Cadbury, *Style and Literary Method* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard 1920), pp. 50-51.

<sup>18</sup> See Raymond Brown, *An Introduction To The New Testament: The Anchor Bible Reference Library* (Garden City, N.Y.; Doubleday and Co., 1966), p.268: It is unclear whether the author of Luke-Acts knew either Hebrew or Aramaic, but it is clear that he knew the Septuagint (LXX) quite well, since he employs a heavy use of the Septuagint style in many parts of his works, which has been used to suggest that the evangelist must have been a Gentile convert to Christianity.

<sup>19</sup> Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX)*, p.52.

4:14). Although it cannot be decisively proved that Luke was a physician and therefore Paul's companion, it cannot be emphatically disproved either.

Finally, one of the stronger arguments against Lukan authorship is that a true companion of Paul would not have made the historical mistakes that the author made in Acts when compared to Paul's epistles. For instance, in Galatians Paul says that no one shared in his conversion experience (Gal 1:12), but in Acts Ananias is shown to have aided Paul in such matters (Acts 9:17); Paul's three Jerusalem visits compared to Paul's two visits in Galatians differ some; Paul's attitude toward the circumcision of Timothy (Acts 16:3) is much different compared to his attitude in his epistles (Gal.2-6; Col.2:11).<sup>20</sup>

It must finally be argued otherwise that the alleged discrepancies are not entirely conclusive. For instance, the book of Acts emphasizes the supernatural character of Paul's conversion, and Paul's three visits to Jerusalem in Acts versus his two visits in Galatians should not be taken to mean that Paul did not make more -- it may be an argument from silence in that he simply does not mention them.<sup>21</sup> Further agreements include Luke's eucharistic formula (Lk 22:19-20), which is on par with Paul's so-called formula (I Cor 11:23-25). Moreover, both Luke and Paul agree that Jesus first appeared to Simon Peter before anyone else (Lk 24:34; I Cor. 15:5); and more importantly, Raymond Brown confirms that "the basic christology of Jesus as God's Son as phrased in Acts 13:33 is not far from Rom 1:3-4. Also, the natural theology of being able to

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<sup>20</sup> W. Prentice, "St. Paul's Journey to Damascus," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 45 no 3-4 (1955), pp. 250-255; Although it seems apparent that Luke did not have good geography skills, it should be remembered that he uses terminology different than we do today. For instance, Luke "uses 'Judea' in a narrow sense to refer to the particular region, but also in a broader sense to refer to all of Palestine; See also Mark Allen Powell, "What Are They Saying About Luke?" (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), p. 8; and I.H. Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970).

<sup>21</sup> Alternatively, some scholars treat the Jerusalem visits in Acts 11:30 and 15 as duplicate versions, which would impugn the accuracy of Luke's information. For more on this, see A.C. McGiffert, *History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1897), p. 171.

recognize God from creation is equally shared by Acts 17:24-30 and Rom 1:19-21; 2:15.”<sup>22</sup> This strongly suggests that an alternative approach to the alleged discrepancies implies that the rejection of the tradition for Lukan authorship rests on an insecure basis.

### *Luke's Readership and Audience*

The preface of Luke's Gospel is essential in determining the intended audience of the author (Luke 1:1-4). Luke begins by addressing what appears to be a provincial member of the ruling class, “most excellent Theophilus” (Luke 1:3). The epithet “most excellent” (*kratiste*)<sup>23</sup> was “generally applied only to officials or to members of the aristocracy.”<sup>24</sup> It pointed to the holder of some procuratorial or similar office within the empire. It should be mentioned that in regards to ancient prefaces, the author of Luke's Gospel uses a literary device common to the rhetorical conventions of that period, who is thoroughly at home in Greek technical language, so much so that he naturally falls into its style and adopts its preface-conventions when he finds himself at the beginning of a major literary undertaking.<sup>25</sup> This suggests, then, that the author “has made use of the common literary pattern of his time to express his own particular sentiments...that Luke was claiming for his work a place in contemporary literature and thereby commending it to the attention of readers...more probably in the church.”<sup>26</sup>

In regards to the name, “Theophilus,” several possibilities exist. It has been suggested that the name, itself, does not represent a real individual per se, but rather was a coined term that means ‘Lover of God’ -- in which case it would appear that the author was perhaps addressing a particular Christian neophyte community with the intent of providing further instruction about

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<sup>22</sup> R. Brown, *An Introduction To The New Testament*, p. 324.

<sup>23</sup> See Acts 23:26; 24:3, 26:25.

<sup>24</sup> Merrill Tenney, *New Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eardmans Publishing Co. 1961), p.176.

<sup>25</sup> Loveday Alexander, *The Preface to Luke's Gospel: Literary convention and social context in Luke 1.1-4 and Acts 1.1.*, (Cambridge University, Press Syndicate, 1993), p. 173.

<sup>26</sup> I.H. Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), p. 38.

the Christian faith and its message. Another possibility is that the community in connection with the elite nature of the name “Theophilus” is representative of high-ranking provincial member(s), for whom the author is trying to gain a favorable hearing for his message – both arguments seem plausible, yet difficult to prove. In view, however, of the formal character of the preface and the conventional practice of ascribing treatises to notable individuals,<sup>27</sup> it is much more natural and practical to regard Theophilus as a real individual,<sup>28</sup> who probably was a notably respected official within society. Also, the fact that Luke dedicates the two-volumes to Theophilus suggests that his corpus of writings is not a private work intended for solely one individual. It is best, then, to regard “Theophilus [as one who] stands for the Christian readers of Luke’s own day and thereafter.”<sup>29</sup>

Although Theophilus may have stood for the Christian readers of his day, it does not negate the fact that Luke may have been addressing a very real, tangible, individual belonging to the upper echelons of society – a person of high ranking social status. It appears that Theophilus was not an outsider to the Christian message, but that he may have been a recent convert, an insider, with whom Luke is giving further instruction concerning the Christian faith and perhaps to clear up whatever rumors may have been circulating about Christianity. According to Loveday Alexander, “what Theophilus is being offered, on this hypothesis, is the greater ‘security’ of a written text over against oral teaching.”<sup>30</sup> I.H. Marshall sums it up this way:

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<sup>27</sup> See Loveday Alexander, *The Preface to Luke’s Gospel*, p.191. The formal treatise address possibly evidences a patron relationship between the author and Theophilus. The role of the patron in the life of the first churches is well known from the book of Acts and the Epistles, which is further confirmed by inscriptional evidence; for publishing conventions refer to Loveday, pp. 193 – 200, and E. Haenchen, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht), 1977, p. 105. The fact that Luke’s literary patron may have helped publish his two-volume work would suggest that he was in fact a Christian.

<sup>28</sup> Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX)*, p. 299. “Theophilus is a proper name commonly used from the third century B.C. on...it was used by both Gentiles and Jews.”

<sup>29</sup> Fitzmyer, p. 300.

<sup>30</sup> Loveday Alexander, *The Preface to Luke’s Gospel*, p.192; and Richard Heard, “The Gospel of Luke,” ch. 9, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, “Most of the original apostles seem to have been already dead, and with

What, therefore, Luke intended to do by his fresh exposition of Christian beginnings was to confirm for Theophilus the truth of the facts which had already been transmitted to him. The provision of a new, orderly narrative would act as further confirmation of what was already known. Luke thus wished to stress the accuracy of the historical facts which formed part of early Christian teaching.<sup>31</sup>

*Luke's Audience: Jew or Gentile?*

It appears that Luke's audience may have been predominately Gentile for several reasons. For example, the substitution of Greek names for Hebrew/Aramaic names; the fact that Jewish localities are explained (Lk 4:31; 8:26; 21:37; 23:51; 24:13); his Genealogy which traces itself from Joseph to Adam instead of to Abraham as Matthew does; his heavy use of the Septuagint (LXX) when referencing the OT (with "redactional modifications"); and finally, his generic terminology of "Judea" in relation to "Palestine" implicitly suggests that his audience was of a non-Palestinian origin.<sup>32</sup>

Additional internal textual features allude to the non-Palestinian nature of Luke's intended audience. For example, Jesus seems to want to scratch beyond his immediate surroundings in order to reach the so-called 'others' with the good news: "But he said to them, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose" (Lk 4:43). Moreover, his mission statement in the synagogue at Nazareth (Lk 4:16-19) regarding the divine commission Elijah received to visit a widow in Zarephath<sup>33</sup> and Naman the Syrian-- both non-Hebraic locations--suggest that Jesus' mission, like theirs, was to extend beyond

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them leaders like Paul and Barnabas. The need for preserving in writing what was still remembered of the life and teaching of Jesus had become imperative, and Luke, with his previous special opportunities for acquiring information, set himself to supplement and improve upon the earliest documents ['Q' & Oral traditions]."

<sup>31</sup> See I.H. Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian*, p. 39.

<sup>32</sup> Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke, (I-LX)*, p. 58. Other non-Palestinian references could include Jesus' non-Hebrew nature of continual feasting with tax-collectors (Lk 5:29-32, 15:1-32, 19:1-10) and healing performances on the Sabbath (6:6-11, 13:10-17, 14:1-6)

<sup>33</sup> See Paul Achtemeier, *Harper Bible Dictionary*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), p.1156, According to which, Zarephath was "occupied from 1600 B.C. onward, Zarephath was most important during the Phoenician period...In an Egyptian text of the thirteenth century B.C. Zarephath is mentioned along with Byblos,

Palestine into the uttermost parts of the world (Acts 1:8).<sup>34</sup> Fitzmyer further affirms a predominately Gentile audience to whom Luke addresses:

The readers envisaged by Luke were not Gentile Christians in a predominately Jewish setting; they were rather Gentile Christians in a predominately Gentile setting. There may have been some Jews and Jewish Christians among them...But the audience envisaged by Luke in his writing of Luke-Acts is one that is predominately Gentile Christian, and Theophilus is one of them.<sup>35</sup>

Further, narrative features exist within Luke's account that favor a more Gentile readership. For example, the "prefacing of a narrative dealing with Jesus' infancy and youth" and "Jesus' lectures at a banquet in comparison to those of a sage at a symposium"<sup>36</sup> (Lk 14:1-24; and not least, Luke's portrayal of a Jesus who suffers less than what the other evangelists record, befit a predominately Hellenistic-Gentile audience.<sup>37</sup>

Although J. Nolland argues that the ideal reader would be a godfearer, Gentile by birth, drawn into the group around the fringes of the synagogue and attracted to the Jewish belief in the so-called one true God,<sup>38</sup> Wenham, however, argues for a wider readership, namely "diaspora Jews (who frequently used the Septuagint in their worship, rather than the Hebrew scriptures)<sup>39</sup>...and Gentile Christians with no synagogue background, but who had become familiar with the Septuagint through it being read in Christian worship."<sup>40</sup>

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Beirut, Sidon, and Tyre. In his campaign of 701 B.C. the Assyrian king Sennacherib included Zarephath in a list of pacified coastal cities, while King Esarhaddon transferred Zarephath to the control of Tyre some twenty years later.

<sup>34</sup> See Robert Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark 1982); and Robert Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, Vol I (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, c1986-c1990), who sees Luke-Acts as a narrative unit in which Jesus comes to his own (Jewish), but his own reject him; therefore, salvation must come to the Gentiles.

<sup>35</sup> Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX)*, p. 59.

<sup>36</sup> R. Brown. *An Introduction To The New Testament*, p. 270.

<sup>37</sup> See J.H. Neyrey, "The absence of Jesus' emotions: the Lucan Redaction of Lk 22:39-46," *Biblica*, 61 no 2 (1980), pp. 153-71.

<sup>38</sup> J. Nolland, *World Biblical Commentary: Luke*, 35 A, Vol. I, (Dallas: Word, 1989), p. 241.

<sup>39</sup> David Tiede, *Prophecy and History in Luke-Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980). Tiede believes that Luke is writing for a Jewish-Christian community. When the Temple was destroyed during the Babylonian Captivity (586 BCE), the Hebrew captives took comfort in the Hebrew Scriptures, so now, as the Temple in Jerusalem has been destroyed again in 70 CE Jewish-Christians, again, are finding comfort in the Hebrew Scriptures, which

While it is difficult to pin-point with exact precision Luke's intended audience, it may be that his aim was to reach a wide range of people in the Greek-speaking world, and though Jews would have certainly made up part of the population, it is more plausible to view Luke's intended readership and mission as being "primarily" Gentile. Simultaneously however, it should be noted that although Luke's targeted mission and focus was seemingly Gentile,<sup>41</sup> it is best to view the beneficiaries of Luke's mission efforts as a mixed population of both Jews and Gentiles.<sup>42</sup>

### *The Date of Composition*

Dating the composition of Luke's Gospel depends upon the nature of the literary relationship between Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The earliest tradition stems from the Anti-Marcionite prologue which indicates that Luke had Matthew and Mark available at the time of his writing, which indicates that he could not have written earlier than 65 C.E. when Mark would have most likely composed his Gospel.<sup>43</sup> The challenge lies in trying to ascertain how much after 65 C.E. Luke wrote his two-volume work. It certainly goes without saying that Luke could not have written beyond 140 C.E. since Marcion is already editing Luke's Gospel at this time. The best one can postulate is that Luke wrote some time between 65–140 C.E. -- most probably sometime after the Fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Jewish Temple in 70 C.E.

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accounts for Luke's high use of OT passages. Luke sees the destruction of the Jerusalem temple as a sign that Israel is in sin once again, in that, she has rejected the Messiah, resulting in the destruction of the temple.

<sup>40</sup> See David Wenham and Steve Walton, *Exploring the NT: A Guide to The Gospel and Acts*, Vol. I (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2001), p.294.

<sup>41</sup> Various themes in Luke allude to a Gentile mission (e.g., Jesus' ministry to outcasts, the religiously unfit, the poor, and especially the large amount of information and treatment of women.).

<sup>42</sup> See Mark Powell, *What Are They Saying About Luke*, p.57. An increasing number of scholars are content to eliminate the term "primarily" altogether and simply affirm that Luke writes for a mixed ethnic community, both elements of which require Luke's attention; see also Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*: "Theophilus is a proper name commonly used from the third century B.C. on...it was used by both Gentiles and Jews," p. 299.

<sup>43</sup> For more info see Theodor Von Zahn's, *Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons*, Vol. I&II (Erlangen: A. Deichert, 1888-92).

The view that Luke wrote some time after the Fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Jewish Temple in 70 C.E. is strongly supported by several key texts that refer to this event: Luke 13:25a; 19:41-44; 21:20-40; 23:28-31. To presuppose that Luke wrote earlier than 70 C.E. is to claim that the above scripture references are nothing more than predictive prophecies (from the OT) made by Jesus prior to the Fall of Jerusalem. This view seems unlikely since Luke appears to be redacting Mark's text (written around 65 C.E.), which would have been much too early for Luke to have obtained a copy of in order to make use of it for his two-volume work. It is much more likely that the prophecies in Luke's Gospel were made after the Jerusalem event – *vaticinium ex eventu*.

Moreover, Fitzmyer supports the view that Luke's references in the prologue to "eyewitnesses" and the "many" who undertook to write an account of the Christian event, strongly favors a post 70 C.E. date due to the fact that attempts to "recount the Jesus-story (Luke 1:1) before his own would be difficult to understand at such an early date."<sup>44</sup> In other words, enough time would have had to pass in order for Luke to have claimed that "many have undertaken"...and "were eyewitnesses" (Luke 1:1-2) of the events surrounding Jesus' ministry for him to have put pen to paper.<sup>45</sup> On this basis, a pre 70 C.E. date would simply be too early for Luke to compose his Gospel; affirming a post 70 C.E. date seems more likely.

J.A.T. Robinson opposes this view and supports an early date of 57-60 C.E. Following in C.H. Dodd and A. Von Harnack's steps, Robinson suggests that Luke-Acts must have been dated prior to Paul's trial and death at Rome, since that is where Acts ends. If Paul's trial and death were known it is difficult to believe that Luke would not have mentioned it.<sup>46</sup> But Fitzmyer

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<sup>44</sup> Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke, (I-IX)*, p. 54.

<sup>45</sup> Luke was certainly dissatisfied with what had been written about Jesus and decided to write an accurate account of what really happened.

<sup>46</sup> See J.A.T Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), p. 91.

counters this claim and suggests that “perhaps Luke deliberately ended the book where he did because he thought that he had by that time written what he wanted to say in his account of the sequel to the Christ-event.”<sup>47</sup> Further detail is provided in his prodigious work, *Acts of the Apostles*:

In any case, it may seem strange that the reader is not told anything about the death of Paul, the hero of the second half of Acts. Yet the ending, such as it is, may not be as puzzling as some think, because it does record that Paul continued to preach the kingdom of God, even in Rome, 'with all boldness and without hindrance' (28:31). That is the note of triumph on which Luke wanted his story to end. The gospel was thus being preached at Rome, the 'end of the earth' (1:8), 'and without hindrance' (28:31). The reader of Acts already knows that Paul's personal end was not far off; the Lucan Paul intimated as much in his speech at Miletus, and so Luke felt no need to recount it. Homer's Iliad is not seen to be incomplete because it does not describe Achilles' death!<sup>48</sup>

Based on this evidence it is more plausible to postulate a post date of 70 C.E. How far after 70 C.E. is too difficult to determine – thus, a date of 80-85 C.E. seems appropriate for the authorship of the two-volume work, Luke-Acts.

### *Conclusion*

In regards to “Who” wrote the two-volume work, Luke-Acts, it appears that the strongest candidate for authorship is the evangelist Luke. Although manuscript titles do not emphatically prove Lukan authorship, at the same time, they do not deny it either. This is affirmed by the early Church Tradition of the patristic Fathers, who unanimously regard Luke as the author of the two-volume work. On this basis, I agree with G.B Caird that the early Church fathers “would have had no means of putting a name to the author if there had not been a valid tradition connecting the books [Luke-Acts] with the name of Luke.”<sup>49</sup> Although various attempts have been made at

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<sup>47</sup> Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX)*, p. 57. Opposing this view is H. Lietzmann, *The Founding of the Church Universal*, tr. B.L. Woolf (London: Lutterworth, 2nd edition, 1950), page 78, The fact that Luke did not write of events following Paul's imprisonment "can only be satisfactorily explained by saying that the author died before the work was completed." But this is too speculative to lend any credence since no one is certain when Luke died.

<sup>48</sup> Fitzmyer, *The Anchor Bible: The Acts of the Apostles*, Vol. 31, (New York: Doubleday, 1998), pp. 791-792

<sup>49</sup> G.B. Caird, *Saint Luke*, p. 17

rejecting Lukan authorship, most, however, appear tenuous and difficult to prove. In this regard it is difficult not to affirm Luke as the author of Luke-Acts.

Next, in regards to the “Whom” of Luke-Acts, that is, Luke’s audience, it appears that Luke’s mind-set was globally focused versus singling out a particular individual or ethnic group. For instance, we have seen that Theophilus, although certainly a high ranking official within the empire, has come to represent a wide range of people(s) and ethnic group(s) for whom Luke is attempting to reach with the Christian message. And although the case can be made that Luke’s targeted audience appears to be Gentile, recent scholarship<sup>50</sup> indicates that Luke had a wider audience in mind, one that consisted of both Jews and Gentiles.

Finally, “When” was Luke-Acts actually written, was it before 70 C.E. or after 70 C.E.? Based on the internal and external evidence from the scriptures and history it seems best to regard Luke’s two-volume work to have been written around 80-85 C.E. This is mainly supported by the key historical landmark(s) of the “Fall of Jerusalem” and the “destruction of the Jewish Temple” that occurred in 70 C.E. To claim a pre 70 C.E. date for Lukan composition is to tenuously affirm that Luke had a copy of Mark’s Gospel between 65-70 C.E., which is simply not enough time for Luke to record that, “many have undertaken...” concerning the Christ-events of that period (Luke 1:1-2). Thus, it is best to affirm a post 70 C.E. (80-85 C.E.) date for the composition of Luke-Acts.

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<sup>50</sup> Powell, Mark. *What Are They Saying About Luke*, p.57.

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