

I Introduction



Galatians is more ad hoc than many of Paul's letters, leaving unstated many assumptions shared between Paul and the Galatians.¹ Most scholars agree that we can learn something about Paul's challengers in Galatia from Paul's letter to the Galatians.² That we have only one side of the conversation, however, warns us not to think that we know more than we really do.³ In keeping with ancient polemical conventions,⁴ Paul sometimes reduces his opponents' principles to absurdity and puts a worse face on their intentions than they would have conceded.

GALATIANS IN EARLY CHRISTIAN CONTEXT

Galatians has long occupied center stage in theological debates, particularly since the period of the Protestant Reformation. Because some modern negative depictions of Paul's view of the law purport to derive their inspiration from Luther, it is helpful to observe that Luther retained valid uses for the law as Scripture.⁵

Luther did depend too heavily on the interpretive grid supplied by his early reading of Galatians. Still, his appeal to Romans to fill the gaps in

¹ G. D. Fee, *Galatians: Pentecostal Commentary* (Blandford Forum, Dorset, UK: Deo Publishing, 2007), 1.

² See, e.g., E. P. Sanders, *Paul: The Apostle's Life, Letters, and Thought* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2015), 477 (with cautions on 165–66).

³ On mirror-reading Galatians, see J. M. G. Barclay, "Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians as a Test Case," *JSNT* 31 (1987): 73–93.

⁴ Smearing opponents was the norm (e.g., Isaeus *Dic.* 46; Fronto *Ad M. Caes.* 3.3); for reducing arguments to the absurd, see, e.g., Rom 3:6, 8; Lysias *Or.* 4.5–6, §101; Cicero *Phil.* 8.5.16; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 83.9; 113.20; Apuleius *Apol.* 29–30, 58, 102.

⁵ E.g., Luther, *Second Lectures on Galatians* on 3:21 (from *Galatians, Ephesians* [ed. G. Bray, *Reformation Commentary on Scripture, New Testament* 1; Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011]).

Galatians' more ad hoc arguments⁶ is probably helpful. If we appeal to any background at all, surely Paul's own developed thought is the closest available background for Galatians.

Nevertheless, precisely *because* Romans is more developed, we must recognize differences between the letters. Luther and most of his contemporaries thought that Galatians abridged Paul's earlier argument in Romans,⁷ whereas most scholars today deem Romans the later, more mature work. Galatians is much harsher toward Jewish tradition and the law, whereas Romans is clearer in differentiating the law from its abuse.

Theologically, the letters basically cohere,⁸ opposing not works per se but boasting in them. Yet Romans is more nuanced, and is helpful for qualifying, by means of Paul's more comprehensive theology just several years later, some striking statements found in Galatians. Galatians is more direct and polemical because, unlike Romans, it addresses an immediate threat from opponents.

At many points Acts also supplies information that coincides with or fills gaps in our understanding of Galatians. Because Acts functions as a historical monograph, because "we" material in Acts suggests that its author traveled with Paul at times, and because I have argued these matters at length elsewhere, I will cite Acts where I believe it relevant.⁹

Nevertheless, when one compares Acts with Galatians, not only omissions but differences of perspective are obvious. For example, writing with the benefit of hindsight, Luke puts the best face on differences between Paul and the Jerusalem apostles (cf. Acts 15:2–32), whereas Paul is at pains in Galatians to emphasize his independence from those apostles (Gal 1:18–20; 2:6). Sharing ancient historians' appreciation for an appearance of a degree of neutrality, Luke has apparently incorporated some Jerusalem perspectives for which Paul had little use when writing Galatians (cf. Acts 15:20, 29; Gal 2:6, 10). Such differences of perspective are helpful for us to keep in mind when comparing the accounts.

⁶ T. Wengert, "Martin Luther on Galatians 3:6–14: Justification by Curses and Blessings," pages 91–116 in *Galatians and Christian Theology: Justification, the Gospel, and Ethics in Paul's Letter* (ed. M. W. Elliott et al.; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014).

⁷ G. Bray, "Introduction to Galatians, Ephesians," pages xxxvii–liii in *Galatians, Ephesians* (ed. G. Bray; *Reformation Commentary on Scripture, New Testament* 10; Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), xxxviii, xli.

⁸ See esp. H. Boers, *The Justification of the Gentiles: Paul's Letters to the Galatians and Romans* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 223–24.

⁹ See C. S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012–2015), 90–319.

THEOLOGY OF GALATIANS AND SOME DOMINANT THEMES

Many interpreters read Galatians against the backdrop of Paul's "apocalyptic" worldview, more explicit in, e.g., 1 Thessalonians or 1 Corinthians than in Galatians.¹⁰ Some scholars, however, warn against an apocalyptic reading that neglects prior salvation history.¹¹ The extent to which "apocalyptic" can characterize Galatians is largely a matter of definition: Galatians is far from the technical definition of an apocalypse as a visionary text,¹² but like Paul's other letters, it does embrace elements of the apocalyptic eschatological worldview.¹³

In the letter's body, the theme of *the gospel* dominates Paul's apologetic narrative section (Gal 1:6–9, 11, 16, 23; 2:2, 5, 7, 14; cf. 4:13); here Paul invokes his personal accounts of receiving and defending the gospel God gave him. The themes of law (2:16, 19, 21; 3:2, 5, 10–13, 17–19, 21, 23–24; 4:4–5, 21; cf. 5:3–4) and promise (3:14, 16–19, 21–22, 29; 4:23, 28) dominate the letter's direct argumentative section, and here Paul repeatedly invokes Scripture (most explicitly in 3:6, 8, 10–13, 16; 4:22, 27, 30), although he also appeals to their experience (3:1–5; 4:8, 13–14) and stirs pathos (4:12–20).

Although law continues to appear (5:14, 18, 23; 6:2, 13) in the body's final section and the Spirit was introduced earlier (3:2–5, 14; 4:6, 29), the theme of the Spirit tends to dominate the letter's ethical section (5:16–18, 22–23, 25; 6:1, 8). It is the Spirit, not external laws, that enables true righteousness (cf. Ezek 36:27). In its distinctively negative or inadequate sense that contrasts with the promised Spirit, *flesh* (*sarx*) is introduced in 3:3, appears in the contrast between the Spirit-promised (prophetically promised) heir and the child born by natural means (4:23, 29), and features heavily in the continued contrast with the Spirit in 5:13, 16–17, 19–21, 24; and 6:8, 12–13.

Paul insists that because his gentile converts have embraced Christ and received the Spirit just like Jewish believers, they are no less full heirs of Israel's promises. In my view, this means that Paul envisions gentile believers

¹⁰ See J. L. Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 97–105, esp. helpful regarding 1:4; 3:23–25; 4:4, 6.

¹¹ E.g., N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2013), 781; Wright, *Pauline Perspectives: Essays on Paul, 1978–2013* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2013), 481–82; R. B. Hays, "Apocalyptic Poïesis in Galatians: Paternity, Passion, and Participation," pages 200–19 in *Galatians and Christian Theology: Justification, the Gospel, and Ethics in Paul's Letter* (ed. M. W. Elliott et al.; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014).

¹² See J. J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).

¹³ See J. M. G. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth: Paul's Ethics in Galatians* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 1988), 100.

as spiritual proselytes (see Gal 3:29; cf. Rom 2:28–29; 11:17), whereas his competitors viewed them as merely sympathizers or God-fearers (cf. Acts 15:20), still needing marks of the covenant to become full children of Abraham.

AUTHOR, PROVENANCE, AND DATE

Nearly all scholars affirm that Paul wrote Galatians.¹⁴ It is too closely connected with the local situation and too close in style to other letters with local connections to be pseudepigraphic.

Ancient writers often thought that Paul wrote Galatians late, from Rome.¹⁵ Modern scholars usually prefer a provenance of Corinth or Ephesus. If Paul's rivals proceeded to Galatia shortly after the Jerusalem Council, Paul could even write the letter from Antioch, describing recent events in 2:11–14. The question of Galatians' provenance makes little difference in interpreting the letter, however, in contrast to the question of the location of its addressees (treated in the later section "North or South Galatia").

Date: After the Jerusalem Council

Scholars today vary in the date they assign to the letter's composition, although the entire range of debated dates is generally less than a decade, from ca. 48¹⁶ to the mid-50s,¹⁷ a common median (which I accept as a working hypothesis) being about 51.¹⁸ Earlier tradition, followed by most Reformers, favored a late date for Galatians, believing that Paul composed it after Romans.¹⁹ Whereas scholars today debate whether 2:1–10 refers to the council depicted in Acts 15 or to an earlier occasion, Luther applied it to an occasion even later than Acts 15.²⁰

¹⁴ E.g., J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians: A Revised Text with Introduction, Notes, and Dissertations* (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1896), 57–62; H. D. Betz, *A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermeneia Commentaries; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1979), 1.

¹⁵ E.g., Theodoret *Ep. Gal.* 6.18 (Edwards).

¹⁶ E.g., W. Ramsay, W. Neil, F. F. Bruce, C. Hemer, B. Witherington, D. Moo.

¹⁷ See, e.g., M. Hengel, G. W. Hansen, G. Fee, S. Eastman, E. P. Sanders, A. M. Schwemer.

¹⁸ J. D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Black's New Testament Commentary; London: A&C Black, 1995), 19 (late 50 through early 51); Martyn, *Galatians*, 19–20, esp. 20n20 (ca. 50); M. C. de Boer, *Galatians: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 5–11; cf. P. Oakes, *Galatians* (Paideia; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 22.

¹⁹ G. Bray, "Introduction to Galatians" (2011), xxxviii, xli.

²⁰ Luther, *Second Lectures on Galatians*, on Gal 2:1 (Bray).

Because Galatians could not be written before the events it reports, the date of the incident in Gal 2:1–10 is a primary crux in the debate concerning a possible early date of Galatians. Scholars most often identify this incident with the time of either (1) Paul's famine visit of Acts 11:30 and 12:25; or, more commonly (2) the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15. Proponents of both views offer plausible arguments. Many respected scholars support the first view,²¹ though a greater number of scholars, including myself, favor the second.²²

I shall first list several of the arguments that scholars have advanced for the first (famine visit) view, following each argument with my response supporting the second (Jerusalem Council) view. Then I shall turn to remaining arguments for the Jerusalem Council view not already treated in my responses.²³

First, supporters of the famine visit view doubt that Paul would have omitted mention of the famine visit in Galatians. This argues from silence, however; in Galatians, Paul addresses only occasions on which he met the *apostles* in Jerusalem (1:17–20; 2:1–2); most of the apostles may have been in hiding when he came (Acts 11:30; 12:1–3, 17).

Second, some consider it “inconceivable” that Paul would not mention the Jerusalem decree in Galatians had the council of Acts 15 already occurred. All scholars acknowledge, however, that 1 Corinthians postdates any event depicted in Acts 15; but 1 Corinthians appeals to no decree to settle the questions of sexual immorality or food offered to idols, issues that the Jerusalem decree expressly addressed (Acts 15:20).

Further, on a post-Jerusalem Council date for Galatians, Paul had *already* delivered these decrees to south Galatia (Acts 16:4) – apparently before insistence on circumcision became an issue there (note the geographic range in 15:1, 23) – and it had not silenced his challengers. Moreover, Paul may effectively *appeal* to the decree in Gal 2:6–10 (see comment there).

²¹ E.g., W. Ramsay (eventually), W. Knox, C. Williams, R. Longenecker, W. Larkin, P. Trebilco, B. Witherington, R. Bauckham, S. Mitchell, D. Bock (very tentatively), D. Moo, A. Das; see especially the detailed cases of E. J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, 2 vols. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity; Leicester, UK: Apollos, 2004), 988–92; D. Wenham, “Acts and the Pauline Corpus, II: The Evidence of Parallels,” pages 215–58 in *The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting* (ed. B. W. Winter and A. D. Clarke; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans; Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1993), 234–43.

²² E.g., J. B. Lightfoot, R. B. Rackham, J. Knox, F. Stagg, R. Stein, H. D. Betz, G. Lüdemann, H. Ridderbos, S. Kistemaker, C. K. Barrett, J. Fitzmyer, F. Mussner, M. Hengel, C. Hill, A. M. Schwemer, J. Dunn, K.-S. Krieger, R. Pervo, P. Nepper-Christensen, G. Fee, R. Hays, S. Eastman, G. Lyons, M. de Boer, P. Oakes, B. Chance, *Acts*, 250, E. P. Sanders. Earlier, see, e.g., Bede *Comm. Acts* 15.2.

²³ See further Keener, *Acts*, 2195–2206, 2258–79.

Third, some find discrepancies between Gal 2:1–10 and Acts 15. Most such discrepancies, however, involve omissions of detail in one account or the other, such as is common in ancient historical texts as well as modern eyewitness testimony.²⁴ The account in Acts 11:30, by contrast, is simply too bare to *offer* many discrepancies – or parallels.

Fourth, the “revelation” in Gal 2:2 could fit the prophetic reason for the famine visit (Acts 11:28–30). In Galatians, however, Paul applies revelatory language specifically to his personal revelation of the gospel (Gal 1:12, 16; cf. 3:23; Rom 1:17; 16:25). In context, then, Paul’s revelation was the gospel message for the gentiles that he presented to the Jerusalem leaders, as suggested even in the verse itself (Gal 2:2).

Fifth, some contend that the agreement reached in Acts 11:30/12:25 and Gal 2:1–10 was incomplete, requiring it to be later revisited in Acts 15. But in logic, the simplest solution is generally the best one available. Since Acts 11:30/12:25 do not mention any agreement or even any meeting with Jerusalem apostles, and since Acts 15 includes both these features, is it not simpler to conclude that Gal 2:1–10 reflects events also reported in Acts 15?

Even right before the Jerusalem council, when Paul debated with circumcisionists in Antioch (Acts 15:1–2), the issue had not yet traveled north from Syria-Cilicia to Galatia (Acts 15:23, 41).

Additional considerations confirm that Paul wrote Galatians after the Jerusalem Council. First, numerous features in common between Gal 2:1–10 and Acts 15 suggest that they refer to the same event.²⁵

Commonalities	Acts 15:6–22	Gal 2:1–10
The same basic object	Acts 15:5	Gal 2:4
The same basic outcome	Acts 15:19–21, 28–29	Gal 2:5–6
Paul’s mission is recognized	Acts 15:12	Gal 2:2
Leaders agree that gentiles need not be circumcised	Acts 15:19–20	Gal 2:7–9
Peter agreed	Acts 15:7–11	Gal 2:9
James agreed	Acts 15:13–21	Gal 2:9

I believe that it strains plausibility to suppose these are coincidentally two completely separate events, one recorded by Luke and the other by Paul.

The accounts emphasize different features, but so long as we recognize that Luke’s and Paul’s reports are independent and from different perspectives,

²⁴ Cf. Keener, *Acts*, 194–96; regarding Acts 15, see 2195–2202.
²⁵ I borrow the following chart from Keener, *Acts*, 2200. See also comparisons in Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 123–24.

their points of agreement provide multiple attestation for memories of an important event.²⁶

James was already influential earlier (Gal 1:19), but in Gal 2:9, 12, he is listed first and appears to be the most prominent leader in the Jerusalem church.²⁷ Insofar as we can tell from Acts, he did not achieve this rank before the famine visit and Peter's departure from the city (Acts 11:30; 12:17; cf. 15:13, 19; 21:18; 1 Cor 9:5).

Because Gal 2:1–10 probably refers to the event later depicted in Acts 15, this commentary adopts a date some time after the Jerusalem Council (ca. 48), but probably before the collection (about which most scholars believe that Galatians is silent), so perhaps ca. 50–52 CE.

Paul's Audience in Galatia

At least the strong majority of Paul's audience was gentile;²⁸ they were not yet circumcised (Gal 5:2; 6:12) and they once worshiped non-gods (4:8). Many gentiles were attracted to Judaism in areas where some Jews lived,²⁹ so some sympathetic polytheists may have had some acquaintance with the synagogue before their conversion (cf. Acts 13:43; 14:1).

Nevertheless, they would be ill prepared to match the circumcisionist teachers from Judea with whom Paul finds himself in theological conflict in this letter.

Galatia's religious environment offers some valuable insights, discussed at Gal 4:8–10 and, regarding one cult, at 5:12. More recently, a number of scholars have viewed Galatians through an anti-imperial lens,³⁰ in view of strikingly prominent imperial temples in this region.³¹ In this letter, however, Paul is probably too concerned with the immediate issue to be focused

²⁶ With, e.g., J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 31; New York: Doubleday, 1998), 540. On the differences, cf. Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 125–28.

²⁷ What was named first was often deemed greater (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Comp.* 5; Mekilta Pisha 1.28; Bah. 8.28–30).

²⁸ Noted also by Jerome *Gal.* 2.5.2 (Edwards).

²⁹ See, e.g., Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.9.20; Juvenal *Sat.* 5.14.96–106.

³⁰ See helpfully on this element B. Kahl, *Galatians Re-imagined: Reading with the Eyes of the Vanquished* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2010); J. K. Hardin, *Galatians and the Imperial Cult* (WUNT 2.237; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

³¹ In Antioch, see S. Mitchell, *Anatolia: Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 1:101, 104–06; 2:10; Mitchell, "Archaeology in Asia Minor, 1990–1998," *ArchRep* 45 (1998–99): 125–92, here 178; in Phrygia generally, MAMA 1.19, 23, 24, 24a, 416, 429.

on the larger setting of Roman oppression.³² Still, Paul is concerned with his rivals imposing their cultural (and they believed scriptural) strictures on his converts, so one could still speak of a sort of cultural and theological imperialism.

One frequently offered aspect of background involves the people from whom the Galatian province derived its name.³³ Many Gauls, or Celts, had settled in Phrygian and Cappadocian territories in Asia Minor.³⁴ Outsiders stereotyped Galatians as ignorant, although Galatians themselves worked hard to challenge this prejudice.³⁵ Erasmus follows Jerome in deeming them stupid, providing Erasmus (though not Jerome) an occasion for anti-French prejudice.³⁶

The relevance of this Celtic backdrop depends to some extent on whether Paul addresses ethnic Gauls (on the north Galatian view) or simply inhabitants of the Galatian province (on the south Galatian view). Yet the character of Paul's letter suggests that even if he addressed north Galatia, he addressed its hellenized and romanized urban residents, not the stereotypical Celtic invaders of earlier generations.³⁷

North or South Galatia?

Commentators divide between those who argue that Paul's primary audience consisted of ethnic Galatians in the northern part of the province of Galatia³⁸ and those who argue that Paul simply employs the provincial

³² Against overemphasis on the imperial cult in Paul, see, e.g., A. A. Das, *Paul and the Stories of Israel: Grand Thematic Narratives in Galatians* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2016), 179–215; C. Miller, “The Imperial Cult in the Pauline Cities of Asia Minor and Greece,” *CBQ* 72 (2, 2010): 314–32; K. Galinsky, “The Cult of the Roman Emperor: Uniter or Divider?” pages 1–21 in *Rome and Religion: A Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue on the Imperial Cult* (ed. J. Brodd and J. L. Reed; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011).

³³ For details on the Celts who settled in Asia, see Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 1–17, 239–51; and esp. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 1:11–58.

³⁴ Livy 38.17.2; W. M. Ramsay, *A Historical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1900), 25, 45–52. Cf. Callimachus *Hymn* 4.173, 184; Seneca *Dial.* 12.7.2.

³⁵ Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:84.

³⁶ Desiderius Erasmus, *Paraphrases*, on Galatians' introduction, following Jerome *Gal.* 1.1.1 (Bray, *Galatians*, 1). Luther and others also deemed Galatians foolish as a people (*Gal.* 1535 on 3:1; see comment on Gal 3:1).

³⁷ Betz, *Galatians*, 2.

³⁸ E.g., Lightfoot, K. Lake, Meeks, Reicke, Mussner, F. Watson, de Boer, Koch, Soards and Pursiful.

label, which allows that his audience could be (and for various reasons probably was) in southern Galatia.³⁹ The latter are probably the majority today.

Historically, most commentators favored the north Galatian hypothesis.⁴⁰ The weight of historical opinion is thus behind the north Galatian hypothesis, ironically (given recent scholarship) making this a more “conservative” (and certainly traditional) view. This was the case, however, because patristic commentators assumed the provincial boundaries and population patterns of their own day, being generally unaware of those of Paul’s day.⁴¹

Arguments for the North Galatian Hypothesis

Following are some key arguments traditionally offered for the north Galatian hypothesis, followed by my responses, and then arguments for the south Galatian hypothesis. One significant argument in favor of the north Galatian hypothesis is its antiquity, already addressed earlier. Another argument is that Luke employs the title Galatia only in Acts 16:6 and 18:23, there in connection with Paul’s mission in the north. This argument, however, proves vulnerable to several criticisms. First, Luke mentions no evangelization occurring in connection with these travels. Second, Luke’s usage cannot determine Paul’s. Third, ancient usage suggests that in 16:6 Luke probably refers to Phrygian Galatia, not to northern Galatia.⁴² Indeed, the route depicted in Acts 16:6–8 might not even pass through northern Galatia.⁴³ Finally, if we are to appeal to Acts, Luke devotes not two verses but the better part of two chapters to the evangelization of the southern part of the Galatian province.

³⁹ E.g., Ramsay, W. Knox, Burton, Neil, Breytenbach, J. Scott, R. Riesner, Rackham, C. Williams, Arrington, G. W. Hansen, P. Barnett, J. Bligh, Bruce, Fung, E. Yamauchi, J. Finegan, B. Witherington, T. Schreiner, D. deSilva, P. Oakes, A. Das, S. Porter; see esp. C. J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (ed. C. H. Gempf; WUNT 49; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989), 278–307; T. Witulski, *Die Adressaten des Galaterbriefes: Untersuchungen zur Gemeinde von Antiochia ad Pisidiam* (Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments 193; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000).

⁴⁰ Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 239, cites “the universal tradition of ancient writers.”

⁴¹ With Oakes, *Galatians*, 19.

⁴² See the primary sources in C. J. Hemer, “The Adjective ‘Phrygia,’” *JTS*, n.s., 27 (1, 1976): 122–26; Hemer, “Phrygia: A Further Note,” *JTS*, n.s., 28 (1, 1977): 99–101.

⁴³ See R. Riesner, *Paul’s Early Period: Chronology, Mission Strategy, Theology* (trans. D. Stott; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 282–86; Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:3.

Orators addressing mixed communities usually used provincial titles. Unlike Luke's descriptions in this region, Paul's letters regularly refer to regions by their provincial titles (Rom 15:26; 16:5; 1 Cor 16:5, 15, 19; 2 Cor 1:1, 8, 16; 2:13; 7:5; 8:1; 9:2, 4; 11:9–10; Gal 1:21; Phil 4:15; 1 Thess 1:7–8; 4:10). More important, in direct address he speaks to the "Corinthians" (using a geographic, not ethnic, designation in direct address) in 2 Cor 6:11, and Philippians in Phil 4:15. If he were using instead ethnic designations, he would probably call them "Roman citizens" and (more typically for Paul's usage) "Greeks"!

Many doubt that Paul would have risked offending Lycaonians and Phrygians by calling them "Galatians," with its often negative connotations (Gal 3:1).⁴⁴ Had Paul been concerned with offense, however, he might have dispensed particularly with the adjective "foolish" that immediately precedes this title.

A more compelling argument for the north Galatian hypothesis is that the letter's audience are former pagans (Gal 4:8–9), a situation that need not be exclusively true in Phrygia.⁴⁵ Luke reports that some Jewish people (Acts 14:1; cf. 13:42) and proselytes (Acts 13:43) in Phrygia became followers of Jesus, and Galatians seems to leave no trace of them. But perhaps Paul simply addresses the group most at risk from his rivals (Paul never objected to circumcision of fellow Jews); after all, his arguments about circumcision address only males, but this does not indicate that there were no females among his converts (Gal 3:28).⁴⁶

It is further possible that Paul addresses primarily the gentile believers because most Jewish believers who remain have gone over to the side of his rivals, who claimed Jerusalem backing. Moreover, it appears that the majority of converts in the chief city of the region were gentiles, opposed by the local synagogue (13:45–50); this was apparently true also in Lystra (14:11–20) and surely true of the outlying areas (13:49; 14:6). Luke speaks of just two synagogues in the region (13:14, 43; 14:1; in both cases articular, as if these were the only ones), though there were apparently some Jews in Lystra (even if at least some of them were fairly lax in observing the Torah; Acts 16:1).

⁴⁴ E.g., W. A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), 42.

⁴⁵ Martyn, *Galatians*, 15; de Boer, *Galatians*, 5.

⁴⁶ D. A. deSilva, *Global Readings: A Sri Lankan Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011), 22.