

GALATIANS

DOUGLAS J. MOO



Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

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For
Jenny, συνεργάτις

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Series Preface

The chief concern of the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (BECNT) is to provide, within the framework of informed evangelical thought, commentaries that blend scholarly depth with readability, exegetical detail with sensitivity to the whole, and attention to critical problems with theological awareness. We hope thereby to attract the interest of a fairly wide audience, from the scholar who is looking for a thoughtful and independent examination of the text to the motivated lay Christian who craves a solid but accessible exposition.

Nevertheless, a major purpose is to address the needs of pastors and others involved in the preaching and exposition of the Scriptures as the uniquely inspired Word of God. This consideration directly affects the parameters of the series. For example, serious biblical expositors cannot afford to depend on a superficial treatment that avoids the difficult questions, but neither are they interested in encyclopedic commentaries that seek to cover every conceivable issue that may arise. Our aim, therefore, is to focus on those problems that have a direct bearing on the meaning of the text (although selected technical details are treated in the additional notes).

Similarly, a special effort is made to avoid treating exegetical questions for their own sake, that is, in relative isolation from the thrust of the argument as a whole. This effort may involve (at the discretion of the individual contributors) abandoning the verse-by-verse approach in favor of an exposition that focuses on the paragraph as the main unit of thought. In all cases, however, the commentaries will stress the development of the argument and explicitly relate each passage to what precedes and follows it so as to identify its function in context as clearly as possible.

We believe, moreover, that a responsible exegetical commentary must take fully into account the latest scholarly research, regardless of its source. The attempt to do this in the context of a conservative theological tradition presents certain challenges, and in the past the results have not always been commendable. In some cases, evangelicals appear to make use of critical scholarship not for the purpose of genuine interaction but only to dismiss it. In other cases, the interaction glides over into assimilation, theological distinctives are ignored or suppressed, and the end product cannot be differentiated from works that arise from a fundamentally different starting point.

The contributors to this series attempt to avoid these pitfalls. On the one hand, they do not consider traditional opinions to be sacrosanct, and they

are certainly committed to doing justice to the biblical text whether or not it supports such opinions. On the other hand, they will not quickly abandon a long-standing view, if there is persuasive evidence in its favor, for the sake of fashionable theories. What is more important, the contributors share a belief in the trustworthiness and essential unity of Scripture. They also consider that the historic formulations of Christian doctrine, such as the ecumenical creeds and many of the documents originating in the sixteenth-century Reformation, arose from a legitimate reading of Scripture, thus providing a proper framework for its further interpretation. No doubt the use of such a starting point sometimes results in the imposition of a foreign construct on the text, but we deny that it must necessarily do so or that the writers who claim to approach the text without prejudices are invulnerable to the same danger.

Accordingly, we do not consider theological assumptions—from which, in any case, no commentator is free—to be obstacles to biblical interpretation. On the contrary, an exegete who hopes to understand the apostle Paul in a theological vacuum might just as easily try to interpret Aristotle without regard for the philosophical framework of his whole work or without having recourse to those subsequent philosophical categories that make possible a meaningful contextualization of his thought. It must be emphasized, however, that the contributors to the present series come from a variety of theological traditions and that they do not all have identical views with regard to the proper implementation of these general principles. In the end, all that matters is whether the series succeeds in representing the original text accurately, clearly, and meaningfully to the contemporary reader.

Shading has been used to assist the reader in locating salient sections of the treatment of each passage: introductory comments and concluding summaries. Textual variants in the Greek text are signaled in the author's translation by means of half-brackets around the relevant word or phrase (e.g., "Gerasenes"), thereby alerting the reader to turn to the additional notes at the end of each exegetical unit for a discussion of the textual problem. The documentation uses the author-date method, in which the basic reference consists of author's surname + year + page number(s): Fitzmyer 1992: 58. The only exceptions to this system are well-known reference works (e.g., BDAG, LSJ, *TDNT*). Full publication data and a complete set of indexes can be found at the end of the volume.

Robert W. Yarbrough
Robert H. Stein

Author's Preface

I am very grateful to Baker Publishing Group and to the editors of this series to have been given the opportunity to write a commentary on Galatians. Studying the Greek text of a NT book, making my own decisions about its meaning (in conversation with many other scholars), and then putting those decisions into English prose that will (it is hoped!) communicate successfully with an audience—all this is one of the chief delights of my life. I have learned a lot during the years of my work on Galatians; and I trust that my thinking and therefore my living are more closely aligned with Christ and his purposes as a result of this study.

Many people have helped me produce this commentary. Colleagues and students at Wheaton College and in the wider academic community have had an immense impact on my understanding of the letter. Providing special assistance in this process were four PhD students, each of whom wrote dissertations with me that focused on aspects of Galatians: Matt Harmon, Chee-Chiew Lee, Chris Bruno, and Dane Ortlund. Also very helpful were three other students who assisted with bibliography collection, proofreading, and formatting: Keith Williams, Mike Kibbe, and Paul Cable. I am privileged to teach at an institution that enables students to work with faculty on scholarly projects.

The careful editorial work by Baker personnel and by the series editor, friend and former colleague Robert Yarbrough, has immeasurably improved the commentary. I am also thankful for the patience of publisher and editor as they waited long past the initial deadline for my work to reach its conclusion (a delay largely due to my extensive, unexpected, but delightful work on the updated NIV, released in 2011).

As always, I am especially grateful for the support in many, many ways of my children, their spouses, and especially my wife, Jenny. She has not only been a wonderful, understanding wife, but she is a true “fellow worker,” having read the entire manuscript, noted the far too many typos and grammatical errors, and offered insightful suggestions for improvement. It is to her that I dedicate this volume.

November 2011
Doug Moo

A Note to the Reader

The series preface to the book explains many of the formal features of the commentary. I want to add here a few words about some features that are particular to this volume.

First, I have chosen to cite regularly only nine of the many commentaries on Galatians. Interrupting my own argument about the meaning of the text with long lists of commentaries makes it difficult to follow what I am saying. Moreover, citing a large number of commentaries is usually not very helpful, since there is so much repetition among them. I have therefore chosen to cite regularly only a handful of commentaries, which I have singled out for their general exegetical excellence and/or for a distinctive view of the letter that they embody. These commentaries are those written by J. B. Lightfoot, Ernest deWitt Burton, Hans Dieter Betz, F. F. Bruce, Franz Mussner, Richard Longenecker, James Dunn, Louis Martyn, and Martinus de Boer. Naturally, I include references to other commentaries when they make a contribution not represented by these nine or when I considered it important to give readers a wider view of the spectrum of opinion on a particular issue.

Second, the reader will quickly see that I consistently refer to English translations to illustrate exegetical options. I do so not simply because I am a translator myself (although I am sure that is one reason!), but because the translations are important representations of the exegetical tradition. Translations are the product of many scholars working cooperatively, and they therefore provide a useful filter of the bewildering variety of exegetical options found in the academy. They also reflect in (usually!) accessible English the various options for interpreting the Greek text. The preacher or teacher can then use a rendering found in the translations to express a particular option in the understanding of the Greek text and can usefully refer listeners to a particular translation for a semiofficial endorsement of the option being argued for.

Third, the translations that I include at the beginning of every “Exegesis and Exposition” section are my own. They are attempts to reflect in English as much of the form of the underlying Greek as possible. (Of course, it is impossible fully or even significantly to reproduce the form of the Greek in English.) As such, they are far from being good translations of the Greek; they are designed only to provide an English basis for the commentary on the Greek text. Translations of other Scripture within the commentary are from the NIV (2011) unless otherwise noted.

Abbreviations

Bibliographic and General

§/§§	section/sections
//	textual parallels
ABD	<i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> , edited by D. N. Freedman et al., 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992)
AD	<i>anno Domini</i> , in the year of the Lord
ad loc.	<i>ad locum</i> , at the place
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i> , edited by H. Temporini and W. Haase, Part 2: <i>Principat</i> (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972–)
AT	author's translation
BC	before Christ
BDAG	<i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , by W. Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000)
BDF	<i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , by F. Blass and A. Debrunner, translated and revised by R. W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961)
BDR	<i>Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch</i> , by F. Blass, A. Debrunner, and F. Rehkopf (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984)
CEB	Common English Bible
cf.	<i>confer</i> , compare
chap./chaps.	chapter/chapters
e.g.	<i>exempli gratia</i> , for example
esp.	especially
ESV	English Standard Version
frg./frgs.	fragment/s
GKC	<i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> , edited and enlarged by E. Kautzsch, revised by A. E. Cowley, 2nd English ed. (Clarendon: Oxford, 1910)
HALOT	<i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> , by L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, J. J. Stamm, and M. E. Richardson, 5 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2000)
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible
Heb.	Hebrew
<i>Institutes</i>	John Calvin, <i>Institutes of the Christian Religion</i> , edited by John T. McNeill, translated by Ford L. Battles, 2 vols., Library of Christian Classics 20–21 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960)
KJV	King James Version

Abbreviations

LEH	<i>Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint</i> , compiled by J. Lust, E. Eynikel, and K. Hauspie, rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003)
lit.	literally
LN	<i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains</i> , by J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Society, 1999)
LSJ	<i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> , by H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, and H. S. Jones, 9th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940)
LXX	Septuagint (the Old Testament in Greek)
ⲙⲏ	majority text
MM	<i>The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament: Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-literary Sources</i> , by J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan (repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976)
MS/MSS	manuscript/manuscripts
MT	Masoretic Text
NA ²⁸	<i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , edited by Eberhard Nestle, Erwin Nestle, B. Aland, K. Aland, J. Karavidopoulos, C. M. Martini, and B. M. Metzger, 28th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012)
NAB	New American Bible
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NET	New English Translation
NETS	<i>A New English Translation of the Septuagint</i> , by the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007)
<i>NewDocs</i>	<i>New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity</i> , edited by G. H. R. Horsley and S. R. Llewelyn (North Ryde, NSW: Ancient History Documentary Research Centre, Macquarie University, 1976–)
<i>New Pauly</i>	<i>Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopedia of the Ancient World</i> , edited by H. Cancik, H. Schneider, and M. Landfester, 20 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2002–11)
NIDB	<i>The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> , edited by K. D. Sakenfeld, 5 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 2009)
NIDNTT	<i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i> , edited by C. Brown, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975–85)
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NKJV	New King James Version
NLT	New Living Translation
NPNF ¹	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church</i> , edited by P. Schaff, 1st series, 14 vols. (repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952–57)
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
OTP	<i>The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> , edited by J. H. Charlesworth, 2 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983–85)
ⲡ	papyrus
RSV	Revised Standard Version

Str-B	<i>Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch</i> , by H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, 6 vols. (Munich: Kessinger, 1922–61)
s.v.	<i>sub verbo</i> , under the word
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, translated and edited by G. W. Bromiley, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)
TDOT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> , edited by G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, and H.-J. Fabry, translated by J. T. Willis, G. W. Bromiley, D. E. Green, and D. W. Stott, 14 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974–)
TLG	Thesaurus Linguae Graecae, online digital library (Irvine: University of California, 2001–)
TNIV	Today's New International Version
UBS ⁴	<i>The Greek New Testament</i> , edited by B. Aland et al., 4th rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993)
v./vv.	verse/verses
v.l.	<i>varia lectio</i> , variant reading
vs.	versus
x	number of times a form occurs

Hebrew Bible

Gen.	Genesis	2 Chron.	2 Chronicles	Dan.	Daniel
Exod.	Exodus	Ezra	Ezra	Hosea	Hosea
Lev.	Leviticus	Neh.	Nehemiah	Joel	Joel
Num.	Numbers	Esther	Esther	Amos	Amos
Deut.	Deuteronomy	Job	Job	Obad.	Obadiah
Josh.	Joshua	Ps(s).	Psalms(s)	Jon.	Jonah
Judg.	Judges	Prov.	Proverbs	Mic.	Micah
Ruth	Ruth	Eccles.	Ecclesiastes	Nah.	Nahum
1 Sam.	1 Samuel	Song	Song of Songs	Hab.	Habakkuk
2 Sam.	2 Samuel	Isa.	Isaiah	Zeph.	Zephaniah
1 Kings	1 Kings	Jer.	Jeremiah	Hag.	Haggai
2 Kings	2 Kings	Lam.	Lamentations	Zech.	Zechariah
1 Chron.	1 Chronicles	Ezek.	Ezekiel	Mal.	Malachi

Greek Testament

Matt.	Matthew	Eph.	Ephesians	Heb.	Hebrews
Mark	Mark	Phil.	Philippians	James	James
Luke	Luke	Col.	Colossians	1 Pet.	1 Peter
John	John	1 Thess.	1 Thessalonians	2 Pet.	2 Peter
Acts	Acts	2 Thess.	2 Thessalonians	1 John	1 John
Rom.	Romans	1 Tim.	1 Timothy	2 John	2 John
1 Cor.	1 Corinthians	2 Tim.	2 Timothy	3 John	3 John
2 Cor.	2 Corinthians	Titus	Titus	Jude	Jude
Gal.	Galatians	Philem.	Philemon	Rev.	Revelation

Other Jewish and Christian Writings

Arist.	Aristides the Apologist	Jdt.	Judith
2 Bar.	2 Baruch (Syriac Apocalypse)	Jub.	Jubilees
<i>Comm. Gal.</i>	John Chrysostom, <i>Commentary on the Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Galatians</i>	L.A.B.	Liber antiquitatum biblicarum (Pseudo-Philo)
<i>Comm. Jo.</i>	Origen, <i>Commentary on the Gospel of John</i>	Lam. Rab.	Lamentations Rabbah
<i>Dial.</i>	Justin Martyr, <i>Dialogue with Trypho</i>	Lev. Rab.	Leviticus Rabbah
1 En.	1 Enoch	1–4 Macc.	1–4 Maccabees
1 Esd.	1 Esdras (in the Apocrypha)	Midr. Teh.	Midrash Tehillim (Midrash on Psalms)
2 Esd.	2 Esdras (4 Ezra)	Num. Rab.	Numbers Rabbah
<i>Exhort.</i>	Clement of Alexandria, <i>Exhortation to the Greeks</i>	Pesiq. Rab.	Pesiqta Rabbati
Gen. Rab.	Genesis Rabbah	Pirqe R. El.	Pirqe Rabbi Eliezer
<i>Idol.</i>	Tertullian, <i>On Idolatry</i>	Pr. Man.	Prayer of Manasseh
<i>Ign. Magn.</i>	Ignatius, <i>To the Magnesians</i>	Pss. Sol.	Psalms of Solomon
		Sib. Or.	Sibylline Oracles
		Sir.	Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)
		T. Sol.	Testament of Solomon
		Tob.	Tobit
		Wis.	Wisdom of Solomon

Josephus

<i>Ag. Ap.</i>	<i>Against Apion</i>
<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Jewish Antiquities</i>
<i>J.W.</i>	<i>Jewish War</i>

Philo

<i>Contempl.</i>	<i>On the Contemplative Life</i>	<i>Moses</i>	<i>On the Life of Moses</i>
<i>Creation</i>	<i>On the Creation of the World</i>	<i>Prelim. Studies</i>	<i>On the Preliminary Studies</i>
<i>Decalogue</i>	<i>On the Decalogue</i>	<i>Somn.</i>	<i>De somniis (On Dreams)</i>
<i>Heir</i>	<i>Who Is the Heir?</i>	<i>Spec. Laws</i>	<i>On the Special Laws</i>
<i>Leg.</i>	<i>Legum allegoriae (Allegorical Interpretation)</i>	<i>Virtues</i>	<i>On the Virtues</i>
<i>Migr.</i>	<i>On the Migration of Abraham</i>		

Rabbinic Tractates

The abbreviations below are used for the names of the tractates in the Mishnah (indicated by a prefixed *m.*), Tosefta (*t.*), Babylonian Talmud (*b.*), and Palestinian/Jerusalem Talmud (*y.*).

'Abot	'Abot	Šabb.	Šabbat
<i>B. Qam.</i>	<i>Baba Qamma</i>	<i>Sanh.</i>	<i>Sanhedrin</i>
<i>Ber.</i>	<i>Berakot</i>	<i>Soṭah</i>	<i>Soṭah</i>
<i>Mak.</i>	<i>Makkot</i>	<i>Ta'an.</i>	<i>Ta'anit</i>
<i>Qidd.</i>	<i>Qiddušin</i>		

Targumim

Sam. Tg.	Samaritan Targum	Tg. Onqelos	Targum Onqelos
Tg.	Targum	Tg. Ps.-J.	Targum Pseudo-Jonathan

Qumran/Dead Sea Scrolls

CD	Damascus Document, from the Cairo Genizah
8HevXIIgr	Greek Minor Prophets Scroll, from Cave of Horror in Nahal Hever
PYadin 19	Papyrus Yadin 19, from Cave of Letters in Nahal Hever
1QpHab	Pesher Habakkuk
1QS	Rule of the Community
4Q266	Damascus Document ^a (later called 4Q268)
4QFlor	4QFlorilegium (4Q174)
4QMMT	Miqṣat Ma'asê ha-Torah (4Q394–4Q399)
4QPNah	Pesher Nahum (4Q169)
11QPs ^a	11QPsalms ^a (11Q5)
11QT ^a	Temple Scroll ^a (11Q19)

Classical Writers

<i>Ages.</i>	Xenophon, <i>Agesilaus</i>
<i>Cic.</i>	Plutarch, <i>Cicero</i>
<i>Hist.</i>	Polybius, <i>Universal History</i>
<i>Is.</i>	Dionysius of Halicarnassus, <i>De Isaeo</i>
<i>Mem.</i>	Xenophon, <i>Memorabilia</i>
<i>Pericles</i>	Plutarch, <i>Life of Pericles</i>
<i>Rhet.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Rhetoric</i>
<i>Tox.</i>	Lucian of Samosata, <i>Toxaris</i>

Transliteration

Hebrew

א	'	בֿ	ā	<i>qāmeṣ</i>
ב	<i>b</i>	בֿ	<i>a</i>	<i>pataḥ</i>
ג	<i>g</i>	הֿ	<i>a</i>	furtive <i>pataḥ</i>
ד	<i>d</i>	דֿ	<i>e</i>	<i>sēgôl</i>
ה	<i>h</i>	הֿ	ē	<i>šērê</i>
ו	<i>w</i>	וֿ	<i>i</i>	short <i>ḥîreq</i>
ז	<i>z</i>	זֿ	ī	long <i>ḥîreq</i> written defectively
ח	<i>ḥ</i>	חֿ	<i>o</i>	<i>qāmeṣ ḥāṭûp</i>
ט	<i>ṭ</i>	בּוֹ	ô	<i>ḥôlem</i> written fully
י	<i>y</i>	בֿ	ō	<i>ḥôlem</i> written defectively
כ/כּ	<i>k</i>	בּוֹ	ú	<i>śúreq</i>
ל	<i>l</i>	בֿ	<i>u</i>	short <i>qibbûṣ</i>
מ/מּ	<i>m</i>	בֿ	ū	long <i>qibbûṣ</i> written defectively
נ/נּ	<i>n</i>	בֿהֿ	â	final <i>qāmeṣ hê'</i> (בֿהֿ = <i>āb</i>)
ס	<i>s</i>	בֿיֿ	ê	<i>sēgôl yôd</i> (בֿיֿ = <i>éy</i>)
ע	'	בֿיֿ	ê	<i>šērê yôd</i> (בֿיֿ = <i>éy</i>)
פ/פּ	<i>p</i>	בֿיֿ	î	<i>ḥîreq yôd</i> (בֿיֿ = <i>îy</i>)
צ/צּ	<i>ṣ</i>	בֿ	ǎ	<i>ḥāṭēp pataḥ</i>
ק	<i>q</i>	בֿ	ě	<i>ḥāṭēp sēgôl</i>
ר	<i>r</i>	בֿ	ö	<i>ḥāṭēp qāmeṣ</i>
שׁ	ś	בֿ	ě	vocal <i>šēwā'</i>
שׂ	š			
ת	<i>t</i>			

Notes on the Transliteration of Hebrew

1. Accents are not shown in transliteration.
2. Silent *šēwā'* is not indicated in transliteration.
3. The spirant forms פּ ת כּ בּ גּ דּ are usually not specially indicated in transliteration.
4. *Dāgēs forte* is indicated by doubling the consonant. Euphonic *dāgēs* and *dāgēs lene* are not indicated in transliteration.
5. *Maqqēp* is represented by a hyphen.

Greek

α	<i>a</i>	ξ	<i>x</i>
β	<i>b</i>	ο	<i>o</i>
γ	<i>g/n</i>	π	<i>p</i>
δ	<i>d</i>	ρ	<i>r</i>
ε	<i>e</i>	σ/ς	<i>s</i>
ζ	<i>z</i>	τ	<i>t</i>
η	<i>ē</i>	υ	<i>y/u</i>
θ	<i>th</i>	φ	<i>ph</i>
ι	<i>i</i>	χ	<i>ch</i>
κ	<i>k</i>	ψ	<i>ps</i>
λ	<i>l</i>	ω	<i>ō</i>
μ	<i>m</i>	ϛ	<i>h</i>
ν	<i>n</i>		

Notes on the Transliteration of Greek

1. Accents, lenis (smooth breathing), and *iota* subscript are not shown in transliteration.
2. The transliteration of asper (rough breathing) precedes a vowel or diphthong (e.g., ᾱ = *ha*; αῖ = *hai*) and follows ρ (i.e., ῥ = *rb*).
3. *Gamma* is transliterated *n* only when it precedes γ, κ, ξ, or χ.
4. *Upsilon* is transliterated *u* only when it is part of a diphthong (i.e., αυ, ευ, ου, υι).

Introduction to Galatians

Author

The author of the Letter to the Galatians identifies himself as “Paul the Apostle” (1:1), and the letter is full of corroborating personal references. Paul defends his independent apostleship by narrating his conversion/call and his early relationships with the Jerusalem apostles (1:11–2:10). He describes a difficult confrontation in Antioch with Peter (and Barnabas; 2:11–14). Paul reminds his readers of his earlier ministry with them (4:12–20). He cites his own attitudes and decisions as matters for the Galatians to emulate (2:18–21; 5:11; 6:14; perhaps 1:13–16). And he seeks to move his readers to embrace again the gospel he first preached to them by means of personal and even emotional appeals (1:6–10; 3:1; 4:11; 5:2–3; 6:17). Only 2 Corinthians and the Pastoral Epistles rival Galatians in degree of personal reference.

From the earliest days of the church, Paul’s authorship of Galatians has been acknowledged and never seriously challenged. Only the more mechanical aspect of authorship is debated. In 6:11, Paul says, “See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!” This claim probably applies only to 6:11 and following and not to the entire letter (on this issue and the reason why Paul might say this, see the commentary). A natural, though not inevitable, corollary is that someone else has “written down” the rest of the letter on Paul’s behalf. We know, both from general ancient testimony and from Paul himself (Rom. 16:22), that he often—indeed, perhaps always—used what was called in the ancient world an “amanuensis” to perform the work of physically writing out his letters (R. Longenecker 1983; Richards 1991). Amanuenses were given varying degrees of freedom as far as their own involvement in the composition was concerned. An amanuensis who was a trusted confidant might be responsible for much of the actual wording of a letter based on a more or less detailed outline of content provided by the true “author” (many interpreters think that such a situation could explain the differences in vocabulary and style among the Letters of Paul; see, e.g., Carson and Moo 2005: 334–35). If Paul used an amanuensis in writing the bulk of Galatians (which is probable), the strongly personal nature of the letter argues for a situation closer to word-for-word dictation.

The Occasion for the Letter

The basic situation Paul addresses in Galatians is clear enough from the opening of the letter body. Omitting any thanksgiving for the Galatians,

Paul immediately decries their flirtation with “another gospel” (1:6–10). This counterfeit gospel is being propagated by false teachers who are “confusing” the Gentile Galatians (1:7; 5:10) by insisting that their faith in Christ be supplemented by submission to circumcision and other elements of the Mosaic law (esp. 5:2–4). Paul responds to this challenge in three stages. First, he uses his own experience to illustrate the relationship between “the truth of the gospel” (2:5, 14) and the law of Moses (1:11–2:21), with a particular focus on his relationship to the Jerusalem apostles (1:17–2:14). Second, he uses the Galatians’ own experience and especially Scripture to argue that the justification that accompanies belonging to the “seed” of Abraham is by faith, apart from torah observance (3:1–5:12). Third, he shows that conduct pleasing to God is secured by that same faith and the work of God’s Spirit apart from torah (5:13–6:18).

The Destination and Date of the Letter

The general circumstances that gave rise to Paul’s Letter to the Galatians are not a matter of debate. But the specifics are much less clear. Who were the people “agitating” the Galatians by proclaiming a different gospel? And who were the Galatians? We will take up this second question first.

The destination of Galatians is one of the best-known and most intractable problems in NT introduction. To be sure, it is not the question of destination per se that is so important but the related question of the date of the letter. This latter issue bears on a range of significant issues, from the meaning of some specific verses in Galatians to the development and shape of Paul’s theology, the historicity of the book of Acts, and the course of early Christian history.¹ Why is there so much disagreement over this issue? Very simply, it is because the location of the Christians that Paul addresses in the letter is unclear, and no other NT text settles the matter.

Paul addresses this letter to “the churches of Galatia” (ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῆς Γαλατίας, *tais ekklēsiāis tēs Galatias*; 1:2); and note 3:1, “you foolish Galatians” (ὧ ἀνόητοι Γαλάται, *ō anoētoi Galatai*). This is the only letter that Paul addressed explicitly to a number of churches in a particular area (although his references in several other letters to believers in general could imply more than one congregation [probably in Rom. 1:7; perhaps in Eph. 1:1; less probably in Phil. 1:1 and Col. 1:2]). The name Γαλάται originally referred to a group of Celtic people from Gaul who migrated into Anatolia in central Asia Minor in the third century BC. (In addition to Γαλάται, these people were called Κέλτοι or Κέλται; in Latin, *Celtae*, *Galli*, or *Galatae*; see, e.g., Josephus *Ant.* 17.344; *J.W.* 4.547, 634; 7.88.) The predominance of this ethnic group in the

1. Hays’s claim (2000: 191) that the question of destination/date is “almost entirely irrelevant for interpreting Paul’s letter” (see also Brown 1997: 474) is true only for the very broad thrust of the letter as a whole. The specific sense of many verses is affected by the issue; and it has very important implications for our understanding of the course of Paul’s life and ministry and for the development of his theology (see Silva 2001: 138–39).

region led the Romans to name a province in central and southern Asia Minor “Galatia” in the first century BC. In Paul’s day, then, “Galatia” had both an ethnic/geographical and a political/geographical referent.²

Options

Paul could not have written this letter any earlier than the date at which he would have been able to visit the cities in question at least once. If, as we will assume, the book of Acts provides reliable (though not, of course, exhaustive) information about Paul’s missionary travels, we can use specific references in Galatians to locate Paul within this narrative.

First, the earliest that we find Paul in *provincial* Galatia is during the first missionary journey of Acts 13–14. The Roman province of Asia covered a wide swath of central Asia Minor, extending from almost the Mediterranean Sea in the south to almost as far as the Black Sea in the north. Included within the province were the cities where Paul planted churches on this first missionary journey (Pisidian Antioch, Lystra, Iconium, Derbe; see Acts 13–14). A destination to provincial Galatia allows, then, a date as early as immediately after this first missionary journey. This is true even if Gal. 4:13 implies that Paul had made two visits to the Galatian churches before writing the letter. The meaning of this verse is debated (see the commentary) because Paul refers to his earlier visit(s) with a word (πρότερον, *proteron*) that could mean either “first” (of three or more) or “former” (of two). In other words, it is unclear whether this verse implies that Paul had made two visits to the Galatians before writing this letter or only one. Most scholars assume or argue that he is implying two previous visits, although we think it more likely that only one is in view. However, our point here is that our decision on this matter does not seriously affect the issue of destination and date. Even if we posit two visits to Galatia before the writing of the letter, a date immediately following the first missionary journey is still possible. For Luke tells us that Paul and his companions, after their initial evangelistic journey through South Galatia, retraced their steps to strengthen these new converts (Acts 14:22–25).

On this general reading of the data, then, Galatians could have been written before the meeting of the Jerusalem Council, perhaps around AD 48. Because the churches of the first missionary journey are located in the southern part of provincial Galatia, this view of the destination and date of Galatians has become known as the “South Galatian” theory. This understanding of the destination and date of Galatians was vigorously defended by William Ramsay and popularized by F. F. Bruce.³ It should be stressed, however, that a South Galatian *destination* does not lock us into an early *date* of the letter:

2. The history of Galatia is treated in considerable detail in Mitchell 1993; cf. also K. Strobel, *New Pauly* 5:648–51; R. K. Sherk and S. Mitchell, *ANRW* 7/2:954–1081.

3. W. Ramsay, 1893: 97–111, passim; 1900: 1–164; Bruce 1982b: 3–18, 43–56; see also George 1994: 38–50; Witherington 1998: 2–20; Fung 1988: 1–3, 9–28; R. Longenecker 1990: lxi–lxxxviii; Schreiner 2010: 22–29 (weakly); Bauckham 1979; Hemer 1989: 247–51; Guthrie 1990: 465–72; McDonald and Porter 2000: 411–13; Breytenbach 1996: 99–176; Mitchell 1993: 2:3–10; Barnett

Paul could have written to these churches anytime after his initial visit. A fair number of scholars, then, while convinced of a South Galatian destination, argue for a date after the Jerusalem Council.⁴

If, on the other hand, we think that Paul wrote to ethnic Galatia, a somewhat later date is required. This is because it appears unlikely that Paul could have entered the region of ethnic Galatia, in north-central Asia Minor, before the beginning of the second missionary journey. Indeed, Luke tells us that, after revisiting the cities of the first missionary journey (Acts 16:1–4), “Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia” (Acts 16:6). Thus if Paul wrote to ethnic Galatia, the earliest date for the letter would be sometime after this visit—around AD 50 or so. And if 4:13 is taken to refer to two visits to Galatia, an even later date would be necessary. This second visit would plausibly be identified with Luke’s claim in Acts 18:23 that, at the beginning of the third missionary journey, “Paul . . . traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.” Hence the classic “North Galatian” theory holds that Paul wrote to ethnic Galatia, with its key cities Ancyra, Pessinus, and Tavium, sometime during the third missionary journey (perhaps around AD 55–56). This North Galatian view was defended by Lightfoot in his classic commentary and is still widely held, especially by German scholars.⁵

Although related, the questions of destination and date are independent. We will first look at the question of destination and then consider the matter of date.

Destination

The two options for the destination of the letter are more properly termed the “tribal” or “regional” (German *Landschaft*) view and the “provincial” view (see, e.g., Esler 1998: 32). In practice, however, since advocates of the “provincial” view identify the destination of the letter with the cities of the first missionary journey, the traditional “North” versus “South” nomenclature is the most useful. Dozens of arguments for and against these views are found

2000: 113–14; Carson and Moo 2005: 458–61; R. Schäfer 2004: 290–319; Burge, Cohick, and Green 2009: 268–69.

4. Dunn 1993a: 5–8; 2009: 720–25; Matera 1992: 19–26; G. Hansen 1994: 16–22; Silva 2001: 129–32; Elmer 2009; Fee 2007a: 3–5 (although he expresses some uncertainty about the destination).

5. See, e.g., Lightfoot 1881: 1–56; Rohde 1989: 5–13; Schlier 1989: 15–17; Oepke 1973: 23–27; Mussner 1988: 3–11; Betz 1979: 3–5; Borse 1972; Brown 1997: 474–77; Achtemeier, Green, and Thompson 2001: 372–75; Kümmel 1975: 296–304; Esler 1998: 32–36; Refoulé 1988; Murphy-O’Connor 1996: 159–62, 180–82. De Boer (2011: 3–5) argues for a North Galatian destination but thinks “Galatia” in 1:2 refers to the province. Breytenbach (1996: 101–3) notes a tendency for German scholars to favor (sometimes without argument) the North Galatian view, while British and American scholars are more divided. Which of these views is the “majority” view among scholars is obviously a judgment call. Compare Guthrie’s (1990: 472) report that “most modern scholars lean to the South Galatian theory” with Brown’s (1997: 476) report that the North Galatian view is “still the majority theory.”

in the literature. Many of them are inconclusive or too subjective to be of much use.⁶ And in any case, we need not evaluate or even list these many arguments, which are covered very adequately by NT introductions and other commentaries (see esp. Guthrie 1990: 465–83; R. Longenecker 1990: lxi–lxxxviii). We instead will focus on two issues that, we think, are the most significant in deciding this question: (1) the meaning of “Galatia/Galatians”; and (2) the route of Paul’s travels. The first issue is usually cited in favor of the North Galatian view, the second in favor of the South Galatian view.

1. The meaning of “Galatia/Galatians.” As we noted above, Γαλατία (*Galatia*, Galatia) in Paul’s day referred both to a region in north-central Asia Minor and to a Roman province. Nothing in Galatians makes clear to which of these Paul refers in the address of the letter (1:2). The referents in Paul’s other two uses of the word are also unclear: in 1 Cor. 16:1, he encourages the Corinthians to follow the example of “the churches of Galatia” (NRSV) in their generous giving to the collection; and in 2 Tim. 4:10 he mentions that “Crescens has gone to Galatia.” The only other occurrence of Γαλατία in the NT comes in the address of 1 Peter: “the elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1:1 ESV). It is almost certain that these names refer to Roman provinces (as most scholars agree; and note NIV and NLT). The word Γαλάται (*Galatai*, Galatians) occurs only in Gal. 3:1 (see also 1 Macc. 8:2; 2 Macc. 8:20). The referent of the adjective Γαλατικῆς (*Galatikēs*, Galatian), which occurs twice in Acts (16:6; 18:23), is also debated (see below on point 2).

Advocates of the North Galatian hypothesis argue that “Galatians” would naturally refer to people who were Galatian by ethnicity (see the data in BDAG 186–87). Indeed, to refer to other ethnic groups who were “Galatian” only because the conquering power, Rome, had imposed the name on them would have been both impolitic and unlikely (see, e.g., Lightfoot 1881: 19). On the other hand, C. Hemer (1989: 299–305) has shown that “Galatians” was, in fact, used to refer to people of various ethnic origins who lived in the southern part of the Roman province. And it is difficult to know what other word Paul could have used if he wanted to refer to all the Christians living in the cities of the first missionary journey (e.g., Burton 1921: xxix). Advocates of the South Galatian hypothesis note further that Paul generally uses provincial rather than ethnic names (Ramsay 1900: 147–64, 314–21). But this is not entirely clear (Kümmel 1975: 297; Rohde 1989: 7–8). The argument about the terms “Galatia” and “Galatians” is therefore inconclusive: they could refer either to the Roman province and people living in that province or to an ethnic region and to the people living in that region.

2. What might we learn from Paul’s travels about the likely destination of the letter? No one doubts that Paul evangelized cities in the southern part of

6. Lightfoot (1881: 14–16), e.g., thought that the reputation of the ethnic Galatians for fickleness fit very well with the threatened theological defection that Paul deals with in the letter. R. Longenecker (1990: lxix) lists a series of arguments that he considers “ambiguous, inconclusive, or faulty.”

the Roman province of Galatia: the South Galatian hypothesis has no problem on this score. The real question is whether Paul evangelized in the cities inhabited by ethnic Galatians in the north-central part of Asia Minor. Evidence from within the Pauline Letters is inconclusive. Of course, Paul rarely refers to his actual itineraries, and when he does, he does so in such passing fashion that little can be concluded about his routes. As we have seen, he refers twice to Galatia outside the Letter to the Galatians (1 Cor. 16:1; 2 Tim. 4:10), but neither reference enables us to locate the area. He refers to the South Galatian cities of (Pisidian) Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra in 2 Tim. 3:11 and never to any cities in north-central Galatia.

Evidence from Acts appears, at first sight, to be more helpful. Luke, of course, provides considerable detail about Paul's initial evangelistic work in the cities of South Galatia (chaps. 13–14). But he also refers twice to Paul's travels in the "Galatian" region. The former comes in Luke's description of the beginning of Paul's second missionary journey. Paul began this journey in the provinces of Syria and Cilicia (15:41), moved on to the cities of Derbe and Lystra (16:1), and then "traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia [διήλθον δὲ τὴν Φρυγίαν καὶ Γαλατικὴν χώραν, *diēlthon de tēn Phrygian kai Galatikēn chōran*], having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia" (Acts 16:6). The second reference occurs in Luke's narrative about the beginning of the third journey. "After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out from there and traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia [διερχόμενος καθεξῆς τὴν Γαλατικὴν χώραν καὶ Φρυγίαν, *dierchomenos kathexēs tēn Galatikēn chōran kai Phrygian*], strengthening all the disciples" (18:23). Paul then took the road "through the interior," arriving ultimately in Ephesus (19:1).

Advocates of the North Galatian hypothesis typically cite these verses to substantiate a ministry of Paul in the ethnic region of Galatia, usually arguing that these two texts refer to the two visits that Gal. 4:13 is thought to indicate. Yet it is unclear here again whether "Galatia" in these texts refers to the ethnic region in the north or to the southern part of the province. In favor of the former is the sequence of movements suggested by Acts 16:1–6. Verse 1 depicts Paul's ministry in Derbe and Lystra, towns in the southern part of the province. We would then expect that the resumption of the travel narrative in verse 6 would refer to ministry in some other territory. Moreover, the aorist participle in verse 6b (κωλυθέντες, *kōlythentes*, being prevented) could suggest that the Spirit's intervention to keep Paul, Silas, and Timothy from preaching in the province of Asia took place earlier and indeed may have been the reason why they "traveled throughout Phrygia and Galatia" (so most English versions; and see, e.g., Barrett 1998: 768–69; Haenchen 1971: 483–84; Peterson 2009: 454). A glance at a map of first-century Asia Minor shows that this sequence of movements makes better sense if "Galatia" refers to the northern region; southern Galatia would be too far behind Paul and his companions to make it a likely place to go after being kept out of Asia. Moreover, the reference to "preaching the word" in the second part of the verse could suggest that Paul and his companions traveled throughout

Phrygia and Galatia for the purpose of evangelism—an assumption that appears to find confirmation in 18:23, which says that Paul and his companions were “strengthening all the disciples” when they next traveled through “the region of Galatia and Phrygia” (Brown 1997: 476). But southern Galatia was, of course, already evangelized. If Acts 16:6 is interpreted as a reference to northern Galatia, then, it is likely that the similar combination of “Galatia” and “Phrygia” in 18:23 would have the same meaning. This interpretation of “Galatia” in Acts receives some support from Luke’s tendency to refer to traditional regions rather than to more recent Roman political entities. As Brown (1997: 475) notes, Luke uses these traditional regional names—not “Galatia”—when he locates the cities of the first missionary journey (Acts 13:14; 14:6).⁷

These considerations make it quite possible that Luke refers briefly to evangelistic work by Paul in northern Galatia. Yet this is not the only interpretation of these passages. Ramsay, in his classic defense of the South Galatian view, argued that the phrase τὴν Φρυγίαν καὶ Γαλατικὴν χώραν referred to “the Phrygian territory incorporated in the province of Galatia” (Acts 16:6; as Bruce [1988: 306] puts it [a shift from his earlier view in 1952: 309–10, 350]; see Ramsay 1893: 74–89; and also, e.g., Riesner 1998: 285; see esp. the discussion in Schnabel 2004: 1132–34). On this view, both geographical names are adjectives,⁸ and the single article associates the two together as coordinate descriptions of one “region” (χώραν).⁹ The problem of the sequence of movements is erased if the participle in verse 6b is taken to describe actions simultaneous to, or even future to, the action of the main verb in verse 6a (see HCSB; Ramsay 1893: 89).¹⁰ The differently worded phrase in 18:23 is then taken to refer to two regions, “the Galatian country” of the first missionary journey and “Phrygia” (distinguished in this case from “Galatia” because the reference is to the part of Phrygia that lay in the province of Asia [Riesner 1998: 285–86; Schnabel 2004: 1199]).

A decision between these two interpretations of “Galatia” in Acts is difficult. We slightly prefer the South Galatian reading; but the evidence is too

7. Another argument in favor of the North Galatia hypothesis is the presence of Jews in the first missionary cities (Acts 13–14) while Galatians does not clearly indicate that Jews were among the audience (Brown 1997: 475).

8. K. Lake (1933) had argued that Φρυγίαν (*Phrygian*) could not be an adjective; but Hemer (1976; see also 1989: 280–99) has found a number of ancient inscriptions that prove the contrary (and cf. also *NewDocs* 4.174).

9. The argument from the single article is not, of course, conclusive. A. T. Robertson (1934: 787–88) draws attention to Acts 15:23, where a single article precedes the names of a city and two provinces (τὴν Ἀντιόχειαν καὶ Συρίαν καὶ Κιλικίαν, *tēn Antiocheian kai Syrian kai Kilikian*, [to the Gentile believers in] Antioch and Syria and Cilicia). Yet this may not be a true parallel, since the phrase lacks the substantive found in 16:6 (χώραν, *chōran*, region). The closest parallel is Luke 3:1, τῆς Ἰτουραίας καὶ Τραχωνίτιδος χώρας (*tēs Ituraiaias kai Trachōnitidos chōras*, the region of Iturea and Trachonitis), where the two place names must refer to separate localities.

10. In NT Greek there is a tendency for aorist participles that precede the verb they modify to denote action antecedent to that of the main verb, while aorist participles that follow the main verb often do not (see G. Lee 1970). But the tendency is only that, and complicating factors (e.g., the more significant aspectual relationships) make it difficult to derive temporal indications from the sequence.

finely balanced to justify any great degree of probability. However, three other general considerations bear on the question of a Pauline ministry in northern Galatia: First, Paul generally focused his evangelistic work on cities with a strong Roman culture and used Roman roads to make his way from city to city. But North Galatia was not very Romanized in the first century (Ramsay 1893: 99), and major Roman roads were not constructed in north-central Galatia until the 70s and 80s of the first century (S. Mitchell, *ABD* 2:870). Second, it has been argued that the agitators were seeking to integrate the Gentile Christians of Galatia into existing synagogues; yet we have no firm evidence of Jewish influence in North Galatia until the third century (Breytenbach 1996: 140–48). This argument is not, however, compelling because (1) our knowledge of first-century North Galatia is fragmentary; and (2) it is not clear that the agitators' program required any local Jewish residents (see Schnabel 2004: 1134). Third, evidence for a Pauline mission in northern Galatia in the book of Acts is, as we have seen, uncertain. Yet in other cases Luke seems to have included explicit information about Paul's evangelistic work in churches to which he wrote letters (Guthrie 1990: 468–69). It appears, then, that evidence for a Pauline mission in South Galatia is explicit and unquestioned; evidence for such a mission in North Galatia is uncertain. Mitchell goes so far as to claim, "There is no evidence in Acts or any non-testamentary source that Paul ever evangelized the cities of N Galatia by any means" (*ABD* 2:871). As an expert in this part of the ancient world, Mitchell must be heard, but it appears that this claim may be exaggerated. Yet it is a salutary balance to the tendency among some scholars to assume a Pauline mission in North Galatia virtually without argument.

While, then, arguments about the meaning of "Galatia/Galatians" are inconclusive, the probable movements of Paul and his companions slightly favor a South Galatian destination of the letter.¹¹ But we cannot say any more on this matter until the related question of date is dealt with.

Date

Our decision about the destination of Galatians inevitably will affect our decision about its date. But the opposite is, of course, true as well, so that we cannot simply assume a view of destination as we look at the matter of date. Some discussions of Galatians, however, operate with an overly simplistic assumption about the relationship of these two issues—as, for instance, when it is assumed that a South Galatian destination means an early date for the

11. In addition to the arguments above, several less decisive considerations are said to point to a South Galatian destination, such as these: the significance of Antioch in Paul's argument (2:11–14) is easier to explain if the Galatian churches are close to Antioch (Dunn 1993a: 17); the references to Barnabas in Galatians make best sense if they know him; and though Barnabas was with Paul when he evangelized the South Galatian cities, he was apparently not with Paul on the alleged visits to North Galatia (Bauckham 1979; Dunn 1993a: 17). De Boer (2011: 4–5), on the other hand, argues that Paul would have mentioned Barnabas in 4:12–20 if he had been with Paul when the churches were founded. And Koch (1999: 94–98) claims that Paul writes as if he alone has founded the churches in Galatia.

letter, or a North Galatian destination means a late date. In point of fact, as we noted above, a South Galatian destination requires only that the letter be dated sometime after Paul's initial visit to the churches. Thus Paul could have written Galatians any time after the end of the first missionary journey (AD 48 or later). This remains the case even if one interprets Gal. 4:13 as a reference to two visits: Paul and his companions visited the churches of South Galatia a second time as they retraced their steps (Acts 14:21–23). A North Galatian destination, however, shifts the possible date of the letter forward only a year or two. Paul's initial visit to the churches would have taken place early on the second missionary journey (Acts 16:6), and he could have written the letter any time after that (AD 50 or later). If, however, 4:13 is thought to require two visits before the letter, then the date is shifted forward several years, because it is unlikely that Paul would have returned to North Galatia before the beginning of the third missionary journey (Acts 18:23). In this case, the letter could have been written no earlier than about AD 54. And this is the option that almost all defenders of the North Galatian hypothesis choose.

Combining destination and date, then, the main options that receive some significant support among scholars are the following:

1. Paul wrote to churches in the southern part of provincial Galatia
 - a. just before the Jerusalem Council (AD 48);¹²
 - b. early on the second missionary journey (AD 50–51);¹³
 - c. during the third missionary journey (AD 54–57).¹⁴
2. Paul wrote to churches in ethnic (North) Galatia
 - a. during the first missionary journey (AD 50–51);¹⁵
 - b. early on the third missionary journey (AD 54–55);¹⁶
 - c. late on the third missionary journey (AD 57).¹⁷

A decision among these options depends on two major issues and several minor ones.

1. The first major issue is the way in which Paul's autobiographical remarks in Gal. 1–2 fit with the narrative of Acts. In apparent response to the claims

12. Ramsay (1920: preface) first argued for a date on the second missionary journey, but later revised his view to place Galatians before the Jerusalem Council. See also Bruce 1982b: 3–18, 43–56; R. Longenecker 1990: lxi–lxxxviii; Fung 1988: 1–3, 9–28; Witherington 1998: 2–20; George 1994: 38–50; Schreiner 2010: 22–29 (hesitantly); Bauckham 1979; Hemer 1989: 260–71; Carson and Moo 2005: 461–65.

13. Dunn 1993b: 12–17; Elmer 2009: 117–31.

14. Burton 1921: xlvi–xlix (hesitantly); R. Schäfer 2004: 209–319; Fee 2007a: 4; Matera 1992: 19–26.

15. Martyn 1997: 19–20; de Boer 2011: 5–11. Betz (1979: 11–12) is open to a date anywhere between 50 and 55.

16. Brown 1997: 474–77; Kümmel 1975: 296–304; Murphy-O'Connor 1996: 159–62, 180–82; Hyldahl 2000: 426–28; Oepke 1973: 23–27.

17. Lightfoot 1881: 48–49; Borse 1972; Refoulé 1988; Buck 1951; Rohde 1989: 10; Mussner 1988: 9–10.

of the agitators, Paul emphasizes in 1:11–2:14 his independence from the apostles in Jerusalem. To establish this point, he goes into some detail about the course of his ministry experience from the time of his conversion to the time at which he wrote Galatians. As we often do in trying to pin down some of the circumstances in which Paul wrote his letters, we can take the information that Paul supplies in Galatians and try to match it with what Luke tells us about Paul’s life and ministry in Acts. In this case, unfortunately, the correlation is not obvious, in particular with reference to the visits of Paul to Jerusalem. A chart of the respective sequences of events will provide a foundation for our discussion. (Events mentioned in both the Galatians and Acts columns in bold type are ones that most scholars agree in identifying; those highlighted in bold italics are the events whose identification is debated and critical to the issue.)

GALATIANS	ACTS
Persecution of the church (1:13–14)	Persecution of the church (9:1–2)
Conversion (1:15–16a)	Conversion (9:3–19a)
Trip to Arabia (1:17a)	Ministry in Damascus (9:19b–25)
Return to Damascus (1:17b)	
“After three years”:	
A visit to Jerusalem during which Paul “got to know” Cephias and met only Cephias and James among the apostles (1:18–20)	Visit to Jerusalem (9:26–29)
Ministry in Syria and Cilicia (1:21–24)	
	Return to Tarsus (9:30; cf. 11:25)
	Ministry in Antioch (11:26)
	<i>Visit to Jerusalem to convey famine aid (11:27–30)</i>
	First missionary journey (12:25–14:25)
	(Paul, Barnabas [and John Mark])
“After fourteen years”:	
<i>A visit to Jerusalem to consult with the “pillar” apostles over the nature of the gospel and spheres of ministry (2:1–10)</i>	
	Cyprus
	Pisidian Antioch
	Iconium
	Lystra
	Derbe
	Stay in Antioch (14:26–28)
Conflict in Antioch (2:11–14)	<i>Visit to Jerusalem for consultation about whether Gentile Christians need to be circumcised and to obey the law of Moses (15:1–29)</i>
	Ministry in Antioch (15:35)
	Second missionary journey (15:36–18:21)
	(Paul, Silas, Timothy [and Luke])
	Syria and Cilicia
	Derbe
	Lystra

GALATIANS

ACTS

“The region of Phrygia and Galatia” (16:6)
 Troas
 Philippi
 Thessalonica
 Berea
 Athens
 Corinth
 (Paul writes 1 and 2 Thessalonians)
 Ephesus
 Visit to Jerusalem (18:22)
 Ministry in Antioch (18:22b–23a)
 Third missionary journey (18:23b–21:16)
 (Paul [and Luke])
 “The region of Galatia and Phrygia” (18:23)
 Ephesus
 (Paul writes 1 Corinthians)
 Macedonia
 (Paul writes 2 Corinthians)
 Greece
 (Paul writes Romans)
 Troas
 Ephesus
 Tyre
 Ptolemais
 Caesarea
 Visit to Jerusalem (21:17–23:30)

Some of the events Paul narrates can rather easily be correlated with Acts, but others are not so easy to identify. Of course, many scholars avoid the challenge of correlating Galatians and Acts by dismissing the historical reliability of Luke’s narrative. Their reconstruction of the Pauline chronology rests on the “primary” evidence of Paul’s Letters alone, and the result is an outline of the life of Paul that bears little resemblance to the narrative of Acts (a notable example of this approach is Lüdemann 1984). We cannot enter into the question of Luke’s accuracy here. But we will assume the historical accuracy of Acts in the following discussion, making reference as relevant to other options.

While there are a few dissenters among those who ignore Acts in reconstructing the chronology of Paul’s life, most scholars agree that the visit to Jerusalem that Paul mentions in Gal. 1:18–19—the first after his conversion—is the same one that Luke describes in Acts 9:26–29. But there is no such agreement about the Jerusalem visit that Paul describes in some detail in 2:1–10. Is Paul describing the same meeting that Luke depicts in Acts 15, often called the “Apostolic Council” (see esp. Mussner 1988: 127–32; Silva 2001: 129–39)? Or is Paul describing an earlier Jerusalem meeting, perhaps one that took place during the so-called famine relief visit to Jerusalem that Luke narrates in Acts 11:27–30 (see esp. R. Longenecker 1990: lxxiii–lxxxiii; Schnabel 2004: 2.987–92)? The latter identification would be required if Paul writes before the Apostolic Council met; but the former identification is possible (though

not, of course, required) if Paul writes anytime after the Council. Since the relationship between Gal. 2:1–10 and Acts 15 is crucial to dating Galatians and has significant implications for our interpretation of Galatians, we need to devote some space to this matter. Three particular pieces of evidence need to be assessed: (a) the chronology of Paul’s early life and ministry; (b) the parallels between Gal. 2:1–10 on the one hand and Acts 11:27–30 and 15:1–29 on the other; and (c) the relationship between Paul’s argument in Galatians and the “decree” issued at the Apostolic Council.

a. *Chronological considerations.* Paul claims that his first visit to Jerusalem came “three years after” his conversion (1:18) and that the visit of 2:1–10 came “after fourteen years.” One would think that these specific chronological notices would enable us to decide whether 2:1–10 describes a meeting during the famine-relief visit to Jerusalem around AD 46 or the Jerusalem Council around AD 48–49. In fact, however, these notices do not help much because of three significant variables. First, we cannot date the key events—Paul’s conversion, the famine-relief visit, the Jerusalem Council—with any degree of precision. Second, we cannot be sure whether the “fourteen years” of 2:1 are to be counted from Paul’s conversion or from his first Jerusalem visit. And third, we cannot know whether “three years” and “fourteen years” are to be counted inclusively (so that, for instance, AD 33–45 would count as fourteen years, with both beginning and ending year counted) or exclusively (as we normally do; AD 33–47 would be “fourteen years”). Taking account of these three variables, the following range of dates is possible:

Paul’s Conversion	Gal. 1:15–16	Acts 9:1–19	AD 33–35
First Jerusalem Visit	Gal. 1:18–19	Acts 9:26–29	“after three years”; AD 35–38
Second Jerusalem Visit	Gal. 2:1–10	Acts 11:27–30 or Acts 15:1–29	“after fourteen years”; AD 45–49 or 47–52

The famine-relief visit cannot be dated more precisely than 45–47; the Jerusalem Council is probably to be dated in 48 or 49. Therefore, as the chart shows, both the famine-relief visit of Acts 11 and the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 could fit chronologically with either of the two schemes for counting the years in Gal. 1–2.¹⁸

b. *Parallels.* The key points in each narrative may be set out as follows:

18. For more detail on these issues of Pauline chronology as well as an attempt to assign absolute dates to the key events in Paul’s life, see Carson and Moo 2005: 366–70. Constructing a chronology of Paul’s life is fraught with difficulty, and scholars continue to debate the matter. So, for instance, Schnabel (2004: 1000) disagrees with the Carson and Moo dates, putting Paul’s conversion in 31/32, his first Jerusalem visit in 33/34, the famine-relief visit in 44, and the Jerusalem Council in 48. Riesner (1998: 136) likewise insists that the latest possible date for the famine-relief visit is AD 45.

	Gal. 2:1–10	Acts 11:27–30	Acts 15:1–29
<i>Location</i>	Antioch and Jerusalem	Antioch and Jerusalem	Antioch and Jerusalem
<i>Immediate Occasion</i>	“by revelation”	prophecy	false teachers
<i>Participants</i>	Paul, Barnabas, Titus; James, Cephas, and John	Paul and Barnabas	Paul, Barnabas, and “some other believers”
		“Elders” are mentioned, but it is not clear how they are involved.	“apostles and elders”
	“private meeting”		Peter and James
<i>Issue</i>	circumcision of Gentile believers	famine relief	circumcision and obedience to law of Moses for Gentile believers
<i>Format</i>	Paul “sets forth” his gospel to the Gentiles.	no meeting mentioned	Paul reports on his Gentile mission; Peter confirms; James issues the decision.
<i>Result</i>	The “pillars” extend the “right hand of fellowship” to Paul and Barnabas; the “pillars” recognize different spheres of ministry.	nothing mentioned	James decides not to require Gentile believers to be circumcised or to obey the law of Moses; but he does insist that Gentile believers avoid certain practices especially offensive to Jews.
	Paul is asked to “remember the poor.”	financial help for the poor in Jerusalem	

The agreements and disagreements among these three narratives have been discussed and debated for years, with no consensus about their relationship. None of the narratives purports to be anything like a complete or objective description of the meeting in question, and we would therefore expect differences even when the same event is being described. The brevity of the Acts 11 description of the famine-relief visit makes it especially difficult to make effective comparisons.

In general, those who identify the Gal. 2 meeting with Acts 15 emphasize the unlikelihood that two such similar meetings would have taken place in Jerusalem within a few years of one another. R. Longenecker (1990: lxxvii), although he does not identify Gal. 2 with Acts 15, summarizes the similarities very well: “Both speak of a meeting held in Jerusalem to deal with the question of Gentile Christians having to observe the Jewish law. In both, the discussion is prompted by Jewish Christian legalists. In both, the main participants are Paul and Barnabas, on the one hand, and Peter and James, on the other hand. And in both, the decision reached is in favor of a law-free mission to Gentiles.” Lightfoot (1881: 124) therefore concludes: “A combination of circumstances so striking is not likely to have occurred twice within a few

years”—a conclusion that Silva (2001: 135) labels a “major understatement.” Of course, there are differences as well, and those who deny the identification focus on them. Some of these differences are easily explained.¹⁹ Even the omission of the restrictions placed on Gentiles by the Jerusalem Council in Paul’s narrative can be explained if the restrictions were intended for a limited time and/or specific area (as Paul’s silence about the matter in 1 Corinthians might indicate). A more puzzling omission in Paul’s narrative is the negative part of James’s decision: that Gentile believers need not be circumcised or obey the law of Moses. Granted the issue in Galatia, one would have expected Paul to make this point the highlight of his report of the meeting. Instead, the issue of circumcision is mentioned early in Paul’s narrative with respect to Titus (2:3–4) but receives no specific mention at the climax of his account. Ultimately, however, this kind of difference cannot bear much weight of argument, since one can always appeal to the selective nature of our accounts. What does have weight are contradictions. One such contradiction may be the difference between Paul’s claim that he “met privately” with the pillars (2:2) and Luke’s reference to “apostles and elders” (Acts 15:6, 22), “the whole assembly” (15:12), and “the whole church” (15:22; see also, e.g., Bauckham 2004: 135–39; Schnabel 2004: 987). However, while we think that Gal. 2:2 refers to a private meeting only, others interpret the text differently (see the commentary)—so the contradiction is not certain.

If we turn to compare Gal. 2:1–10 with Acts 11:27–30, we have much less to work with: Luke’s account is very brief. As the chart above shows, the only real parallels are (1) the impetus for Paul’s visit (if the “revelation” of Gal. 2:1 came via prophecy); (2) the location (movement from Antioch to Jerusalem); (3) the presence of Barnabas; and (4) concern with aid for the poor. None of these correspondences is so striking as to create a very strong presumption that the two narratives must refer to the same meeting. To be sure, there are few points of disagreement between the narratives, but the reason for this is simply that Luke provides so few details about this visit.

The argument from the parallels among these three accounts is, then, hardly decisive. The lack of detail in Acts 11:27–30 means that little can be said for or against the option of locating the meeting Paul describes in Gal. 2 during this visit. A comparison between the much more richly detailed narrative of Acts 15 with Gal. 2:1–10 reveals, as we have seen, both similarities and differences. On the one hand, the number of similarities, combined with the unlikelihood that two such similar meetings would have taken place in Jerusalem within the space of two or three years, is a strong argument for their identification. On the other hand, if the meeting of Gal. 2:1–10 was indeed a private one (see 2:2), then it is difficult, if not impossible, to identify them. Because we think that 2:2 is relatively clear about the private nature of the meeting, we incline

19. Silva (2001: 135) rightly notes that the differences between the accounts in Gal. 2:1–10 and Acts 15 are not as significant as the differences in many narratives of the same event among the Gospel writers.

very weakly to locate the meeting of Gal. 2:1–10 during the famine-relief visit of Paul to Jerusalem (Acts 11:27–30).

c. *Two arguments from silence.* Scholars who argue that Galatians was written before the Apostolic Council usually appeal to two arguments from silence as critical evidence in favor of this date (see esp. R. Longenecker 1990: lxxviii–lxxx).

First, why does Paul fail to mention one of his visits to Jerusalem in Gal. 1–2? If Gal. 2:1–10 = Acts 15 (and, as everyone agrees, Gal. 1:18 = Acts 9:26–29), Paul has failed to mention the visit recorded in Acts 11:27–30. Of course, this omission causes no problem for those scholars who do not think that Luke’s reference to this visit is historically accurate.²⁰ But for those who view Luke’s account as accurate, an explanation for this omission is necessary. Silva’s explanation (2001: 136–39) may be taken as representative. According to him, the problem of the omission disappears once we understand the purpose and sequence of thought in Gal. 1–2. Paul is not concerned to detail every one of his contacts with Jerusalem between his conversion and the writing of this letter. Rather, his concern in Gal. 1 is to show that he did not learn his gospel from any human during his early years of ministry. The famine-relief visit occurred at a later period than covered in chapter 1; and in any case, Paul may not even have met any of the apostles on this occasion. Chapter 2, according to Silva, takes up a separate issue, as Paul treats two special situations that the Galatians need to know about.

Silva’s argument is not, however, convincing. We think it unlikely that a transition of the sort that he suggests occurs between chapters 1 and 2. The *ἔπειτα* (*epeita*, then, 2:1) signals continuity from chapter 1 into chapter 2. In contrast to Silva, however (who acknowledges some degree of continuity), we think the continuity involves the very heart of Paul’s argument (see also, e.g., R. Longenecker 1990: lxxix). The common denominator in Paul’s narrative from 1:17 right through 2:14 is his relationship with the “pillars,” the Jerusalem apostles. This note is sounded immediately after Paul’s description of his conversion—“I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was” (1:17)—and is heard throughout the rest of Paul’s narrative: “Then, after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas. . . . I saw none of the other apostles” (1:18–19); “I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea” (1:22); “after fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem” (2:1); “When Cephas came to Antioch” (2:11); “certain men came from James” (2:12). Even if Paul did not meet with any of the “pillars” during his famine-relief visit (an improbable supposition in itself), we would think that Paul would need to mention the visit, if only to claim he did not meet any of the pillars. The focus on the Jerusalem apostles that continues into Gal. 2 suggests that Paul wants to detail his contacts with these apostles

20. Scholars who doubt the accuracy of Luke’s narrative usually argue either that (1) Luke has misplaced the event (it really happened on a later visit to Jerusalem [Acts 18 or Acts 21]; e.g., Lüdemann 1984: 13–14; Jewett 1979: 34); or (2) Luke has created two events on the basis of two reports of one event (the Apostolic Council; e.g., Lake 1933: 237–39). See Barrett 1988: 558–61 and R. Longenecker 1990: lxxiv–lxxv for discussion.

during all the time from his conversion to his writing of the letter. His claim in 1:22 to have been “unknown to the churches of Judea” seems designed to cover the entire period from his first visit (1:18–19) to the visit he narrates in 2:1–10. Barrett (1998), who identifies Gal. 2:1–10 with Acts 15, is typical of more critical scholars who conclude that the Acts 11 visit must be a Lukan fabrication precisely because Paul does not mention it in Galatians.²¹

A second argument from silence is Paul’s failure to mention the Jerusalem decree anywhere in Galatians. In a letter that has at its heart an appeal to Gentile Christians not to undergo circumcision, we would expect Paul at least to mention the fact that the Jerusalem apostles themselves had agreed not to impose circumcision on Gentile converts. His silence about this decision only makes sense, it is argued, if that decision had not yet been reached. The force of this argument, however, is mitigated by two considerations: First, the intended scope and duration of the Jerusalem decision is unclear. The letter communicating the decision of the Council is addressed to “Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia,” an area that does not include the churches of Galatia. Second, Paul’s concern to distance himself from the Jerusalem apostles in his claims for “the truth of the gospel” might make him reluctant to appeal to those same apostles in his argument. Neither of these responses is entirely convincing. There is legitimate question about the scope of the Jerusalem decree; Paul’s silence about it when he deals with an issue touched on in the decree (meat sacrificed to idols) in 1 Corinthians suggests that the scope was indeed limited. But, even if the restrictions imposed on Gentile believers were of limited applicability, the very important precedent established by the Council with respect to the circumcision of Gentile converts would surely have been of broader and more permanent significance. As to the other issue: the emphasis on agreement between Paul and the “pillars” in 2:1–10 shows that, while Paul wanted to show that his gospel was not derived from those leaders, he was quite happy to note when those leaders agreed with his understanding of it.

Arguments from silence are considered to be of minimal value—and often with good reason. But silence can sometimes be rather deafening; and we think there is considerable merit in these two particular arguments from silence. These two arguments, combined with the probability that the meeting of Gal. 2 was a private one, lead us to align Gal. 2:1–10 with Acts 11:27–30. Paul’s failure to mention the Apostolic Council visit to Jerusalem can only be explained, then, if he wrote *before* the Council had met. On this scenario, the sequence of events would be as follows:

Planting (and follow-up visit) of the churches in South Galatia (Acts 13:1–14:25; cf. Gal. 4:12–20)

21. Barrett (1998: 559–60) says, “It is inconceivable that Paul should have been so foolish (not to say so untruthful) as to omit in the controversial epistle to the Galatians a visit of which his adversaries could have made good use.” See also Burton (1921: 115–17): because he thinks it is overwhelmingly clear that Gal. 2:1–10 = Acts 15, he concludes that Acts 11 is “inaccurate.”

Return to Antioch, where Paul stayed for “a long time” (Acts 14:26–28)

Arrival of agitators in the South Galatian churches during Paul’s stay in Antioch (perhaps at the same time as the arrival of similar false teachers in Antioch: Acts 15:1)

Writing of Galatians

Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1–29)

2. The second major factor in determining the date of Galatians is one internal to the Letters of Paul, and therefore often given decisive weight by scholars (esp. among those who doubt the historicity of Acts). The vocabulary and argument of Galatians find parallels in many of Paul’s Letters, yet are especially close to the vocabulary and argument of Romans (Lightfoot 1881: 45–48 provides a full list):

- a. Discussion of the Mosaic law is prominent in both letters. Of Paul’s 121 uses of the word νόμος, seventy-four occur in Romans and thirty-two in Galatians. The phrase [τὰ] ἔργα [τοῦ] νόμου (*[ta] erga [tou] nomou*, the works of the law) occurs only in these letters, as does reference to Lev. 18:5 with respect to the law (Gal. 3:12; Rom. 10:5). In both letters (and only in these letters), Paul refers to “dying to” the law (Gal. 2:19; Rom. 7:4).
- b. “Righteousness” language is prominent in both letters. The verb δικαιοῶ (*dikaioō*, justify) occurs eight times in Galatians and thirteen times in Romans (five occurrences elsewhere in Paul), the noun δικαιοσύνη (*dikaioḡsynē*, righteousness) four times in Galatians and thirty-three times in Romans (twenty elsewhere in Paul), and the adjective δίκαιος (*dikaios*, righteous) once in Galatians and seven times in Romans (and nine elsewhere in Paul). In both letters (and only in these letters) Paul uses two key OT texts to illuminate his teaching on righteousness: Gen. 15:6 and Hab. 2:4.
- c. Both letters give pride of place to Abraham in their portrayal of salvation history, focusing on his faith, his inclusive significance, and the contrast between the promise God gave him and the Mosaic law (Gal. 3:6–9, 14, 15–18; Rom. 4:1–25). Both letters also single out the “true” children of Abraham from among all Abraham’s biological descendants (Gal. 4:21–31; Rom. 9:7–13).
- d. While Paul touches on the idea that Christians are “sons” (υἱοί, *huiοi*) or “children” (τέκνα, *tekna*) of God in other letters (e.g., 2 Cor. 6:18; Eph. 5:1; Phil. 2:15), it is only in Galatians and Romans that Paul develops the concept, using the technical term υἱοθεσία (*huiothesia*, adoption), and linking Christian “sonship” to Christ as Son and to future inheritance (Gal. 4:4–7; Rom. 8:14–17).²²

22. The gender-specific “sons/sonship” is used throughout the commentary in order to preserve the first-century concept of inheritance (almost always involving male offspring) and

- e. In both letters (and only in these letters), Paul uses the imagery of being “crucified with” Christ to describe the transition from the old life to the new (Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:6).
- f. Only in Galatians and Romans does Paul claim that the law is “fulfilled” by the love command (Lev. 19:18; Gal. 5:13–14; Rom. 13:8–10).
- g. Although Paul often refers to the Holy Spirit as basic to Christian existence, it is only in Galatians (5:16–26) and Romans (8:4–13) that he develops the nature of this relationship in some detail.

Other scholars have noticed similarities between Galatians and 2 Cor. 10–13 (see esp. Borse 1972: 84–119). The similarities between Romans (and to a lesser extent 2 Cor. 10–13) and Galatians strongly suggest, it is argued, that they were written at about the same time. Thus Galatians, like Romans, must have been written sometime on the third missionary journey.

The parallels between Romans and Galatians are clear, but it is not so clear how we are to interpret those parallels (see esp. the discussion in Bruce 1982b: 45–56). First, for all the overlap in themes, Romans and Galatians develop some of those themes in quite different ways; compare, for example, the treatment of Abraham and Gen. 15:6 in Gal. 3:7–29 and Rom. 4. And, as we argue below, Galatians and Romans focus on different aspects of justification. Thus Betz (1979: 12) argues that these differences suggest a distance in date between the two letters (cf. also Sampley 1985). Second, of more significance is the question about how to explain the similarities between Romans and Galatians. Paul’s theology undoubtedly developed over the course of his ministry. But perspective is important. The conception of a Paul who suddenly had to begin working out his theology in his first letter and then developed his ideas dramatically over the course of his letter-writing career is belied by simple chronology: Paul spent almost as much time in ministry before he ever wrote a canonical letter (ca. AD 33–48) as he did during his letter-writing period (ca. AD 48–64; see Bruce 1982b: 46). In general the theological language and arguments used by Paul appear to have much more to do with the occasion for his writing than with any kind of trajectory in the development of his theology (which, in any case, is notoriously difficult to trace).²³ The similarities between Romans and Galatians, in other words, are not necessarily because Paul wrote them at the same time. The similarities could equally be explained as Paul’s dealing with similar issues in the two letters.

Galatians, we conclude, was probably written in AD 48 just before the Apostolic Conference of Acts 15.²⁴ It is the earliest extant letter of Paul.

the relationship between the “sons” and the “Son” (4:5–6). The term refers, of course, to male and female believers equally.

23. This principle applies equally to other such arguments from theological development: e.g., Dunn (1993b: 17) thinks the failure to mention justification in the Thessalonian Letters suggests that they were written before Galatians.

24. A possible objection to this dating is the argument that Paul would have waited to write to the Galatians until the results of the Conference in Jerusalem were known. But (1) Paul may