4

Foolish Galatians

INTRODUCTION

"When St. Paul carried the gospel into Galatia, he was thrown for the first time among an alien people, differing widely in character and habits from the surrounding nations." So wrote J. B. Lightfoot on the opening pages of his famous commentary on Paul's epistle to the Galatians.[1] Lightfoot devoted his commentary's opening section to a discussion of "the broad features of national character" of the Galatians, which he argued would "prepare the way for the solution of some questions of interest" in the interpretation of the letter.[2] Lightfoot's emphasis on the significance of the "national character" of the Galatians for the interpretation of Paul's letter contrasts sharply with scholarship published over the last several decades. Even in commentaries that document the history and geography of the Galatian region in detailed fashion, discussion of ancient authors' estimates of the character of the Galatians is notably absent.

[1] J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, 3rd ed. (London; Cambridge: Macmillan, 1869), 1. The first edition of this commentary was published in 1865, followed by nine further editions, the final one being published posthumously in 1890. John Riches, *Galatians through the Centuries*, Blackwell Bible Commentaries (Malden: Blackwell, 2008), 52–58, offers a helpful discussion of the historical context and significance of Lightfoot's commentary. In the estimation of Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians*, 7, "it remains a standard work which no student of the letter can afford to overlook – and there are not many commentaries over a hundred years old of which this sort of thing can be said." Harker, *The Colonizers' Idols*, 171–75, also offers a helpful discussion of Lightfoot's commentary, including his statements about the Galatian people.

[2] Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, 1–2.

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The present chapter seeks to demonstrate that much can be gained by revisiting ancient descriptions of the Galatian people; I will argue that Paul's letter draws on stereotypical assumptions about the Galatians. If ethnic stereotypes have a significant impact on many social interactions (as argued in Chapter 2) and Paul was capable of thinking of groups as broad and diverse as the "Gentiles" in essentialist terms (as argued in Chapter 3), it is reasonable to hypothesize that he may have viewed the Galatians in a similarly generalizing manner and that culturally shared assumptions about the Galatians exerted influence on how he perceived, evaluated, and responded to recent developments in the Galatian communities.[3]

The chapter focuses on a particularly notable point of similarity between how the Galatian people were commonly viewed in antiquity and how the Galatians are depicted in Paul's letters: their alleged fickleness.[4] Based on analysis of the depiction of the Galatians in ancient literature (Section 4.1) and in Paul's letter (Section 4.2), the chapter will argue that Paul utilized the ethnic stereotype of Galatian fickleness to advance his rhetorical and theological argument (Section 4.3). Section 4.4 explores the effects of this depiction of the Galatians in the history of interpretation. It demonstrates that Paul's letter influenced how ethnic groups like the Irish and Welsh were viewed in the modern era and shows that Paul's letter legitimated thinking about ethnic and racial character traits as immutable.

[3] A recurrent point of emphasis throughout this study is that these literary depictions are not to be equated with social reality. Since the 1990s, historians have made significant efforts to reconstruct the history of the Galatians in ways that do not reiterate the biases found in the ancient literary record. See especially Stephen Mitchell, *Anatolia: Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); Strobel, *Galater*; Altay Coşkun, "Die lokalen Eliten der Galater in hellenistischer Zeit," in *Lokale Eliten und hellenistische Könige. Zwischen Kooperation und Konfrontation*, ed. Boris Dreyer and Peter Franz Mittag (Berlin: Verlag Antike, 2011), 80–104; Altay Coşkun, "Belonging and Isolation in Central Anatolia: The Galatians in the Graeco-Roman World," in *Belonging and Isolation in the Hellenistic World*, ed. Sheila L. Ager and Riemer A. Faber (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 73–95; Liam Gale, "Hellenistic Galatians: Representation and Self-Presentation" (PhD dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 2017).

[4] While this point of overlap has been noted by Lightfoot and others, there is considerably more pertinent ancient evidence than has been previously taken into account. Lightfoot only cited one passage each from Tacitus, Polybius, Livy, and Florus, and a handful of passages from Caesar's *BG*. He did not refer to some of the most compelling evidence assembled below.

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4.1 GALATIAN FICKLENESS IN ANCIENT LITERATURE

Classical and Hellenistic authors use a variety of Greek and Latin words and phrases to depict the Galatians in a manner that is arguably best captured by "fickle" and encompasses both senses of that word as distinguished by *OED*: "changeable, changeful, inconstant, uncertain, unreliable" and "false, deceitful, treacherous." Ancient descriptions of the Galatians frequently claim that (1) they quickly reverse course and give up on their efforts, and (2) they routinely abandon or otherwise betray their allies. Frequently underlying these two interrelated flaws is the understanding that the Galatians were moved by impulse more than reason; they change course or betray their allies rashly rather than on the basis of careful consideration.[5] In the following sections, I will discuss a range of authors who commented relatively extensively on this characteristic of the Galatians and whose works predate or postdate Paul by no more than approximately two centuries. Other pertinent texts will be cited in the subsequent discussion of Paul's letter.

Before turning to the ancient evidence, a few words on terminology are in order. There is a great deal of overlap, sometimes even interchangeability, in the usage of the Greek and Latin terms for Celts, Gauls, and Galatians. In Greek and Latin sources, the words Γαλάται and *Galli* can refer to what in modern parlance are either Gauls (in Europe) or Galatians (in Anatolia).[6] Since the Galatai of Anatolia originally hailed from Gaul, they were usually viewed as ethnically identical with the Galatai of Europe. Occasionally, the Anatolian Galatai are referred to as *Gallograeci*, *Galatae*, Γαλλογραικοί, or Ἑλληνογαλάται,[7] terms that

[5] Not all ancient authors who discuss the Galatians mention these traits, but it is a theme that, with some variation, recurs frequently, as will become evident on the next few pages. As with other ethnic groups, varying assessments of the character of the Galatians can be found within and across classical sources. The ancient record on the Galatians combines condemnation with a degree of admiration and is certainly not entirely negative, as has been highlighted by Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity*, 141–58.

[6] As Stephen Mitchell notes ("The Galatians: Representation and Reality," in *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*, ed. Andrew Erskine, Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World [Malden: Blackwell, 2003], 280), while "in modern terminology Galatians is applied exclusively to denote the Celtic peoples of the eastern Balkans and especially Asia Minor," ancient authors use this term to "refer both to the Celtic peoples of Gaul and to the Celts of Asia Minor."

[7] See, e.g., Livy, *Hist.* 38.17, Annaeus Florus, *Epitome of Roman History* 1.27.11; Diodorus Siculus, *Libr. Hist.* 5.32. It appears that only Gregorius Cedrenus used Κελτογαλλία. Pausanias distinguishes the Anatolian Galatai from their European counterparts by calling

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distinguish the Gauls of Asia from their European compatriots, while also acknowledging their common Gallic identity.

Unsurprisingly, the Galatian inhabitants of Anatolia were generally described in the same terms as the Galatai of Europe.[8] This is true also of "Celts" (Κελτοί/*Celti*), which appears to have been an older designation of the same people.[9] To the extent that Celts and Gauls were distinguished by ancient authors, this happens in ways that are inconsistent between different authors.[10] The Greek and Latin words for Gaul,

them Γαλάται δὲ οἱ ὑπὲρ Φρυγίας (10.36.1); Livy at one point refers to them as *Galli qui Asiam incolunt* (39.6.3), see also the quotation from Justin in note 8.

[8] In a few instances, awareness of certain differences may be observed. The speech of Manlius Vulso in Livy 38.17 and the parallel in Annaeus Florus, *Epitome of Roman History* 1.27.11 suggest that the Gallogrecae had grown soft compared to the warlike European Gauls. But as we will see below (p. 71), Vulso assumes that they were still for the most part characteristically identical. Cf. also Mithridates' speech in Justin's *Epitome* (38.4.8–10), where it is claimed that "the Galli, who live in Asia differed from those who had settled in Italy only geographically; they had the same origin, valour and style of fighting" (*Nam hos, qui Asiam incolunt, Gallos ab illis, qui Italiam occupaverant, sedibus tantum distare, originem quidem ac virtutem genusque pugnae idem habere*). Mithridates adds, though, that "the Asian (Galli) were all the more spirited than the Italian Gauls, having made their way through Illyricum and Thrace on a longer and more difficult journey, and very nearly devoting more effort to travelling over those territories than to occupying the points where they settled it" (*tantoque his acriora esse quam illis ingenia, quod longiore ac difficiliore spatio per Illyricum Thraciamque prodierint, paene operosius transitis eorum finibus quam ubi consedere possessis*).

[9] See Strobel, *Galater*, 123–39. For an illustration of how Latin *Galli* can also function as a synonym of "Celts," see Polybius 3.79 and Livy 22.2; in these two versions of the same story, Polybius speaks of Κελτοί, whereas Livy calls them *Galli*. See also the quotation of *BG* 1.1 in note 10.

[10] This can be effectively demonstrated by comparing three accounts from the first century BCE: Caesar's *Gallic War*; Dionysius' *Roman Antiquities* and Diodorus Siculus' *Library of History*. According to Caesar, *Gallia* can be divided into three parts, one of which is inhabited by a group "who in their own language are called Celts, but in ours Galli" (*qui ipsorum lingua Celtae, nostra Galli appellantur*, *BG* 1.1.1). This shows not only that *Galli* and *Celtae* could be used interchangeably but also intimates confusion as to whether *Galli* refers to all the inhabitants of *Gallia* (as is often logically the case) or only to a subgroup (as Caesar suggests). Dionysius (*Roman Antiquities* 14.1.2–3) refers to Gaul as Γαλατία τῆς θαλάττης, presumably to distinguish it from Anatolian Galatia, and states that this territory along with Germany (Γερμανία) is called Celtica by the Greeks (κοινῷ δ' ὀνόματι ἡ σύμπασα πρὸς Ἑλλήνων καλεῖται Κελτική). Contrast this with the account in Diodorus Siculus, *Libr. Hist.* 5.32.1, derived perhaps from Posidonius (see Strobel, *Galater*, 123), which restricts Celtica to a much smaller region: "They call Celts (Κελτοὺς ὀνομάζουσι) those who dwell in the interior above Massilia and along the Alps, and next to the Pyrennees; but those who live above Celtica (Κελτική) in the region stretching towards the north besides the ocean and the Hercynian mountains and up to the border of Scythia, they call the Galatai (Γαλάται)." Diodorus adds that "the Romans put all the tribes together under one name, and call them all Galatai (Γαλάται)." From this

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Galatian, and Celt accordingly constitute a "triad of ethnic terminology"[11] and must all be taken into account if we are to arrive at a reliable understanding of how the Galatians were viewed in Paul's day. In the discussion that follows, I transcribe the Greek and Latin terms to avoid imposing modern distinctions on the ancient record as much as possible. Consistent with this approach, I will sometimes refer to Paul's addressees as Galatai in the hope of avoiding reinscribing the artificial linguistic boundary between Paul's Galatians and the people discussed by other Greco-Roman authors.

Polybius

Polybius did much to imprint on posterity the view that the Galatai were fickle.[12] He often draws attention to the unreliability and changeability of the Galatai and frequently employs the term ἀθεσία when doing so. J. H. C. Williams explains the meaning of this word, unusual outside of Polybius, as follows: "Related to the verb *atheteo*, meaning literally 'to make without place or position,' and hence 'to set aside,' a promise or treaty, it refers to the moral quality that gives rise to such behaviour, and its connotations are distinctly pejorative .... Its meaning is adequately rendered by such English concepts as perfidy, faithlessness, and treachery."[13]

Roman perspective, the Keltoi are a subgroup of the Galatai, and this would seem to suggest that Celtica is only a part of the territory of Gaul, which is the opposite of what Dionysius states.

[11] Strobel, *Galater*, 123: "'Dreiklang' der ethnischen Begrifflichkeit."

[12] On Polybius' account of the Galatai, see Ralf Urban, "Die Kelten in Italien und in Gallien bei Polybios," in *Hellenistische Studien: Gedenkschrift für Hermann Bengtson*, ed. J. Seibert (München: Maris, 1991), 137–57; Philippe Berger, "Le portrait des Celtes dans les Histoires de Polybe," *Ancient Society* 23 (1992): 105–26; Bernhard Kremer, *Das Bild der Kelten bis in augusteische Zeit: Studien zur Instrumentalisierung eines antiken Feindbildes bei griechischen und römischen Autoren* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1994); Philippe Berger, "La xénophobie de Polybe," *Revue des Études Anciennes* 97 (1995): 517–25; É. Foulon, "Polybe et les Celtes, I," *Les Études Classiques* 68 (2000): 319–54; É. Foulon, "Polybe et les Celtes, II," *Les Études Classiques* 69 (2001): 35–64; J. H. C. Williams, *Beyond the Rubicon: Romans and Gauls in Republican Italy*, Oxford Classical Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), esp. 68–99; Erich S. Gruen, *Ethnicity in the Ancient World – Did It Matter?* (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2020), 56–60.

[13] Williams, *Beyond the Rubicon*, 82–83. On ἀθεσία in Polybius, see also F. W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 1:208; Attilio Roveri, *Studi su Polibio*, vol. 17, Università degli studi di Bologna. Facoltà di lettere e filosofia. Studi pubblicati dall'Istituto di filologia classica (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1964), 119.

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In 2.32.8, Polybius describes the Romans as in doubt as to whether they should enlist the help of a Gallic auxiliary force given their "Galatian perfidy" (ἡ Γαλατικὴ ἀθεσία). The Romans worry that the Galatai would betray their allegiance to them. This would not necessarily be a calculated betrayal, though, because in Polybius' estimation, the Galatai were moved by impulse more than anything else and lacked the capacity to lay out plans and follow through on them. He states this perhaps most clearly in his final evaluation of the Gallic wars in 2.53.2–3:

> Such was the end of the war against the Celts, a war which, if we look to the desperation and daring of the combatants and the numbers who took part and perished in the battles, is second to no war in history, but is quite contemptible as regards the plan of the campaigns, and the judgment shown in executing it, not most steps but *every single step that the Galatai took being commended to them rather by irascibility than by reason* (ἀλλὰ συλλήβδην ἅπαν τὸ γινόμενον ὑπὸ τῶν Γαλατῶν θυμῷ μᾶλλον ἢ λογισμῷ βραβεύεσθαι).

The Galatai were consistently swayed by irascibility or impulsivity (θυμός), Polybius alleges, rather than by reason (λογισμός). The view that the Galatai act on the basis of θυμός rather than λογισμός is reiterated by Polybius twice elsewhere,[14] and in general, the rash and unreflecting behavior of the Galatai is an important element of their portrayal by Polybius.[15]

The notion of infidelity to existing allegiances is also mentioned frequently. When Hannibal crosses the Pyrenees on his way to Italy, the local

[14] In 2.21.2, he describes a group of Galatai as θυμοῦ μὲν ἀλογίστου πλήρεις ("full of unreasoning irascibility"). In 2.30.4, a group of Galatai is said to be "rushing in vain toward the enemy with irascibility and lack of reason" (εἰς τοὺς πολεμίους ὑπὸ τοῦ θυμοῦ καὶ τῆς ἀλογιστίας εἰκῇ προπίπτοντες).

[15] As Williams (*Beyond the Rubicon*, 84) points out, Polybius explains their political and military failure by citing "their generally low level of moral and intellectual capabilities, which is exemplified by their *athesia* that leads them to act senselessly and calculate disastrously. With particular reference to the Celts, we can see now how Polybius explained their history, their perpetual violence, and their constant belligerence against Greeks and Romans in terms of their collective psychology as a group almost entirely lacking in the ability to act reasonably." Berger ("La xénophobie," 521) stresses the degree to which Polybius describes these deficits as innate to the Galatai/Celts: "Le Celte trahit par nature, par atavisme culturel, bien plus que par calcul politique ou stratégique – au contraire, le Celte passe pour un être irrationnel, inapte à l'analyse, à la planification. Il trahit … parce qu'il est celte. Personne ne pourra rien y changer: lui et ses semblables sont ainsi faits. Aussi longtemps qu'ils seront des Celtes, ils seront des traîtres! Tel serait leur 'tempérament.'"

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Galatai betray their allegiance to the Romans and join Hannibal.[16] It is telling that the Roman commander Scipio later devises a strategy based on the assumption that, because of their ἀθεσία, the Galatai will not remain faithful to the Carthaginians either (οὐκ ἐμμενεῖν ἐν τῇ πίστει, 3.70.4).[17] This view is shared by Hannibal himself (3.70.9–10). In fact, Hannibal is said to have worried that his new allies would turn on him: "fearing the treachery of the Celts (τὴν ἀθεσίαν τῶν Κελτῶν) and possible attempts on his life, owing to his establishment of the friendly relations with them being so very recent" (3.78.2). Hannibal feared not just a lack of enthusiasm for continued warfare but acts of active enmity against his person.

Polybius also explicitly associates ἀθεσία with the Galatai of Asia Minor (24.14.7). Again, the issue is that they are unreliable allies. Polybius refers to this Galatian trait once more in his account of how Epirus fell into the hands of the Greeks. The Epirotes had enlisted Gallic mercenaries, who subsequently betrayed the city (2.5.4).[18] This led Polybius to ask rhetorically (2.7.5): "Would not anyone who is aware of the general reputation of the Galatai think twice before entrusting to them a wealthy city, the betrayal of which was easy and profitable?" (τίς οὐκ ἂν τὴν κοινὴν περὶ Γαλατῶν φήμην ὑπιδόμενος εὐλαβηθείη τούτοις ἐγχειρίσαι πόλιν εὐδαίμονα καὶ πολλὰς ἀφορμὰς ἔχουσαν εἰς παρασπόνδησιν;). Polybius' language of "the general reputation of the Galatai" (ἡ κοινὴ περὶ Γαλατῶν φήμη) suggests that the view that they were liable to betray their allies did not originate with him but was common knowledge.

[16] 3.40.6–7: "Scarce had both these colonies been established when the Boii Galatai (οἱ Βοῖοι καλούμενοι Γαλάται), who had been for long as it were lying in wait to throw off their allegiance to Rome (τὴν πρὸς Ῥωμαίους φιλίαν), but had hitherto found no opportunity, elated now by the messages they received assuring them of the near arrival of the Carthaginians, revolted (ἀπέστησαν) from Rome." After a parley was agreed, the Boii treacherously breached their agreement (παρασπονδήσαντες) and seized the Roman representatives (3.40.10).

[17] Cf. 3.49.2: τὴν ἀθεσίαν τῶν κατοικούντων τοὺς τόπους βαρβάρων with reference to the Celtic peoples north of the Alps.

[18] This is one of many passages that attest to the mercenary activities of the Galatai (see, e.g., David Rankin, *Celts and the Classical World* [London; New York: Routledge, 1998], 23, 25, 26, 28; Arnaldo Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom: The Limits of Hellenization* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975], 53), which ties in with the view that they are essentially unreliable. As Williams, (*Beyond the Rubicon*, 91) notes: "The Greek and Roman solider was meant to fight for his city unconditionally rather than for money … defending all he held sacred and right …. The consequence of this was that the Celtic warrior tended inevitably to be portrayed as a mercenary with all the moral deficiencies that status implied, something which by definition the citizen-soldier could never be. This is the ethical notion underlying the frequent literary references to mercenary service among Celts, which Greek historical experience appeared to confirm."

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Livy

In addition to their unreliability and changeability vis-à-vis their allies, Polybius offers limited evidence that the Galatai were seen as lacking staying power in battle.[19] This theme is all the more prominent in Livy's *History of Rome*.[20] His Galli are valiant in battle at first but lack stamina, and, as a result, their attitude changes completely as the battle wears on.[21] The following passage is representative:

> The Romans with Fabius were rather defending themselves than attacking, and were trying to prolong the struggle to as late an hour in the day as possible. This was because their general was persuaded that both Samnites and Galli fought fiercely at the outset of an engagement, but only needed to be withstood; when a struggle was prolonged, little by little the spirits of the Samnites flagged, while the physical prowess of the Galli, who could least of all men put up with heat and labour, ebbed away, and, whereas in the early stages of their battles they were more than men, they ended with being less than women. (10.28.2–4)

Although the Samnites and Galli are mentioned in one breath, the description of the Galli is more disparaging. They tolerate challenging circumstances least of all people, and they turn into what Livy evidently considered the very opposite of a brave warrior: they become "less than women" (*minus quam feminarum*). Elsewhere in Livy too, the Galli give up more quickly than other "barbarians."[22] A minor obstacle is enough to turn them from strength to weakness. According to 7.12.11, they are people "whose strength and courage lay wholly in attacking, and became weak as soon as there came a slight delay" (*quorum omnis in impetu vis esset, parva eadem languesceret mora*). In another battle, "they did not endure even the first volley of weapons" (38.27.4).[23] Like Polybius, Livy cites the impulsivity of the Galli to explain their lack of endurance and success.

> The Galli were taken aback; they armed, and, with more rage than judgment, charged the Romans (*Galli nova re trepidi arma capiunt iraque magis quam*

[19] See 2.18.8, 2.33.2, 3.70.9, 3.79.4–7 (a parallel to Livy 22.2, discussed below). But note that Polybius also mentions instances where they stay their ground for some time (e.g., 2.30.6–7, 2.34.15).

[20] Kremer, *Bild*, 33.

[21] Livy was committed to the idea that nations have specific collective characteristics: "States, as well as individuals, have their different characters; some are violent, others daring, others timid; some addicted to wine, others more particularly to women" (45.23).

[22] 22.2.3–8, 27.48.15–17.

[23] For other examples of lack of endurance on the part of the Galli, see 24.42.7, 34.47.5, 35.5.7.

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consilio in Romanos incurrunt). But now fortune had turned; now the might of Heaven and human wisdom were engaged in the cause of Rome. Accordingly, at the first shock the Galli were routed with as little effort as they had themselves put forth to conquer on the Allia. (5.49.5)[24]

The Galli are easily defeated, because they proceed impulsively, with more *ira* than *consilium* (cf. Polybius' opposition of θυμός and λογισμός).

Particularly interesting for present purposes is Manlius Vulso's speech to rally his troops for their fight against the Galli of Asia Minor (Livy 38.17). It is clear that he regarded them as substantially similar to the Galli of the West and that they shared the same flaws:

> It does not escape me, soldiers, that of all the peoples who inhabit Asia the Galli stand first in reputation for war . . . . But let Greeks and Phrygians and Carians fear these things to which they are unused and unaccustomed; to Romans Gallic riotings are familiar and their vain displays too are well known. Once, when we first met them at the Allia, our ancestors long ago fled before them; from that time now for two hundred years, terrified like animals they are slain and routed, and more triumphs, almost, have been celebrated over the Galli than over all the world. This has now been learned by experience (*iam usu hoc cognitum est*): if you bear up under their first onset, into which they rush with glowing enthusiasm (*fervido ingenio*) and blind passion (*ira*), their limbs grow lax with sweat and weariness, their weapons fall from their hands; their soft bodies, their soft souls (when passion subsides) are overcome by sun, dust, thirst, so that you need not use arms against them (*mollia corpora, molles, ubi ira consedit, animos sol pulvis sitis ut ferrum non admoveas prosternunt*). Not only when matched legion to legion have we learned this, but when fighting man to man alone. Titus Manlius, Marcus Valerius have shown how far Roman valour surpasses Gallic madness (*Gallicam rabiem*).

Livy's Vulso believed that the Asian Galli had the same characteristics as the Galli encountered by the Romans in Europe, even if he goes on to say that the Galli who had moved to Asia deteriorated and were no longer as fierce as the Galli of the west (38.17.9).[25] In his (and Livy's) view, Galli everywhere lack grit and because they are moved by "passion" (again, *ira*), rather than cool *ratio*, they go from one extreme (terrifying aggression) to another (utter weakness ["you need not use arms against them"]).

[24] At Allia, the Galli beat the Romans, and in that case *non fortuna modo sed ratio etiam cum barbaris stabat* ("not only luck but calculation as well were on the side of the barbarians," 5.38.4). Kremer, *Bild*, 37–38 argues that this is not so much said in praise of the Galli, but to criticize the Romans for being inferior even with respect to *ratio* to the otherwise completely irrational ("ansonsten völlig kopflosen") Galli.

[25] Note also that in 38.48.11, Vulso seems to go back on his view that the Asiatic Galli are not as fierce. Similarly, Livy 37.8.4: "The original nature of the people had not yet disappeared and they preserved their Gallic spirit."

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The emphasis on the Gallic tendency to betray their allies found in Polybius is also echoed by Livy. In 22.2, Hannibal makes the Galli march in the middle of his army, in between the much more reliable Spaniards and Africans in the front and the Numidian cavalry in the back (22.2.3–4). The latter's principal task was "to keep the Galli in order, in case they should weary of the long and painful march – for the race is ill adapted to such hardships – and flee or refuse to go forward" (*ut est mollis ad talia gens, dilaberentur aut subsisterent*, 22.2.4, cf. 22.2.6–8). When the going gets tough, the Galli stop going, Livy suggests, and by refusing to move forward or even fleeing away, they prove to be less than reliable allies.

In 21.25.6–7, they demonstrate their unreliability once again by betraying an agreement: "The Galli ... started feigning interest in peace negotiations. Roman spokesmen, invited to parley by the Gallic chieftains, were then apprehended by them, not only against international convention but also in violation of sworn guarantees given for that occasion." Later in Book 21, Livy mentions that the Romans mistrusted the Galli because of their "many acts of treachery" (*infida multa facinora*) in the past and the recent "treachery" (*perfidia*) of the Gallic tribe of the Boii (21.52.7). This passage intimates that treachery or faithlessness was not seen as an isolated incident but as a characteristic of the Galli. This view is reiterated in a much later passage, when the Galli are in the vicinity of Macedonia. Livy reports that king Perseus of Macedon "began to discourse on the *treachery* and savagery of the Galli, which had been demonstrated long since by disasters to many people" (*institit de perfidia et feritate Gallorum disserere, multorum iam ante cladibus experta*, 44.26.12–13). According to 22.1.3, the unfaithfulness of the Galli extended even beyond their allies to their own people: "Often a target of their chieftains' plots, he [Hannibal] had been kept from harm by the treacherous interrelations among them, since they betrayed a conspiracy as easily as they had formed it" (*petitusque saepe principum insidiis, ipsorum inter se fraude eadem levitate qua consenserant consensum indicantium servatus erat*).

Caesar

Caesar's account of the Galli is more nuanced than that of Polybius or Livy. This may be due to the considerable period of time he spent in Gaul, but it is almost certainly also a function of his efforts to glorify his own achievements. Imbuing the Galli with a level of ability and *virtus*

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made Caesar's exploits in Gaul seem all the more impressive.[26] Yet Caesar also reiterates various traditional negative views concerning the character of his opponents. Caesar's Galli, Arthur Kahn notes, "exhibit a tragic flaw, instability of character. They lack perseverance, are fickle, impetuous, susceptible to rumor and prone to swift turnabout in crises. In distress they are treacherous."[27] Or in the words of Jane Gardner, "they are impulsive, emotional, easily-swayed, fickle, loving change, credulous, prone to panic, scatter-brained."[28]

According to Caesar, the Galli are driven by "fickleness and inconstancy of mind" (*mobilitate et levitate animi*, *BG* 2.1.3)[29] and make rash and impulsive decisions: "The Galli are sudden and spasmodic in their designs" (*sunt Gallorum subita et repentina consilia*, 3.8). He regularly mentions how quickly they abandon their course to adopt another one, driven by a desire for change: Caesar "knew that almost all the Galli were eager for new things and could be recklessly and rapidly aroused to war" (*intellegeret omnes fere Gallos novis rebus studere et ad bellum mobiliter celeriterque excitari*, 3.10.3).[30] This made them very unreliable in the eyes of the Romans.[31] Yet as quickly as they would take up arms against them, they might also abandon their efforts again because of their lack of endurance: "For while the temper of the Galli is eager and ready to undertake a campaign, their disposition is feeble and in no way steadfast to endure disasters" (*Nam ut ad bella suscipienda Gallorum alacer ac promptus est animus, sic mollis ac minime resistens ad calamitates perferendas mens eorum est*, 3.19.6).[32]

[26] In addition, Caesar was interested in pointing the finger at Roman flaws and did so inter alia by suggesting that the Galli lost some of their original virtue under the increasing influence of Roman civilization. For a succinct, deft discussion of Caesar's complex objectives and his multifaceted portrayal of his Gallic enemies, see Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity*, 147–58.

[27] Arthur D. Kahn, "Vercingetorix: A New Play by C. Iulius Caesar," *Classical World* 65 (1971): 252.

[28] Jane F. Gardner, "The 'Gallic Menace' in Caesar's Propaganda," *Greece & Rome* 30 (1983): 185. For more on the characterization of the Galli in Caesar's opus, see Kremer, *Bild*, 133–257; Alexa Jervis, "Gallia Scripta: Images of Gauls and Romans in Caesar's 'Bellum Gallicum,'" PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2001; A. N. Sherwin-White, *Racial Prejudice in Imperial Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 13–29.

[29] *Levitas*, which Livy had used as well, also appears in Tacitus in connection with the Galli (*Germ.* 29.4). On Tacitus' familiarity with other anti-Gallic topoi, see Kremer, *Bild*, 33.

[30] See also the discussion of *BG* 4.5 below.

[31] The untrustworthiness of the Galli is illustrated at various points throughout *BG* (e.g., 2.32–33, 4.30, 5.27–49).

[32] This characteristic is frequently mentioned in *BG* (cf. 2.24, 4.15.1, 4.37.4, 6.8.6) but also often belied by the ability of the Galli to overcome setbacks.

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In *BG* 4.5, Caesar offers a particularly interesting statement about the character of the Galli: "Fearing the fickleness of the Galli (*infirmitatem Gallorum veritus*),[33] because they are capricious (*mobiles*) in forming designs and for the most part eager for new things (*novis plerumque rebus student*), he [Caesar] considered that no trust should be reposed in them (*nihil his committendum existimavit*)." This eagerness for "new things," which Caesar had previously mentioned in 3.10.3 could be interpreted as a desire for revolution, for which *novae res* is sometimes a shorthand in Latin. Yet what follows in 4.5 suggests that it also includes a desire for new information:

> It is indeed a regular habit of the Galli to compel travelers to halt, even against their will, and to ascertain what each of them may have heard or learnt upon every subject; and in the towns the common folk surround traders, compelling them to declare from what districts they come and what they have learnt there. Such stories and hearsay often induce them to form plans upon vital questions (*de summis ... rebus*) of which they must forthwith repent (*quorum eos in vestigio poenitere necesse est*); for they are the slaves of uncertain rumours (*incertis rumoribus serviant*), and most men reply to them in fictions made to their taste.

This claim about the eagerness of the Galli to hear novelties and their tendency to immediately accept as fact whatever they are told is reiterated twice elsewhere in *BG*. In 7.42, when discussing the Aedui, one of the Gallic tribes, Caesar comments on their *temeritas* (impulsivity, rashness, thoughtlessness, hastiness) and claims that this characteristic "is very much an inborn characteristic of their race, so that they treat frivolous hearsay as assured fact" (*quae maxime illi hominum generi est innata, ut levem auditionem habeant pro re comperta*). It is against the backdrop of this apparent ease and eagerness with which the Galli accept the truth of "new things," that the following statement must be interpreted:[34]

> Those states which are supposed to conduct their public administration to greater advantage have it prescribed by law that anyone who has learnt anything of public concern from his neighbours by rumour or report (*si quis quid de re publica a finitimis rumore aut fama acceperit*) must bring the information to a magistrate and not impart it to anyone else; for it is recognised that oftentimes rash and ignorant people (*temerarios atque imperitos*) are terrified by false rumours, and so are driven to crime or to decide supreme issues (*de summis rebus*). (*BG* 6.20)

The alleged tendency of the Galli to accept whatever they are told as fact and to use it as the basis to rashly make decisions about important matters

[33] Note that Caesar also refers to "the fickleness of the Galli" (*Gallorum infirmitate*) in 4.13.
[34] See also Kremer, *Bild*, 210 on the connection between this passage and 4.5.

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was apparently such a serious concern that some Gallic communities legislated against it as far as matters of public interest were concerned.

In short, despite Caesar's extensive personal interactions with the Galli, he too regards them as a fickle people, who are impulsive, unreliable, and prone to quickly give up. Rather more than other authors, he emphasizes their impulsivity with regard to their willingness to accept any information or hearsay that reaches them.

Strabo

In Book Four of his *Geography*, Strabo offers a brief assessment of the character of the Galatai.[35] The opening line is a good illustration of the interchangeability of "Gallic" and "Galatian" and of the essentializing way in which ancient authors frequently characterized this ethnic group:

> The entire tribe that is now called Gallic or Galatian is intense about war, and high-spirited and quick to fight, but otherwise simple and not malignant (Τὸ δὲ σύμπαν φῦλον, ὃ νῦν Γαλλικόν τε καὶ Γαλατικὸν καλοῦσιν, ἀρειμάνιόν ἐστι καὶ θυμικόν τε καὶ ταχὺ πρὸς μάχην, ἄλλως δὲ ἁπλοῦν καὶ οὐ κακόηθες, 4.4.2 [C195]).

Similar to Polybius before him, Strabo asserts that "the whole tribe" is θυμικός,[36] and, like Caesar, he claims that they are quick (ταχύς) to go to battle. Strabo elaborates on this last point in the following line: "When roused to fight they come together all at once for the struggle" (ἐρεθισθέντες μὲν ἀθρόοι συνίασι πρὸς τοὺς ἀγῶνας). Despite this eagerness, they can be relatively easily defeated, Strabo alleges, because they proceed in an unreflecting and impulsive manner:

> They come together all at once for the struggle, openly and without consideration (φανερῶς καὶ οὐ μετὰ περισκέψεως)[37] so that those who wish to defeat them by stratagem can do so easily. If one is willing to provoke them by whatever means on some pretext, they will readily go into danger, having nothing to assist them except strength and daring (πλὴν βίας καὶ τόλμης, 4.4.2 [C195]).

[35] Strabo (and other ancient authors, like Diodorus Siculus) drew on Posidonius, whose work has unfortunately been lost. No attempt will be made here to distinguish between Strabo's own contribution and what he gleaned from Posidonius and other sources. On Strabo's account of the Galli, see Sherwin-White, *Racial Prejudice in Imperial Rome*, 6–13; Monique Clavel-Lévêque, "Les Gaules et les Gaulois. Pour une analyse du fonctionnement de la Géographie de Strabon," *Dialogues d'histoire ancienne* 1 (1974): 75–94.

[36] Similarly, 4.4.5 (C197).

[37] Or, as Sarah Pothecary, *Strabo's Geography: A Translation for the Modern World* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2024), 236, translates οὐ μετὰ περισκέψεως: "without advance planning."

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Because they are so easily influenced, they can also be readily coaxed to take up more useful activities: "If persuaded (παραπεισθέντες), they easily (εὐμαρῶς) give in to usefulness, so that they engage in education and language" (παιδείας ἅπτεσθαι καὶ λόγων, 4.4.2 [C195]). Strabo's Galatai can be steered in any direction without much difficulty.

The claim that they are capable of grasping *paideia* and *logoi* may seem to stand in tension with Strabo's view that they are a "simple people" (φῦλον . . . ἁπλοῦν 4.4.2 [C195]), but ἁπλοῦς in this context should perhaps be taken to mean straightforward and direct.[38] A little later on, Strabo adds that the Galatai are not only ἁπλοῦς and irascible but also especially foolish and boastful: "In addition to their simplicity and high-spirited nature, much foolishness and boastfulness are present" (Τῷ δ' ἁπλῷ καὶ θυμικῷ πολὺ τὸ ἀνόητον καὶ ἀλαζονικὸν πρόσεστι, 4.4.5 [C197]). Given his earlier comment about how easily they can be nudged toward learning, the "foolishness" of which he speaks here cannot be a lack of intelligence but must probably be understood as rashness or mindlessness. This is borne out by the context. Shortly after, Strabo notes the Galatian tendency to be inconstant and move from one extreme to another by adding: "Because of this inconstancy they are unendurable when victorious but appear panic-stricken when beaten" (ὑπὸ τῆς τοιαύτης δὲ κουφότητος ἀφόρητοι μὲν νικῶντες, ἐκπλαγεῖς δ' ἡττηθέντες ὁρῶνται, 4.4.5). The inconstancy described here is connected with their foolishness in what follows: "In addition to their foolishness, there is the barbarity and alienness that is an attribute of most people toward he north." The word "foolishness" here translates ἄνοια, which is a cognate of ἀνόητος (cf. Gal 3:1, 3) and in context refers back to their inconstancy. It is not so much a lack of intelligence, then, but a tendency to act impulsively and in an unreflecting manner that Strabo has in mind when he imputes "foolishness" to the Galatians.

Cassius Dio

Cassius Dio, the final ancient author to be considered here, likewise reiterates various elements of the stereotypical image of the Galatai.

[38] Cf. 3.4.5 (C158), where Strabo claims that the Iberians are "deceptive by nature and not simple" (τὸ πανοῦργον φύσει καὶ τὸ μὴ ἁπλοῦν). Note also that when Polybius states that the Galatai's "lives were very simple" (ἁπλοῦς εἶχον τοὺς βίους), he explains that "they have no knowledge whatever of any art or science" (οὔτ' ἐπιστήμης ἄλλης οὔτε τέχνης παρ' αὐτοῖς τὸ παράπαν γινωσκομένης, 2.17.9). Strabo uses the word in a different sense, because while he agrees that the Galatai are ἁπλοῦς, he also maintains that they are able to lay hold of *paideia* and language (or perhaps, literature [λόγοι]).

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He mentions the unreliability of the Galatai in connection to their allegiance with the Carthaginians. When commenting on their alliance with Hannibal, he writes: "For the whole Galatian race is naturally more or less fickle, cowardly, and faithless. Just as they are readily emboldened in the face of hopes, so even the more readily when frightened do they fall into a panic" (Κοῦφον[39] γάρ τι καὶ δειλὸν καὶ ἄπιστον φύσει πᾶν τὸ Γαλατικὸν γένος ἐστίν· ὥσπερ γὰρ ἑτοίμως θρασύνεται πρὸς τὰς ἐλπίδας, οὕτως ἑτοιμότερον φοβηθὲν ἐκπλήττεται, Cass. Dio F 57.6b).[40] Dio's Galatai lack *pistis* to such an extent that they can be described as ἄπιστον φύσει ("faithless by nature").[41] He claims, moreover, that the "whole Galatian race" is impulsive and readily moves from hope to panic (cf. ἑτοίμως . . . ἑτοιμότερον).

Dio intimates in his description of Caracalla that this fickleness is a summary vice of Galatia: "Antoninus belonged to three races; and he possessed none of their virtues at all, but combined in himself all their vices; the fickleness, cowardice, and recklessness of Galatia (τῆς μὲν Γαλατίας τὸ κοῦφον καὶ τὸ δειλὸν καὶ τὸ θρασύ)[42] were his, the harshness and cruelty of Africa, and the craftiness of Syria, whence he was sprung on his mother's side" (*Excerpta Valesiana* 361, Cass. Dio 78[77].6.1a).[43]

The most comprehensive assessment of the Galatian character is found in Cassius Dio F 50.2–3 and is worth quoting at length:

> The Galatians (οἱ Γαλάται) became dejected on seeing that the Romans had already seized the most favourable positions. For all men, if they obtain the object of their first aim, proceed more readily toward their subsequent goals, and likewise if they fail of it, lose interest in everything else. Those of the Galatian race, however, rather more than the rest of mankind (τὸ δὲ δὴ Γαλατικὸν πλέον τι ἢ κατὰ τοὺς ἄλλους), seize very eagerly upon what they desire, and cling most tenaciously to their successes, but if they meet with the slightest (βραχύτατον) obstacle, have no hope at all left for the future. In their folly (ὑπ᾽ ἀνοίας) they are ready to expect whatsoever they wish, and in their ardour (ὑπὸ θυμοῦ) are ready to carry out whatsoever they undertake. They are men of ungoverned passion and

[39] This is a conjectural emendation; the text is incomplete at this point. Dio associates τὸ κοῦφον with the Gauls/Galatians in the next passage quoted as well. See also the passage in Strabo discussed above (4.4.5).

[40] Dio likewise notes Hamilcar's fear that the Galatai would betray him (Book 11; Zonoras 8.10).

[41] Cf. Polybius 3.70.4: οὐκ ἐμμενεῖν ἐν τῇ πίστει.

[42] This is a somewhat odd combination of attributes: fickleness, cowardice, and extreme boldness. It speaks to the extreme changeability of the Galatai and should perhaps be construed as an apposition: fickleness, that is, being either cowardly or overly bold.

[43] Cf. the description of Caracalla in the Epitome of Book 78, 10.2, where Dio characterizes Caracalla as θερμότατος καὶ κουφότατος ("very hot-headed and very inconstant").

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uncontrolled impulse (ὀργῇ ἀκράτῳ καὶ ὁρμῇ ἀπλήστῳ), and for that reason they have in these qualities no element of endurance (οὔτε τι διαρκὲς ἐν αὐταῖς ἔχουσιν), since it is impossible for reckless audacity to prevail for any time; and if once they suffer a setback, they are unable, especially if any fear also be present, to recover themselves, and are plunged into a state of panic corresponding to their previous fearless daring. In brief time they are moved quickly to the very opposite extremes, since they can furnish no sound motive based on reason for either course (δι' ὀλίγου γὰρ πρὸς τὰ ἐναντιώτατα ὀξυρρόπως, ἅτε μηδὲν ἐκ τοῦ λογισμοῦ ἐχέγγυον ἐς μηδέτερον αὐτῶν παρεχόμενοι, φέρονται).

There are a number of notable elements in this passage. While Dio recognizes that it is common to all people to be encouraged by success and discouraged by failure, he claims that this is true to a greater extent for the Galatai, who give up at the slightest obstacle. Like Strabo, Dio mentions the Galatians' ἄνοια in this connection: The mind (νοῦς) has no control over them, but they are rather swayed by θυμός. They are driven by "ungoverned passion and uncontrolled impulse." And because they are so impulsive, they quickly swerve off course and exhibit no staying power, instead moving quickly from one extreme to the other.

Summation

A relatively stable set of characteristics was often ascribed to the ancient Galatians: They were seen as an inconstant people, guided by impulse rather than reason, unreliable and treacherous, lacking in endurance and wont to radically shift course. There is considerable variety in the Greek and Latin terms used to sketch this portrayal of the Galatians, but a number of words recur often enough to constitute something of a refrain. The Galatians allegedly lack λογισμός, *ratio*, and *consilium* and are therefore ἀνόητοι (cf. ἄνοια), which resulted in rashness (*temeritas*) and irascibility (θυμικός, *ira*). They were, moreover, said to be faithless (*infidus*, ἄπιστος) and to frequently exhibit treachery (*perfidia*, ἀθεσία) and inconstancy (*mobilitas*, *levitas*, *infirmitas*, κουφότης). While there is a fair bit of variation in the portrayal of the Galatians across different authors, most of these characteristics are attested by every author surveyed above.[44] The Galatians were known for these traits, even if they

[44] Although I have not here considered the visual representation of the Galatians and its relevance to the interpretation of Paul, a task expertly taken up by Brigitte Kahl, *Galatians Re-Imagined: Reading with the Eyes of the Vanquished*, Paul in Critical Contexts (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), I would be remiss not to note that the widespread iconography of Galatians/Gauls who are falling or dying would have

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were not the only people in the ancient world to which they could be applied.[45] The characteristics outlined here are also attested in several other ancient texts, which will be cited in the discussion of Paul's letter to which we now turn.

4.2 STEREOTYPICALLY GALATIAN FEATURES IN PAUL'S EPISTLE

The Galatai of Paul's letter have certain key elements in common with the stereotypical Galatai found in the literature analyzed above. Much of the epistle is devoted to arguments (scriptural, biographical, etc.) that are relevant to the issues at play in the Pauline communities but do not tell us much about the character or attitude of the Galatians per se. Yet when Paul turns directly to the Galatians, he often addresses or depicts them in ways that are consistent with the stereotypical image of the Galatai as it appears in the Greco-Roman texts discussed above. The present section will discuss a number of passages in which these similarities may be observed in the order in which they appear in the letter.

Galatians 1:6–9

Galatians, more than any other letter of the Pauline corpus, is marked by an acerbic tone, which reflects the fact that from Paul's point of view the Galatians have reversed course and are headed in the entirely wrong direction. He makes this point right away, following the opening benediction:

> I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you (Θαυμάζω ὅτι οὕτως ταχέως μετατίθεσθε ἀπὸ τοῦ καλέσαντος ὑμᾶς) in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel – not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are confusing you and want to pervert (μεταστρέψαι) the gospel of Christ. (Gal 1:6–7)

reinforced the view of the Galatai as inferiors and as people unable to stand their ground. The imagery masked the inconvenient truth that the Galatai proved indomitable for much longer than Greeks and Romans cared to remember, but the view they projected, nowhere more tangibly than in the production of sculptures and other artifacts, was of the Galatai as a group that was routinely overpowered by others, and it is this image that Paul must have encountered many times on his travels around the eastern Mediterranean.

[45] E.g., Cicero also considered the Greeks fickle (see Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, 413). This does not of course alter the stereotype about the Galatians; it simply was too attractive a charge to limit to one ethnicity. See above, p. 39.

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Paul depicts the developments among the Galatians as a 180-degree turn; they are turning away from the one who called them and turning to a different gospel,[46] preached by those who seek to turn the gospel of Christ into its opposite.[47] Paul states that this radical change is taking place "quickly" (ταχέως), which adds to Paul's indictment of the Galatians. As John Chrysostom observed:

> The one who is carried away after a long time is worthy of blame, but the one who falls at the first attack and in the initial skirmish has furnished an example of the greatest weakness. And with this he charges them also, saying "What is this, that those who deceive you do not even need time, but the first assault suffices to rout and capture you?"[48]

Chrysostom's choice of metaphor is notable in light of the repeated insistence by ancient authors that the Galatai quickly give up in battle and sometimes "did not endure even the first attack" (*primus impetus*, Livy 38.27.4, cf. Chrysostom: πρώτη προσβολή). While this point of verbal overlap may be coincidental, it is clear that Paul's assessment of what happened in the *ekklēsiai* of Galatia fits very well with the common view that the Galatai were a fickle people. Greco-Roman authors claimed regularly that the Galatai shift course and abandon their initial plans, and this is precisely what Paul here accuses them of doing. More specifically, he depicts this change of course as a radical turnabout and claims that it is taking place rapidly. Paul's assessment is strikingly similar to Dio's description of the Galatai: "In brief time they are moved quickly to the very opposite extremes" (δι᾽ ὀλίγου γὰρ πρὸς τὰ ἐναντιώτατα ὀξυρρόπως . . .

[46] The interpretation of the phrase ἕτερον εὐαγγέλιον, ὃ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλο is disputed. Many scholars take ἕτερος and ἄλλος as functionally synonymous; for a substantial discussion that arrives at a different conclusion, see Jens Schröter, *From Jesus to the New Testament: Early Christian Theology and the Origin of the New Testament Canon*, trans. Wayne Coppins, Baylor-Mohr Siebeck Studies in Early Christianity (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2013), 137–46.

[47] See de Boer, *Galatians*, 43, for several pertinent examples of the verb μεταστρέφω being used to express the transformation of something into its opposite (cf. Martyn, *Galatians*, 112: "[Paul] means [the Teachers] are turning it around 180 degrees, changing it into the not-gospel"). Note also that Paul talks about "a message contrary to what we proclaimed" (παρ᾽ ὃ) in 1:8 and 1:9.

[48] *Homily on Galatians* 1.6. Translation: Mark J. Edwards, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture VIII (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1998), 6; Greek (PG 61:620): Ἄξιος μὲν γὰρ ἐγκλημάτων καὶ ὁ μετὰ πολὺν χρόνον· ὁ δὲ ἐκ πρώτης προσβολῆς, καὶ ἐν αὐτοῖς τοῖς ἀκροβολισμοῖς καταπεσὼν, ἐσχάτης ἀσθενείας ἐξήνεγκεν ὑπόδειγμα, ὃ καὶ τούτοις ἐγκαλεῖ, λέγων· Τί τοῦτο, ὅτι οὐδὲ χρόνου δέονται οἱ ἀπατῶντες ὑμᾶς, ἀλλ᾽ ἡ πρώτη προσαγωγὴ ἀρκεῖ πάντας ὑμᾶς καταστρέψασθαι καὶ ἑλεῖν;

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φέρονται).[49] Like Paul, Dio emphasizes both the extremity of the change the Galatai undergo as well as its velocity.

Both elements are found in other descriptions of the Galatai as well, as we have seen. The swiftness of change among the Galatai is assumed by the statements analyzed above to the effect that the Galatai only needed to meet a small amount of resistance before their initial bravery changed into its opposite.[50] In addition, Strabo comments on how quickly (ταχύς) they can be aroused to go to war (4.4.2 [C195]), a point that echoes Caesar's observation about their swift (*celer*) decision-making (3.10.3); Caesar also notes that their plans are changeable and sudden or hasty (*sunt Gallorum subita et repentina consilia*, 3.8). The Byzantine princess Anna Comnena would later claim that "the Celtic race" (τὸ Κελτῶν γένος) is "inconsistent (ἀνώμαλον) and turns to one extreme or the other in the twinkling of an eye (καὶ ἐφ' ἑκάτερα ἐν ὀξείᾳ καιροῦ ῥοπῇ μεταφερόμενον)."[51] Like Cassius Dio, she suggests that they were wont to change course quickly and radically. Paul's assessment of the development among the Galatai as a quick, radical shift is therefore in line with how the conduct of the Galatai was characterized by others.

Paul uses the verb μετατίθημι to describe this shift. As Hans Dieter Betz has noted, this verb "comes from political language and is here applied to 'desertion' from God in the sense of a shifting away from the Pauline gospel. As a political term, μετατίθημι is intended to express a partisan point of view, to cast a negative judgment on the Galatians, to question their stability and loyalty."[52] It is used by Appian to describe such a shift in political allegiance specifically with reference to the Galatai: "The Galatai who inhabited the country lying between Ravenna and the Alps went over to Metellus en masse" (Γαλάται . . . ἀθρόως . . . μετετίθεντο, *Bell. civ.* 1.10.92). Many other passages similarly accuse the Galatai of betraying their allies, as noted above. The Galatai of these Greek and Roman authors routinely betrayed their allies, much like Paul's Galatai

[49] Dio emphasizes the swiftness of the change twice: δι' ὀλίγου and ὀξυρρόπως.

[50] Esp. Livy's claim that while "in the early stages of their battles they were more than men, they ended with being less than women" (10.28.4) and the similar statements in Manlius Vulso's speech in Livy 38.17 (p. 139).

[51] Translation: Elizabeth A. S. Dawes, *Anna Comnena: The Alexiad* (London: Paul, 1928), adapted. On Anna Comnena's use of traditional anti-Gallic topoi, see Strobel, *Galater*, 137 and the literature cited there.

[52] Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 47. Martyn, *Galatians*, 108, proposes the translation "defecting from," which also effectively captures the connotation of (political) betrayal.

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were deserting the one who called them and turned to Paul's rivals and their allegedly gospel-perverting message.[53]

In short, Galatians 1:6–7, Paul's opening salvo in his argument to the assemblies of Galatia,[54] contains three elements that are also frequently found in contemporary characterizations of the Galatai: (1) they are inconstant and move from one extreme to another, (2) they do so quickly, and (3) they betray existing allegiances.

Paul continues his argument by insisting that the Galatai should not put faith in anything that they are told by a messenger if that message should go against what Paul had originally proclaimed: "But even if we or a messenger from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed! As we have said before, so now I repeat, if anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed!" (Gal 1:8–9). Paul apparently had already cautioned the Galatai about this prior to the present crisis (cf. προειρήκαμεν); he had evidently been worried for some time that the Galatai would readily accept new ideas even if they ran contrary to his own message.

Paul's concern is reminiscent of Caesar's repeated claim that one of the ways in which the fickleness of the Galli manifested itself was that they were very eager to hear "new things" (*BG* 3.10.3, 4.5, 6.20, 7.42) and were liable to believe whatever they were told by visitors (4.5, 6.20). By the first century CE, this credulity of the Galli had become proverbial, such that Martial could write in one of his epigrams: "I will believe it and proudly enjoy a Gallic credulity" (*putabo et tumidus Galla credulitate fruar*, 5.1.10). The Galatai were evidently known for their "easiness of belief" (*credulitas*). According to Caesar, as discussed earlier, they rashly made decisions about "matters of greatest importance" (*de summis rebus*) on the basis of whatever they were told and, as a result, had to quickly repent from these decisions when the "new things" they had heard proved false. The problem was apparently serious enough that some communities felt the need to legislate against it (*BG* 6.20). Paul for his part considered it necessary to anathemize anyone bringing a message that could throw the Galatai off course.

[53] It is unclear if ὁ καλῶν refers to God, Christ, or Paul. The referent is perhaps intentionally ambiguous. Elsewhere in Paul's letters it is God who calls, with the likely exception of Rom 1:6 (ὑμεῖς κλητοὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ).

[54] I.e., in terms of rhetorical *dispositio*, at the beginning of the *exordium*. See the analysis in Betz, *Galatians*, 44–46.

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Galatians 3:1–4

Following 1:6–9, Paul's argument takes an autobiographical turn before again addressing the Galatai directly in 3:1–4:[55]

> You foolish Galatai! (Ὦ ἀνόητοι Γαλάται) Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly exhibited as crucified! The only thing I want to learn from you is this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? (οὕτως ἀνόητοί ἐστε;) Having started with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh? (ἐναρξάμενοι πνεύματι νῦν σαρκὶ ἐπιτελεῖσθε;) Did you experience so much for nothing? – if it really was for nothing (τοσαῦτα ἐπάθετε εἰκῇ; εἴ γε καὶ εἰκῇ).

Paul suggests that the Galatai are so radically shifting course that it may all have been "in vain" (εἰκῇ, 3:4). He believes that they began in the Spirit now to be on their way to finish in the flesh, the very opposite of the Spirit (3:3).[56] As noted previously, to shift course and move from one extreme to another was frequently seen as typical Galatian behavior.

It is in this literary context that Paul scolds his addressees as ἀνόητοι Γαλάται ("foolish Galatians" or "Gauls/Celts").[57] Paul uses similar terms elsewhere; in 2 Corinthians 6:11 he addresses his readers as "Corinthians" (Κορίνθιοι), and in Philippians 4:15 as "Philippians" (Φιλιππήσιοι). Galatians 3:1 is different in two significant respects. Firstly, Paul does not address his audience as the inhabitants of a specific city but of an entire region. And, secondly, he connects this regional or ethnic identifier with a disparaging adjective. There is a not-so-subtle

[55] It is widely recognized that this passage stands at the head of a major new section, often identified as the letter's *probatio* (Betz, *Galatians*, 128–29). On 1:6 and 3:1 as the markers of the first two major sections of the letter according to John Chrysostom's structural analysis of the letter, see Malcolm Heath, "John Chrysostom, Rhetoric and Galatians," *Biblical Interpretation* 12 (2004): 379–80.

[56] The verb ἐπιτελεῖσθε can also be translated as "perfected," and this meaning is perhaps pertinent in this context. Be this as it may, it is evident that Paul is setting up a contrast between where the Galatians began (ἀρχή) and where they are ending up (τέλος). See the careful discussion in de Boer, *Galatians*, 178–80.

[57] Lightfoot preferred "Gauls" (similarly, e.g., Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, 2nd ed. [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983], 42; Kahl, *Galatians Re-Imagined*; Cilliers Breytenbach, *Paulus und Barnabas in der Provinz Galatien: Studien zu Apostelgeschichte 13f.;16,6;18,23 und den Adressaten des Galaterbriefes*, AGJU 38 [Leiden: Brill, 1996], 150). This is defensible, since the Greek word was used to refer to both the Gauls of Europe and to the Galatians of Anatolia, and they were generally seen as one and the same people. Paul does not address his audience as Ἑλληνογαλάται or Γαλλογραικοί (cf. pp. 65–66 above), which would imply a distinction between them and the western Gauls.

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difference between addressing a group as, for example, "(You) Dutch" and as "(You) Stingy Dutch." The latter mode of expression is a slur or insult, which draws for its efficacy on its correspondence to an existing stereotype. In the case of ἀνόητοι Γαλάται, the attendant stereotype was certainly in existence.[58] In Strabo's view, "foolishness" was a trait much in evidence among the Galatai (πολὺ τὸ ἀνόητον . . . πρόσεστι, 4.4.5), and a little later in the same passage he uses the cognate term ἄνοια to characterize the Galatians' behavior (cf. Paul's repetition of ἀνόητοι in 3:3). Strabo, much like Paul, uses this terminology in connection to the radical changes in attitude that the Galatai allegedly undergo. Cassius Dio similarly states that the Galatai are driven by ἄνοια and likewise does so in the context of discussing their inconstancy (Cass. Dio F 50.2–3). This is true too of Manlius Vulso's speech (*apud* Livy 38.17.8), who in this connection spoke of "Gallic madness" (*Gallica rabies*). Caesar even has one of the Gallic leaders accuse his own people of foolishness (*stultitia*, *BG* 7.77.9). We should also recall the several passages discussed above where the Galatai are accused of acting impulsively and are described as governed almost entirely by passion or anger (θυμός, *ira*), which is sometimes explicitly contrasted with being governed by reason. Another passage of interest in this connection is Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant.* 14.9.15, where the Galatai are described as attacking ἀνοήτως ("foolishly," "impulsively"), in contrast to the Romans, who stand their ground μετὰ λογισμοῦ ("with cool calculation").

The emphasis in these texts is not on a lack of basic intelligence on the part of the Galatai but on their alleged tendency to act in an unthinking, unreflective, and impulsive manner. In a few isolated instances,

[58] Modern commentaries often fail to see any connection between Gal 3:1 and the reputation of the Galatians. One relatively recent exception is the commentary by Marion L. Soards and Darrell J. Pursiful, *Galatians*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary 26a (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2015), 120: "Paul may have been insulting the Galatians in a way that is not immediately apparent to later readers – viz., the Galatians had a reputation from previous times (prior to Paul's day) of being uncivilized and barbarous people. Thus, to refer to the Galatians as 'foolish' not only could have insulted them in a straightforward fashion but also could have maligned their heritage." In an unpublished SBL paper quoted by Soards and Pursiful, N. A. Dahl likewise cites the Galatians' "ancient reputation that they were barbarians, uncivilized, rude and cruel people" in connection with Gal 3:1, 3. While I agree in general with these statements, I think we can be more specific about what exactly Paul is accusing them of and how this relates to the reputation of the Galatians in particular, rather than barbarians in general, as well as to Paul's argument.

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admittedly, the Galatai are described as "stupid,"[59] but this is counterbalanced by other evidence that suggest that the Galatai were regarded as intelligent.[60] The considerable variation among our sources notwithstanding, the overall impression is that the Galatai were not so much seen as particularly unintelligent but as being swayed by their impulses rather than by reason. It stands to reason that Paul too, who presents his audience with a very complex argument in this missive, is emphasizing their impulsivity rather than alleging a lack of mental ability on their part. It is in any case evident that Paul's scolding of the Galatai as ἀνόητοι matches the way that they were characterized by a range of other Greco-Roman authors.[61]

[59] Antonius Diogenes described the Celts as "a savage and stupid people" (ἔθνει ὠμῷ καὶ ἠλιθίῳ, *apud* Photius, *Bibliotheca* 166 [109b l. 22]); Callimachus in his *Hymn to Delos* (4).184, calls the Galatians "a senseless tribe" (Γαλατῆσι … ἄφρονι φύλῳ);Valerius Maximus writes (2.6.10): "I should call them fools, were it not (*dicerem stultos, nisi*) that they held the same conviction in their breeches as Pythagoras in his cloak." Cf. Lucian, *Alex*. 27, where M. Sedatius Severianus, who hailed from Poitiers, is referred to as ὁ ἠλίθιος ἐκεῖνος Κέλτος ("that stupid Celt"). Hilary, also of Poitiers, referred to the Galli as *indociles* ("untaught," "unteachable") according to Jerome, *Comm. Gal.* pref. Book 2 (Raspanti, *Commentarii*, 80), similarly: Anon. Lat., *De phys*. 9: *Celti autem sunt indociles, fortes, feri*.

[60] Cato, *Origines* fr. 34 (Peter), fr. 2 (Iordan) credits the Galli with being actively engaged in *argute loqui*, "witty speaking" (on the proposed emendation to *agriculturam,* see Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom*, 65, who dubs this "the least argute emendation of any text"). According to Diodorus Siculus 5.31.1, "they have sharp wits and are not without cleverness at learning" (ταῖς δὲ διανοίαις ὀξεῖς καὶ πρὸς μάθησιν οὐκ ἀφυεῖς). Polybius relates a story about an intelligent Galatian woman in 21.38. The fourth-century CE orator Themistius describes the Galatai as "sharp-minded and smart and quicker to learn than even the very Hellenic are" (ὀξεῖς καὶ ἀγχίνοι καὶ εὐμαθέστεροι τῶν ἄγαν Ἑλλήνων, *Or*. 23 [299a]). Johann Christian Conrad von Hofmann, *Die heilige Schrift Neuen Testaments zusammenhängend untersucht. 2,1: Der Brief Pauli an die Galater* (Nördlingen: E. H. Beck, 1869), 46, claimed on the basis of this passage that it "ihnen (Paul's addressees) um so empfindlicher sein mußte, unverständig genannt zu werden, wenn sie sich selbst des anderwärts den Galatern nachgerühmten Verstandes bewußt waren." This assessment ignores the considerable evidence cited above to the effect that Paul is not going against a common view of the Galatai but is rather agreeing with what others had said about them.

[61] Theodor Zahn, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater*, 2. Aufl., Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 9 (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1907), 139, denies that Paul "sie mit Rücksicht auf ihren Nationalcharakter ἀνόητοι nenne." He argues: "Die in Bezug auf Nationalität und Kultur buntgemischten Gemeinden hatten gar keinen gemeinsamen Nationalcharakter." On the grounds that the people in question exhibit too much internal variety one could question the validity of *any* ethnic stereotype, but it does not follow that ethnic stereotypes do not exist, whether today or in antiquity. It should also be noted that whatever cultural and ethnic variety among his addressees Paul may have recognized, he addressed them communally as "Galatai," which implies at least some level of shared (ascribed) identity, and is a designation to which stereotypical features were routinely assigned in ancient texts.

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Galatians 4:8–11

Paul's understanding that the Galatians are in the process of making a 180-degree turn comes to the fore once more in Gal 4:8–11, where he writes the following:

> Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to beings that by nature are not gods. Now, however, that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again (ἐπιστρέφετε πάλιν) to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits? How can you want to be enslaved to them again (πάλιν ἄνωθεν δουλεύειν)? You are observing special days, and months, and seasons, and years. I am afraid that my work for you may have been in vain (εἰκῇ κεκοπίακα εἰς ὑμᾶς).

The Galatians are "turning back again" (ἐπιστρέφειν πάλιν) says Paul, using the same verb that he employs in 1 Thess 1:9 to describe the transition from worship of the traditional gods to worship of the God of Israel. Paul, then, frames the developments among the Galatians as a reconversion or deconversion of sorts.[62] He construes their reversal as so profound that he believes his work among them may have been in vain (4:11, picking up on the previous usage of εἰκῇ in 3:4). While he uses similar language elsewhere, nowhere does the possibility that it may all have been for naught seem as real as here in Galatians (cf. 4:19–20).[63] In Paul's telling, the believers in Galatia were once enslaved (4:8) and are now willingly being enslaved all over again (πάλιν ἄνωθεν, 4:9). They shifted their allegiance from the "weak and poor elements" (ἀσθενῆ καὶ πτωχὰ στοιχεῖα) to the one true God (4:9) but are now about to give up on the latter and to return to their previous masters, or so Paul suggests.

It was noted previously that the idea of shifting allegiances and making radical turns accords with stereotypical ancient views of the Galatai. What renders the present passage so interesting is that it intimates the extent to which this is a rhetorical construct on Paul's part. The literary context suggests that the calendric practices (4:10) that the Galatai find so

[62] Cf. Martyn, *Galatians*, 411: "With rhetorical sarcasm he uses the verb *epistrephô*, 'to turn,' 'to convert,' in a mocking way."

[63] Craig S. Keener, *Galatians: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 364: "This is not the only place where Paul warns his converts that if they pursue the wrong path their faith and his work will have been in vain (1 Cor. 15:2, 10, 14; 2 Cor. 6:1; cf. Phil. 2:16) or the only place where he fears the possibility (1 Thess. 3:5). Elsewhere he sometimes counters these concerns fairly confidently (1 Cor. 15:58; 2 Cor. 7:4, 16; 8:22; 1 Thess. 3:6); he does so only fairly weakly in Galatians (Gal. 5:10)."

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appealing may well be Jewish in nature.[64] If so, the Galatians are moving from worship of their previous gods (4:8), via Paul's gospel, to a more Torah-focused way of following Jesus. Paul, however, construes this not as an evolution but as a return to square one. He equates their new, more Judaizing practices with their erstwhile worship of pagan deities. This is an extraordinary rhetorical move.[65] What the Galatians likely regarded as a further, positive development of their Christian beliefs and practices is then framed by Paul as a betrayal of the gospel and as tantamount to idolatry. At least in this passage, then, the movement from one extreme to another (and back again), which accords so well with the stereotypical view of the Galatians, would seem to be a construal of the situation by Paul with which the Galatai likely would not have readily agreed.

Galatians 4:14–18

The total shift that the Galatai are undergoing according to Paul is also evident in their personal relationship with him. At first, they welcomed him "as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus" (4:14) and would have "torn out [their] eyes" to give them to Paul (4:15), but now the apostle believes he may in effect have become their enemy: "Have I now become your enemy (ἐχθρός) by telling you the truth?" (4:16). The Galatians may very well not have viewed it in such extreme terms: If they thought of their newly adopted course as a further improvement that built on what they had received from Paul, they may very well have still held their founder in

[64] There is widespread agreement on this among commentators (see, e.g., Ernest DeWitt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1921], 233–34; James D. G. Dunn, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* [London: A. C. Black, 1993], 227–28; Betz, *Galatians*, 218; Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians*, BECNT [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013], 277). The interpretation is not, however, uncontested. For other possible readings, which construe the calendrical practices as (also) related to Roman and/or local traditions, see, e.g., Troy W. Martin, "Pagan and Judeo-Christian Time-Keeping Schemes in Gal 4.10 and Col 2.16," *NTS* 42 (1996): 115–16; Justin K. Hardin, *Galatians and the Imperial Cult: A Critical Analysis of the First-Century Social Context of Paul's Letter*, WUNT 2/237 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 116–46; Kahl, *Galatians Re-Imagined*, 353 n. 47; Harker, *The Colonizers' Idols*.

[65] Cf. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 181: "Beyond question, Paul's lumping of Judaism and paganism together in this manner is radical in the extreme"; De Boer, *Galatians*, 271: "Paul here deploys heavy rhetorical artillery in order to keep the Galatians from becoming observers of the law."

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honor.[66] It is in any case clear that in Paul's view the Galatians are shifting their allegiance to the other preachers and that he may now be regarded as an enemy. Turning allies into enemies is a stereotypical Galatian thing to do, and Paul's concern that he may have become their enemy is reminiscent of Hannibal, who was apprehensive that the Galatai would treat him as an enemy because of their characteristic ἀθεσία. Hannibal feared "possible attempts on his life, owing to his establishment of the friendly relations with them being so very recent" (Polybius 3.78.2). As part of his efforts to remedy the situation, Paul calls the Galatians to constancy and resolve. In 4:18, he writes "It is good to be made much of for a good purpose at all times, *and not only when I am present with you*" (καλὸν δὲ ζηλοῦσθαι ἐν καλῷ πάντοτε καὶ μὴ μόνον ἐν τῷ παρεῖναί με πρὸς ὑμᾶς). He exhorts them to be constant in their commitment to him and not to change their tune when he is gone.[67]

4.3 ETHNIC STEREOTYPES AND THE COMPOSITION OF GALATIANS

In view of the striking confluence of characterizations, tropes, and commonplaces used by Paul and his literary predecessors, it is plausible that Paul's construal of the circumstances in the Galatian assemblies was to some extent influenced by the way that the Galatai were commonly viewed in antiquity. Paul was probably aware of the common understanding of the Galatians as fickle, even without direct knowledge of any of the primary texts analyzed above. Polybius already spoke in this connection of "the general reputation of the Galatians" (ἡ κοινὴ περὶ Γαλατῶν φήμη, 2.7.5, discussed above), and this φήμη was repeated many times over in

[66] So Keener, *Galatians*, 385: "Probably the Galatians do not in fact consider Paul an enemy." De Boer, *Galatians*, 282 notes that "Paul's use of the strong term 'enemy' (*echthros*) seems exaggerated in this context" and suggest that "a possible explanation for the use of the term is that the new preachers ... have suggested to the Galatians that Paul with his version of the gospel is actually their enemy .... It is possible, however, that the word simply expresses Paul's fear that his honesty has caused the originally positive feelings of the Galatians toward him to have taken a 180-degree turn, from friend to enemy." The use of such an exaggerated term may also be explained on rhetorical grounds: by suggesting to the Galatians that following the new teachers is tantamount to declaring Paul their enemy, he is putting heavy rhetorical pressure on them to abandon his rivals.

[67] Similarly emphasizing the need for constant resolve: Gal 5:1 "Stand firm" (στήκετε), and 6:9 "let us not grow weary (μὴ ἐγκακῶμεν) in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up (μὴ ἐκλυόμενοι)."

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the fragmentarily preserved literary record.[68] It is reflected not only on the pages of elite cultural producers like the historians and geographers surveyed in Section 4.1 but also by the proverbial notion of Gallic credulity attested by Martial.[69] Paul, who was comparatively well educated, may well have had firsthand knowledge of literary descriptions of the Galatians' fickleness. Another, not mutually exclusive possibility is that he heard about the alleged fickleness of the Galatians in his hometown of Tarsus in nearby Cilicia (if Acts 22:3 can be trusted on this point) or became aware of it as he traveled toward this region. He may very well have made inquiries about the character of the Galatians; that would seem like a commonsense first step for any traveler in antiquity, especially for one on a mission to convince people of the truth of his εὐαγγέλιον.[70]

The alternative position, that Paul was unaware of how the Galatai were commonly viewed, is not only unlikely for the reasons just mentioned, it also requires that the commonalities between the depiction of the Galatai in the ancient record and Paul's letter are purely coincidental. In that implausible scenario, Paul was unaware of the stereotype yet accidentally portrayed them in ways very much consistent with that stereotype.

As I argued in Chapter 2, on the basis of recent work on social cognition, it is to be expected that widespread views of the collective character of ethnic groups had an impact on Paul's understanding of and response to the people that he associated with that group. The fact that Paul knew the Galatians personally does little to diminish the

[68] Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom*, 61, 67–68, reviews the most important evidence for now-lost sources on the Celts/Gauls/Galatians.

[69] On proverbs as reflecting the ethnographic knowledge of non-elites, see below, p. 213 n. 8.

[70] In the uncertain and dangerous circumstances of ancient travel (cf. 2 Cor 11:25–27), having a sense of the character of the locals and the prevailing mores would presumably matter a great deal. We may speculate that Paul's decision to stay with the Galatians while he was struggling with his ἀσθένεια τῆς σαρκός (4:13) was informed on some level by the Galatians' reputation for hospitality (see Diodorus Siculus 5.28.5: "They invite strangers to their feasts, and do not inquire until after the meal who they are and of what things they stand in need," cf. the report of Celtic hospitality in Parthenius, *Love Romances* 8). Paul's description of the reception he initially enjoyed in any case dovetails nicely with Diodorus' assessment: "You did not scorn or despise me, but welcomed me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus" (4:14). For further discussion of the Galatians' reputation for hospitality, see Valérie Nicolet's forthcoming monograph, *Writing to the Barbarians: Revisiting the Galatian Archive and Reinterpreting Paul's Epistle*; on the practical realities of (early Christian) hospitality in relation to Galatia, see Laura S. Nasrallah, *Archaeology and the Letters of Paul* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 76–104.

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likelihood of this scenario, because various studies have shown that "stereotypes may shape our reactions to stereotyped individuals even when these individuals are familiar to us."[71] It is not at all clear, moreover, how familiar Paul really was with the recent developments among the Galatian *ekklēsiai*. There is no mention of a letter or a visit by a coworker or member of the Galatian communities, and it seems clear that Paul is not basing his assessment of the situation in Galatia on a recent personal visit either, for otherwise he would presumably have mentioned this. Quite possibly, the facts available to Paul were fairly limited and were processed by him under the influence of what was commonly known about the Galatai, including that "in brief time they are moved quickly to the very opposite extremes" (Cassius Dio F 50.3). Another, not incompatible possibility is that in the reports that Paul received about the assemblies in Galatia by mouth or by letter, the developments among them had, intentionally or not, already been presented in terms of typical Galatian behavior. The bottom line is that given the abundant evidence for how stereotypes impact the perception and critical abilities of human beings, including people aware and critical of the influence of stereotypes, it is unreasonable to think that stereotypes did not impact, directly or indirectly, Paul's estimation of the situation that obtained among the Galatians.

Allowing for the impact of stereotypes facilitates a construal of the apostle that is historically plausible. If in antiquity "ethnography played an active role in interpreting historical events because it supplied a repertoire of analytical and explanatory ideas with which to confront new circumstances and new peoples,"[72] it stands to reason that it functioned as such for Paul as he confronted new developments among the Galatian assemblies. The strategy of brilliant military minds like Scipio, Hannibal, and Caesar in dealing with the Galatai was informed by their alleged fickleness. Why should this not be the case for Paul? It is worth noting that a Paul who adhered to stereotypical conceptions about Galatians not only fits this broader ancient context but is also similar to various early Christian authors who reiterate the stereotype of Galatian fickleness.[73]

[71] Kunda, *Social Cognition*, 357. For discussion, see above, pp. 34–36.

[72] Michael Maas, "Ethnography," in *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*, ed. G. W. Bowersock, Peter Brown, and Oleg Grabar (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 435.

[73] In some cases, this stereotypical feature is mentioned in relation to Paul's activity among the Galatians. Jerome's commentary on Galatians, which also cites Hilary of Poitiers in support of the view that the Galli are "stupid," has been briefly discussed on pp. 1–2 of

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If we accept that Paul was to some extent influenced by stereotypical notions about the Galatians, this still leaves open the question of whether Paul was *aware* of any link between stereotypical views of the Galatians and the behavior of his communities as he perceived it. As discussed in Chapter 2, significant empirical research indicates that although we usually believe our assessments to be based on the attributes and behavior that we have observed, these assessments are at times informed by stereotypical assumptions, to the effect that "if the person had belonged to a different group, we might have imbued the same attributes with very different meanings."[74] Applying this to Paul suggests the possibility that he came to interpret the behavior of his Galatian adherents as fickle under the influence of the stereotypical view of the Galatians but nonetheless believed that it was based strictly on the "facts" available to him. If so, he would have been unaware of any connection between his estimation of his addressees and the stereotype of Galatian fickleness.

Typical Galatians

Speaking against this possibility is that Paul scolds his addressees as ἀνόητοι Γαλάται in Gal. 3:1. As noted above, it is significant that Paul mentions this gentilic in the context of accusing his addressees of unstable behavior and in juxtaposition with an adjective (ἀνόητος) elsewhere used in connection with the Galatians' alleged inconstancy and impulsivity. Paul seems to suggest, in short, that his addressees are acting like typical

this study. See also Asterius, *Hom.* 8.27.2, who mentions "the characteristic inconstancy of the Galatai" (Γαλατῶν οἰκείᾳ κουφότητι), and Nilus of Ancyra, *Ep.* 30.3, who describes Paul's addressees as "Galatai beguiled due to simplicity and inconstancy" (Γαλάται ἐξ ἀφελείας καὶ κουφότητος παραπεισθέντες [note the use of the same verb in Strabo 4.4.2]). In other cases, there is no direct relationship to Paul's letter. E.g., Philostorgius, *Church History* 4.2a: "Constantius feared for the state ... and knowing in addition that the Galatai were extremely easy to arouse whenever they became eager to support usurpation, due to their physical strength and mental inconstancy" (ἄλλως τε καὶ τῶν Γαλατῶν ὀξύτατα δὴ καὶ ὁπότε προθυμηθεῖεν εἰς τὰς τυραννίδας ἐγειρομένων διά τε σώματος ἰσχὺν καὶ κουφότητα φρονημάτων). Translation: Philip R. Amidon, *Philostorgius: Church History*, Writings from the Greco-Roman World (Atlanta: SBL, 2007); Greek text: J. Bidez and F. Winkelmann, *Philostorgius. Kirchengeschichte*, GCS (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1981); Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius* 1.131: "the Galatians, through their usual readiness to yield, offered no resistance" (Γαλατῶν ὑπὸ τῆς συνήθους εὐκολίας ἀκονιτὶ παραστάντων). My translation. Greek text: Werner Jaeger, *Contra Eunomium libri: Pars prior, Liber I et II (vulgo I et XIIb),* Gregorii Nysseni Opera 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1960).

[74] Kunda, *Social Cognition*, 349.

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Galatians, which implies that he is aware of the stereotype of the fickle Galatian. His suggestion that they are acting like true Galatians ties in with his emphasis at various points in the letter that his audience is reverting to their original state and that Paul's work among them may well have been in vain (3:1–4; 4:8–11, 5:7, etc.). They are turning their back on Paul's gospel and have in effect returned to their prior Galatian ways.

By scolding them in this manner, Paul sought to incentivize them to mend their ways; by implying that their recent actions were only confirming the unflattering things that had long been said about the Galatai, Paul sought to shame his addressees and to motivate them to abandon their current course of action. Shaming an audience, while not particularly persuasive to the contemporary ear, was a recognized element of rhetorical persuasion in antiquity. Shame plays an important role in Paul's rhetoric in Galatians and elsewhere (cf. especially 1 Cor 6:5, 15:34: "I say this to your shame" [πρὸς ἐντροπήν]).[75] Philosophically minded orators like Dio Chrysostom defended the importance of criticizing their audience in direct terms. In *Or.* 33, much of which is a sardonic indictment of the Tarsians, Dio invoked the example of Socrates and stated approvingly that the "philosopher censured and rebuked (ἤλεγχε καὶ ἐνουθέτει) his auditors," adding: "Indeed, how much better it is to abuse (τὸ λοιδορεῖν) the people and to hold up to the light each person's stupidity (ἀβελτερίαν) and wickedness (πονηρίαν) than to court favor by what is said and by compliments debauch one's auditors (τοὺς ἀκούοντας)" (10–11).[76]

While Paul was evidently not unique in preferring to confront and "abuse" his audience, it must remain a matter of speculation how compelling this strategy was to his Galatian audience. Yet even if we consider Paul's gambit unlikely to have succeeded, the availability of potentially more productive rhetorical approaches should not cast doubt on Paul's use of an ethnic stereotype. Paul regularly makes rhetorical decisions that we may question, such as when he wishes castration upon his opponents (Gal 5:12). It is methodologically problematic to assume that Paul always necessarily adopted the most expedient rhetorical strategy, perhaps especially in the case of a letter that does not appear to have been authored

[75] See Troy W. Martin, "The Voice of Emotion: Paul's Pathetic Persuasion (Gal 4:12–20)," in *Paul and Pathos*, ed. Thomas H. Olbricht and Jerry L. Sumney, SBL Symposium Series 16 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 181–202; Te-Li Lau, *Defending Shame: Its Formative Power in Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2020).

[76] For another example of an orator mocking his audience, see below, p. 112 n. 13 on Favorinus.

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when Paul was at his most calm and composed. Regardless of our contemporary views on using ethnic stereotypes for persuasive purposes, the evidence assembled in this chapter strongly suggests that Paul adopted this course of action.

Paul's emphasis on his own steadfastness in the letter further contributed to this shaming of the Galatians. Paul portrays himself as staying true to the initial revelation that he received (1:11–12), irrespective of the opinion of others (1:10), external pressures (2:5), or persecution (5:11). He was willing to submit to bodily suffering for the sake of his gospel (6:17) and even stood firm when other apostolic figures, including Cephas, failed to do so (2:11–14). Paul depicts himself as everything but fickle.[77]

Paul's suggestion that his addressees were doing the opposite and were acting in conformity with what was often said about the Galatai could have served his purposes regardless of the region in which the assemblies were located, a question that has been the subject of considerable scholarly debate.[78] If he wrote to the south of the Roman province, Paul may have wanted to convey that his addressees had started behaving like the barbarians after which their province was named. If he wrote to the north, the implication would be that their current actions corroborated what had long been said about the forebears of many members of the community. In either case, Paul challenged them not to live up to the stereotype.

This interpretation helps explain the word Γαλάται in 3:1, which is not wholly apropos if the aim was simply to address the audience. The word may have been capable of different usages, including referring to the inhabitants of Gaul or people who spoke a Gallic language, in the context

[77] Cf. Aristotle's discussion of the various ways in which the *pathos* of shame can be used in the context of rhetorical persuasion (*Rhet.* 2.6), which includes the following comment: "Men are … ashamed before those who are not open to the same accusations, for it is evident that their feelings are contrary. And before those who are not indulgent towards those who appear to err; for a man is supposed not to reproach others with what he does himself, so it is clear that what he reproaches them with is what he does not do himself" (2.6.9).

[78] Paul either addressed his letter to the southern part of the Roman province Galatia, which included the cities Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe mentioned in Acts, or to the northern part, where the Galatian tribes had originally settled after they moved from Gaul. For an overview of the debate, see James M. Scott, *Paul and the Nations: The Old Testament and Jewish Background of Paul's Mission to the Nations with Special Reference to the Destination of Galatians*, WUNT 84 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 187–201.

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of Asia Minor it was used primarily to refer to people who could trace their history and genealogy back to the ancient homeland of Gaul (i.e., it frequently functioned as an ethnic designation).[79] Yet regardless of whether Paul was writing to North or South Galatia, it is unlikely that the assemblies that he addressed consisted solely of such ethnic Galatians.[80] In neither scenario, then, would Γαλάται be an entirely appropriate label to address all the various members of the

[79] Cf. discussion on pp. 21–28 and especially Hall's definition (p. 23), to which Γαλάται, in the context of Asia Minor, would appear to generally conform rather well. As Strobel, *Galater,* 117–18, notes: "Betrachtet man jedoch den hellenistischen Sprachgebrauch, der sich in der Zeit des selbst tief von hellenistischer Bildung geprägten Apostels nicht geändert hatte, so wird man auch seine Verwendung des Galaterbegriffes nur im Sinne des allgemein üblichen ethnischen Begriffes deuten können. Für die Zeitgenossen war diese historisch und literarisch verfestigte Konnotation des Galaternamens eindeutig." William Ramsay, who fiercely advocated the South Galatia theory, maintained that Γαλάται could refer to the inhabitants of the Roman province, rather than to the ethnically Galatian people (for the argument in its most extensive version, see William M. Ramsay, "The 'Galatia' of St. Paul and the 'Galatic Territory' of Acts," in *Essays in Biblical Archæology and Criticism and Kindred Subjects*, vol. 4 [Oxford: Clarendon, 1896], 26–34; followed by Valentin Weber, *Die Adressaten des Galaterbriefes* [Ravensburg: Kitz, 1900], 32; Alphons Steinmann, *Der Leserkreis des Galaterbriefes: Ein Beitrag zur urchristlichen Missionsgeschichte*, NTAbh [Münster: Aschendorff, 1908], 61–76; Thomas Witulski, *Die Adressaten des Galaterbriefes: Untersuchungen zur Gemeinde von Antiochia ad Pisidiam*, FRLANT 193 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000], 17–23). Yet the only direct evidence Ramsay musters is a single passage from Tacitus in which the word *Galatae* possibly refers to the inhabitants of the province (Steinmann, *Leserkreis*, 70, rightly speaks of a "Vermutung" in this connection). This Latin word is obviously derived from the Greek Γαλάται, but it does not completely overlap with that term, because in Greek Γαλάται is used of people in both east and west (much like Latin *Galli*), whereas Latin *Galatae* is used of people in the east and is hence more comparable to the Greek terms Γαλλογραικοί and Ἑλληνογαλάται (further on the use of *Galatae* in Roman sources: Gale, "Hellenistic Galatians," 39, 42). It is in any case problematic to conclude on the basis of the insecure use of a Latin word in a single passage in Tacitus that the Greek word Γαλάται would have been interpreted by Paul's audience as "inhabitants of the province." The very limited evidence for the use of Γαλάται to refer to the inhabitants of the Roman province forces Ramsay into a curious interpretation of Gal 3:1 (*A Historical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1899], 321–22): "The very rarity and unusualness of the word 'Galatians' in its Pauline sense . . . made it a word that arrested the attention of the audience, conveyed a wealth of meaning to them, and placed them at a certain point of view." It is more plausible to assume that Paul used the word in the same sense as his Hellenophone contemporaries, that is, as referring to ethnic Galatians, rather than to posit a very rare and unusual "Pauline sense" that was meant to have special significance for Paul's audience.

[80] As Cilliers Breytenbach has argued (*Paulus und Barnabas*, 153), even in the north of the province Galatia the population was mixed, certainly in the cities in which Paul's ministry was presumably concentrated. On the other hand, according to Breytenbach, many of the cities in the southern part of the province "könnten Einwohner keltischer Abstammung

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ekklēsiai.[81] Yet if Paul sought to convey that his audience was acting like typical Galatians, his choice of the word Γαλάται would be readily explained.

It is possible that something similar is at hand in Gal 1:2. It is remarkable that Paul addressed his letter not to a specific city, as he usually did, but to the assemblies of the entire region of Galatia (1:2).[82] In Brigitte Kahl's estimation, this "sounds more like a conspiratorial concealment of the intended recipients' location than a proper address!"[83] Highlighting the curiosity of the authorial decision to address the assemblies in all of Galatia is that the letter's specificity and urgency suggest that it can hardly have served as a general encyclical but was more likely addressed to a small number of assemblies.[84] So why did Paul not name the limited number of cities or towns in which these communities were located? Again, this can be accounted for if Paul's goal was to suggest to his audience that they were behaving like typical Galatians. If that was part of his rhetorical aims, it would have made eminent sense for him not to address them as inhabitants of the cities or towns in which they were located but as inhabitants of Γαλατία. Galatians 1:2, in any case, clearly indicates that Paul thought of his audience as "inhabitants of Galatia"

gehabt haben, welche als Hausgemeinden von Paulus in Gal 3,1 angesprochen werden" (167). In response, de Boer, who favors the North Galatia hypothesis, asks rhetorically: "How likely is it that (virtually) all the members of the two or more (!) Galatian congregations in the south are also ethnic Galatians so that Paul can address them in this way?" (*Galatians,* 4 n. 10). I concur with de Boer that the presence of a small minority of ethnic Galatians in southern assemblies would not be enough to render Paul's address of them as Galatai unproblematic. However, de Boer's objection also applies in a more limited sense to the North Galatia hypothesis, since any Christian communities in that region would likely also not have consisted solely of ethnic Galatians, as Breytenbach points out. Similarly, Christopher M. Tuckett, *Galatians*, ICC (London: T&T Clark, 2024), 24: "There could still have been (ethnic) Galatians in 'South Galatia,' and equally not all the inhabitants of 'North Galatia' would have been 'Galatians' in this sense so there is still a similar issue." Tuckett's commentary unfortunately appeared too late to be given full consideration in this chapter.

[81] Cf. Mitchell, *Anatolia* 2:4: "[Ὦ ἀνόητοι Γαλάται] would not be a natural or formal mode of address to the inhabitants of cities which had few, if any, genuine Celtic inhabitants."

[82] Paul refers to the "*ekklēsiai* of Galatia" in 1 Cor 16:1 as well, but in this context it is less unexpected, because Paul elsewhere also refers to the assemblies of particular regions and provinces in the body of his letters (1 Cor 16:9; 2 Cor 8:1, 9:2; 1 Thess 1:7–8). The only time he mentions a province or region in the *adscriptio* of a letter (2 Cor 1:1), it is still preceded by the mention of a specific city, and the letter is addressed to a single *ekklēsia,* rather than to multiple *ekklēsiai* as in Gal 1:1.

[83] Kahl, *Galatians Re-Imagined*, 33.

[84] Note also that 6:11 ("See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand!") suggests that Paul did not have copies of the letter made for general distribution.

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from the very start of the letter, which strengthens the hypothesis that stereotypical notions about people from Galatia influenced his missive.[85]

Other Stereotypically Galatian Features

The penultimate section of this chapter will briefly consider whether other elements of the depiction of the Galatians in contemporary literary sources are reflected in Paul's letter. We have already noted their reputed credulity, which may have informed Gal 1:8–9, but there are perhaps other points of intersection as well. Lightfoot certainly thought so. He deemed the "drunkenness and revellings" (μέθαι, κῶμοι) denounced by Paul in Gal 5:21 a "darling sin of the Celtic people"[86] and saw their alleged avarice echoed by Gal 6:6–7, where Paul encourages the Galatians to share in all good things with their teacher. Lightfoot also opined that Paul's "reiterated warning against strife and vainglory will seem directed against a vice of the old Celtic blood still boiling in their veins, and breaking out in fierce and rancorous self-assertion."[87] Putting aside Lightfoot's essentialist assumptions about the determinative impact of the "old Celtic blood," how much stock can be placed in these parallels?[88]

Not very much, I suggest, because even though Paul warns against greed and drunkenness, as well as sexual immorality (5:19), vices that are associated with the Galatai by other ancient authors,[89] he does not put

[85] It is of course possible that Paul suggested that his addressees behaved like real Galatians purely for rhetorical reasons, without actually subscribing to the view that Galatai were liable to act in this manner. While ultimately indeterminable in the absence of direct access to the historical Paul, this is perhaps a particularly realistic possibility if Paul was writing to the south of the Roman province, in which case there were likely few ethnic Galatians among his audience, making it less likely that Paul truly believed that they were wont to behave in a Galatian fashion.

[86] Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, 13. Cf. his commentary on Gal 5:19, where Lightfoot states that μέθαι and κῶμοι seem "to be thrown in to give a sort of completeness to the list, though not unfitly addressed to a nation whose Gallic descent perhaps disposed them too easily to these excesses" (207).

[87] Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, 14.

[88] In fairness to Lightfoot, he noted that the "many coincidences" might be "press[ed] unduly" (Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians,* 13). Cf. Kahl, *Galatians Re-Imagined*, 271, who notes with reference to Gal 6:4: "We might speculate whether this emphasis on 'boasting competitions,' together with the mentioning of rudeness, carousing, and magic drugs (*pharmakeia*) among the vices in 5:20–21 (the latter occurring elsewhere in the New Testament only in Rev 18:23 and 9:21), has a specifically Celtic ring." She does not explore the matter further.

[89] *Greed:* Lightfoot points to Diodorus Siculus 5.27.4: "The Celts are an exceedingly covetous people" (ὄντων τῶν Κελτῶν φιλαργύρων καθ' ὑπερβολήν) and Livy, who describes the Galli as "a people most greedy for plunder" (*avidissima rapiendi gens*, 38.27.7; cf. 38.27.3:

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much emphasis on these issues in Galatians, and he mentions them in some of his other letters as well.[90] While the possibility cannot be excluded that Paul's exhortations were informed on some level by the Galatians' reputation for love of money, heavy drinking, and sexual malfeasance, given the lack of special emphasis, these warnings are perhaps better understood as standard paraenesis rather than as vices to which Paul feared his Galatian addressees were especially likely to fall victim.[91]

Paul's warnings against strife and arrogance may be a different matter. Communal tension is the subject of considerable emphasis in the final part

cupiditas praedae). We may add Plutarch's observation that the Galatai were a "race insatiable of wealth" (οἱ δὲ Γαλάται γένος ἀπληστότατον χρημάτων ὄντες, *Pyrrh.* 26.6).

Drunkenness: Polybius accuses the Galatai of "irrational inebriations" (ἀλόγους οἰνοφλυγίας, 2.19.4), and according to Diodorus Siculus (5.26.3): "The Galatai ... are exceedingly addicted to the use of wine (κάτοινοι δ' ὄντες καθ' ὑπερβολήν) ... they partake of this drink without moderation by reason of their craving for it (καὶ διὰ τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν λάβρῳ χρώμενοι τῷ ποτῷ), when they are drunken they fall into a stupor or a state of madness (καὶ μεθυσθέντες εἰς ὕπνον ἢ μανιώδεις διαθέσεις τρέπονται)." This assessment is reiterated some five centuries later by Ammianus Marcellinus (*Hist.* 15.12.4), who claimed that the Galli are "a race greedy for wine (*vini avidum genus*) ... with wits dulled by continual drunkenness (*obtunsis ebrietate continua sensibus*) (which Cato's saying pronounced a voluntary kind of madness [*furoris*]) rush about in aimless revels (*raptantur discursibus vagis*)." See also Livy 5.33.2–3. Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.20.17, cited by Lightfoot, refers not to the Γάλαται but to the Γάλλοι, that is, the priests of Cybele.

Sexual immorality: Diodorus Siculus' claim that "they rage with lust, in outlandish fashion, for the embraces of males" (5.31) goes back to Aristotle, who wrote that "the Celts and such other races as have openly held in honor passionate friendship between males" (*Pol.* 1269b.27). It is echoed by other post-classical authors, including Athenaeus ("So too the Celts, even though they have the most beautiful women of all the barbarians, prefer sex with boys; as a result, some of them routinely sleep on their animal-skins with two boyfriends," Deipn. 13.603a), See also Bardaisan, *The Book of the Law of Countries/Dialogue on Fate*, 592, 607 (H. J. W. Drijvers, *The Book of the Laws of Countries: Dialogue on Fate of Bardaisan of Edessa* [Assen: Van Gorcum, 1964], 48–49, 60–61).

[90] On greed/generosity, cf. 1 Cor 9:14; 2 Cor 8–9; Rom 15:27; on drunkenness, Rom 13:13, 1 Cor 5:11, 6:10, 11:21; on sexual immorality, esp. 2 Cor 12:21 (ἀκαθαρσίᾳ καὶ πορνείᾳ καὶ ἀσελγείᾳ), which is very close to Gal 5:19 (πορνεία, ἀκαθαρσία, ἀσέλγεια), see also 1 Cor 5–7; 1 Thess 4:3–8.

[91] A similar argument can be made with respect to the εἰδωλολατρία and φαρμακεία mentioned in Gal 5:20. The former could conceivably be taken as a reference to traditional Celtic cults (cf. Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 15–17 on the Gauls as "a superstitious people, given over to ritual observances" [16]), and φαρμακεία as a reference to the "magic" practiced by the Druids and other figures held in honor among the Galatai (see, e.g., Diodorus Siculus 5.31). From Paul's perspective, idolatry, at least, was by no means a peculiarly Galatian phenomena (cf. 1 Cor 5:10–11; 6:9; 10:7, 14), and he does not mention it again in Galatians.

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of the letter. Galatians 5:15 ("if you bite and tear at each other, see to it that you are not consumed by one another") and 5:26 ("Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another") suggest that intercommunity strife was a real concern, and, as John Barclay has argued, "this may well be the best context in which to understand the various maxims gathered in 5.25–6.10."[92] This section of the letter (5:13–6:10) certainly contains much that coheres well with these two warnings against strife. This includes the "works of the flesh" catalog in 5:19–21, which features a long string of nouns that refer to internal dissent (ἔχθραι, ἔρις, ζῆλος, θυμοί, ἐριθεῖαι, διχοστασίαι, αἱρέσεις, φθόνοι),[93] as well as Paul's instructions in 5:25–6:10 to encourage harmony among the Galatians. He instructs the Galatians to "be slaves of one another through love" (5:13) and to "love your neighbor as yourself" (5:14), to "carry one another's burdens" (6:2), and he exhorts them: "Let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith" (6:10). In short, throughout 5:25–6:10, Paul encourages behavior that is the opposite of strife, while unequivocally condemning strife in all possible forms. Paul's emphasis on avoiding communal tensions is significant enough that the view that this is garden-variety paraenesis rings hollow. He must have had reason to believe that this was a real concern.

Barclay points in this connection to the agonistic patterns of Greco-Roman honor culture. He describes the Roman world as a "contest-culture" and argues that "Paul's appeal for mutual love is no bland generality: it specifically targets habits of intracommunal rivalry that were characteristic of ancient Mediterranean society . . . Paul lived in a face-to-face society where self-advertisement, rivalry, and public competition were a perpetual cause of tension in everyday life."[94] What is notable, though, is that even within the generally agonistic world of the ancient Mediterranean, the alleged penchant of the Galatai for communal conflict stood out. Ammianus Marcellinus claimed that "almost all the Galli are . . . fond of quarrels/strife" (*paene Galli sunt omnes . . . avidi iurgiorum*, *Hist.* 15.12). Diodorus Siculus offered a similar assessment: "It is their custom, even during the course of the meal, to seize upon any trivial matter as an occasion for keen disputation and then to challenge

[92] John M. G. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth: A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians*, Studies of the New Testament and Its World (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 154.

[93] Paul's stress on this point is apparent from the fact that fully half of these words (ἔχθραι, διχοστασίαι, αἱρέσεις and φθόνοι) are not used in other vice catalogs in his corpus.

[94] Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 432–33.

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one another to single combat, without any regard for their lives" (5.28.5).[95] A little later on, Diodorus adds that "they like to talk in superlatives, to the end that they may extol themselves and depreciate all others" (ἐπ᾽ αὐξήσει μὲν ἑαυτῶν, μειώσει δὲ τῶν ἄλλων, 5.31.1). According to Strabo (4.4.6 [C199]), "It is also repeated over and over again that all the Celti are fond of strife" (φιλόνεικοι).

In the context of warning against strife, Paul also cautions against boastful behavior (5:26, 6:3),[96] while promoting its antonym "humility" (πραΰτης, Gal 6:1[97]). This too fits with ancient views of the Galatai. In Strabo's view "the trait of boastfulness" (τὸ ἀλαζονικόν) was very much present among the Galatai (4.4.5). According to Diodorus Siculus, they are "boasters and threateners and are fond of pompous language" (ἀπειληταί τε καὶ ἀνατατικοὶ καὶ τετραγῳδημένοι ὑπάρχουσι, 5.31.1). Ammianus, moreover, described them as "proudly arrogant" (*sublatius insolentes*, 15.12), and Cassius Dio regarded τὸ θρασύ ("arrogance, overboldness, recklessness") as a typical Galatian vice.[98] The observations by Ammianus, Diodorus, and Strabo are made in close conjunction with the previously quoted claims that they were fond of strife. Like Paul, these three authors associated the arrogance of the Galatai with their taste for conflict.

Paul's evident concern about strife, in combination with arrogant behavior, may of course have been a response to information that he received about the assemblies or it may have been based on the expectation that his fierce letter would create tensions between those swayed by the new teachers and Pauline loyalists. Yet the reasonably widespread view of the Galatai as both disputatious and arrogant may have influenced Paul's assessment of the situation as well. The former does not have

[95] εἰώθασι δὲ καὶ παρὰ τὸ δεῖπνον ἐκ τῶν τυχόντων πρὸς τὴν διὰ τῶν λόγων ἅμιλλαν καταστάντες, ἐκ προκλήσεως μονομαχεῖν πρὸς ἀλλήλους, παρ᾽ οὐδὲν τιθέμενοι τὴν τοῦ βίου τελευτήν. Paul echoes Diodorus not just on the general point of strife but also on the more specific point that the Galatai "challenge" one another (Gal 5:26: ἀλλήλους προκαλούμενοι; Diodorus: ἐκ προκλήσεως . . . πρὸς ἀλλήλους [5.28.5]).

[96] Paul's subsequent comments in 6:4–5 gesture in the same direction. His insistence that "all must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor's work, will become a cause for pride" would seems primarily intended to ensure that each individual judges their own work rather than that of others. As de Boer (*Galatians,* 382) notes, "the latter activity leads to an inflated sense of one's own importance."

[97] De Boer, *Galatians,* 373: "The key term in this verse is 'humility' (*praütes*) . . . to act in 'a spirit of humility' is the opposite of being 'conceited,' of having an exaggerated sense of one's self-importance, in the previous verse."

[98] *Excerpta Valesiana* 361, Cassius Dio 78(77).6.1a, quoted above (p. 77).

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to exclude the latter. Quite to the contrary, whatever indications Paul had about the likelihood of communal tension could very well have been highlighted and emphasized because of their coherence with common expectancies about how the Galatai usually interacted with each other.[99] As with the Galatian reputation for fickleness, it is not necessary for Paul to have fully subscribed to these stereotypical views in order for them to have exerted influence on his perception of the Galatai. Awareness of their reputation in this regard would have been enough to shape his perception and assessment and hence inform his instructions to the assemblies.

4.4 RECEPTION HISTORY

The notion that Paul's letter reflects the collective character of the Galatian *ethnos* forms an important strand in the history of interpretation. In the book's Introduction, I briefly discussed Jerome's reading of Galatians 3:1. Paul's designation of the Galatians as "foolish" is to be explained, Jerome claimed, by "the fact that each province has its own unique characteristics."[100] As with much of what Jerome wrote, the claim that foolishness or "stupidity" was characteristic of the inhabitants of Galatia was picked up by others in later centuries. The French Benedictine Haimo of Auxerre (ninth century) may well have been indebted to Jerome when he commented on Galatians 3:1, "Every people has its own particular customs and way of life. Although the Galatians were ferocious, they were also stupid or silly and thus could easily be moved from one thing to another."[101] Beyond any doubt is the influence of Jerome on Robert Grosseteste (thirteenth century), who wrote, "perhaps the Apostle

[99] See Chapter 2, pp. 30–31.

[100] Jerome's use of the word *prouincia* is of interest in the context of the North/South Galatia debate, but probably not too much should be made of this, because he also speaks of the Galatian *regio* and *gens*, see above, p. 2.

[101] Ian Christopher Levy, *The Letter to the Galatians*, The Bible in Medieval Tradition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 95. Latin: *Unaquæque gens suam proprietatem in conversatione et moribus habet. Unde Galatis proprium est ut, licet feroces sint, sint etiam stolidi sive stulti, facileque transferri possint de una re ad aliam.* In the introduction to his commentary, Haimo similarly argued that "although they are the bravest of warriors, they are still foolish and prone to change their minds. Consequently, after they received the Apostle's word of preaching and he had taken leave of them in order to go on to others, they were then led astray by false apostles and Jews" (Levy, *The Letter to the Galatians*, 79). Latin: *Sunt ergo strenuissimi bellatores, sed stulti et facile a proposito mentis recedentes. Unde cum accepissent verbum praedicationis ab Apostolo, et Apostolus ab eis ad alios transiret, seducti sunt a falsis apostolis et a Judæis.*

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calls them fools in keeping with the characteristics of their province since it is thought that each province has its own unique character. Just as 'Cretans are liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons' (Titus 1:12), so the Mauri are vain, the Dalmatians ferocious, the Phrygians timid, the Athenians clever, the Greeks fickle, and the Jews heavy-hearted and stiff-necked."[102] The first part echoes the line from Jerome just quoted. The second part, mentioning various ethnic groups, paraphrases what Jerome writes immediately after.[103] The influence of Jerome is likewise indisputable in the case of Erasmus, who quotes him directly[104] and is apparent also in the interpretation of Galatians by his younger contemporary Martin Luther.[105]

Luther and other early modern German authors suggested that Paul's Galatians were the forebears of the proto-German Teutons.[106] Such

[102] Levy, *The Letter to the Galatians*, 216. Latin: *Vel insensatos eos dicit secundum prouinciae ipsorum proprietatem: habent enim singulae prouinciae singulas, ut creditur, proprias proprietates, ut Cretenses mendaces, malae bestiae, uentres pigri; Mauri uani; Dalmatae feroces; Phrygae timidi; Athenienses ingeniosi; Graeci leues; Iudaei graues corde et dura ceruice*.

[103] Jerome in turn took it, with some adaptations, from Tertullian, *An.* 20. See Chapter 7 (pp. 198–99).

[104] "The Galatians are Greeks, but they are descended from the Gauls and, according to St Jerome, 'they resembled their forebears in dullness of wit. Hilary, himself a Gaul, also says in his book of hymns that the Gauls are 'slow to learn.' And Paul, in a scolding voice, calls them *anoetoi* [foolish] ... the Galatians embraced Christ because of their good nature, but because they were fickle and foolish they immediately relapsed into Judaism" (*Paraphrase on Galatians*, preface). Translation: Robert D. Sider, *Erasmus: Paraphrases on Romans and Galatians*, New Testament Scholarship 42 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 94.

[105] "It is as though he were saying: 'As you are called and as you are said to be, so you are, and so you remain, namely ἀνόητοι Galatians. You are proving this now in the very matter of the Gospel, where you really should have been very wise. But that nature of yours persists!' In a similar way we also distinguish among nations on the basis of their vices. For every nation has its own peculiar vices. The Germans are eager for novelty; the Italians are arrogant, etc. By this method of rebuke, therefore, Paul reminds the Galatians of their nature." (Martin Luther, *Luther's Works: Lectures on Galatians 1535, Chapters 1–4*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Walter A. Hansen, trans. Jaroslav Pelikan, American Edition, vol. 26 [Saint Louis: Concordia, 1955], 188). Note esp. "every nation has its own peculiar vices," which seems like a direct quote from Jerome.

[106] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians,* 47: "Some people think that we Germans are descended from the Galatians, and there may be some truth in this. For we Germans do resemble them in nature. I myself am obliged to wish that our people were steadier and surer. Whatever we do, we are always very ardent at the beginning, but when the ardor of our initial feelings is spent, we soon lose our enthusiasm. We give up on things and completely reject them as impetuously as we undertake them." For references to other German scholars, see Otto Schmoller, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians*, ed. Johann Peter Lange, Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scripture (New York: C. Scribner & Co.,

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questions of ethnic origin took on particular urgency in the nineteenth century, the age of nation-building. Tracing one's lineage back to the Galatians gave one's nation the signal honor of having been among the first Christians. Germans were not the only ones to claim this honor. James MacGregor, Professor at New College, Edinburgh wrote in his Galatians commentary:

> There is a vague tradition about a mysterious visitor who came to Britain with the gospel, round by the Straits of Gibraltar from the Mediterranean Sea. May not this mysterious visitor have been a Christian of Galatia, perhaps a convert of Paul and a student of this Epistle, who, driven by persecution or constrained by love of Christ, bore the gospel from a Celtic land near the cradle of mankind, and preached it in the mother-tongue to that Britain which was the then recognized motherland of the Celts?[107]

The oft-cited fickleness of the Galatians was no reason to abandon claims of Galatian ancestry and in fact had a welcome hortatory potential. The commentator or preacher identifying their audience as the descendants of the Galatians could use it to encourage them to be firm in their resolve and resist the fickleness to which they were evidently genealogically predisposed. Versions of this argument can be found as early as Martin Luther's 1535 *Lectures on Galatians* and as late as J. Vernon McGee's

1870), 1–2. Lightfoot dismisses this possibility in an excursus in his commentary (*St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, 235–46). For a more recent evaluation of this hypothesis, see Albrecht Oepke and Joachim Rohde, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater*, THKNT 9 (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1973), 19: "Nationale Romantik hat einst in der Bekehrung der Galater den Anfang der deutschen Kirchengeschichte sehen wollen. Allein die van *Nikolaus Selnecker* (†1592) ab bis tief ins neuzehnte Jahrhundert hinein vielfach verfochtene Annahme, daß die ersten Leser unseres Briefes *Germanen* gewesen seien, hält der wissenschaftlichen Nachprüfung nicht stand" (italics original).

[107] James MacGregor, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1879), 20–21. Lightfoot's commentary contains a similar passage, though not introduced as a "vague tradition" but rather as a "passing fancy": "In the age when St Paul preached, a native of Galatia spoke a language essentially the same with that which was current in the southern part of Britain. And if – to indulge a passing fancy – we picture to ourselves one of his Asiatic converts visiting the far West to barter the haircloths of his native country for the useful metal which was the special product of this island, we can imagine that finding a medium of communication in a common language he may have sown the first seeds of the Gospel and laid the foundations of the earliest Church in Britain" (*St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* 246). Lightfoot did not, however, see the English as related to the Galatians, in contrast to the Welsh (see p. 103). As Harker (*The Colonizers' Idols,* 175) notes: "Even in this historical imagining, Lightfoot has traced the origins of the gospel in Britain to the Galatians, while leaving the faults he has elaborately described throughout the commentary at the feet of the Welsh, rather than the English. The English emerge as spiritual beneficiaries with none of the racially defined flaws of the Galatians."

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1983 commentary, who applies this logic to Americans of European descent.[108]

The argument could easily be wielded in the opposite direction as well; by identifying other nations or ethnic groups as the descendants of the Galatians, one could impute them with a range of undesirable Galatian characteristics (including fickleness), while aligning oneself with the position of the apostle. In the nineteenth century, a range of authors identified nations about whom they had negative or ambiguous feelings as latter-day Galatians. Philip Schaff, a Swiss-born, German-trained professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York, disputed the Germans' identification of themselves as the descendants of Paul's Galatians not because of any qualms about ethnic essentialism but on the grounds that "the fickleness of the Galatian Christians is characteristic of the ... modern French," rather than the Germans.[109] Some, especially English authors identified the Irish as the (primary) descendants of the Gauls/Galatians.[110] Lightfoot opted for the Welsh.[111] The Scots were an option as well.[112] Debates about the history of the Gauls and the identity of Paul's Galatians were evidently never simply about ancient history. How one construed the identity of Paul's addressees influenced how one construed the contemporary world and vice versa. As with the Gentiles discussed in

[108] On Martin Luther, see n. 106. J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible – Vol. 5: 1 Corinthians–Revelation* (Nashville: Nelson, 1983), 148: "These Gallic Celts had much of the same temperament and characteristics of the American population, that is, of those who came out of Europe or England. It is interesting to see what was said concerning my ancestors (and maybe yours). Many of these Germanic tribes were wild and fierce. Caesar said of them: 'The infirmity of the Gauls is that they are fickle in their resolves, fond of change, and not to be trusted.' This description fits the majority of Americans in our day .... Therefore the Epistle to the Galatians has a particular message for us because it was written to people who were like us in many ways." For McGee, the letter speaks to the American public not only because of certain perceived characterological similarities but also because of the genealogical connection between the "Gallic Celts" and part of the American population.

[109] Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. IV (New York: C. Scribner & Co., 1890), 8 n. 1.

[110] Various examples are collected in Harker, *The Colonizers' Idols*, 118–21.

[111] Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, 240 n. 3.

[112] MacGregor saw parallels with all of the above: "Galatian character has long survived the infusion of various foreign elements in the Scottish Highlands, Wales, Ireland, and France" (*Galatia*, 14). This Galatian character is also visible in Paul's letter: "The character of the Galatians, as revealed in this Epistle, curiously corresponds with notices found in ancient Pagan writers of the character of the European Gauls, and what is known of the character of Celtic races in mediaeval and modern Christendom" (17). Among these characteristics is that "the Gauls as a race have been characterised as peculiarly addicted to certain vices," including fickleness (18).

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Chapter 3, Paul's letters functioned as a lens that shaped how ethnic groups in the modern world were viewed.

Underlying such arguments about the descendants of Paul's addressees was the assumption that their collective characteristics were largely immune to change, even over the course of centuries. Paul's letters could be of use in understanding the contemporary world only on the assumption that the present-day descendants of the Galatians were, in essence, characterologically the same as their ancient ancestors who were addressed by Paul. The letter to the Galatians supported this assumption, because to the likes of Lightfoot it showed that the Galatians had not changed much over the course of several centuries or as a result of moving to the other side of the then-known world (from Gaul to Anatolia). While Lightfoot recognized that Paul's Galatia had a "heterogenous population," he nevertheless maintained that "it was the Celtic blood which gave its distinctive colour to the Galatian character, and separated them by so broad a line even from their near neighbors."[113] According to Lightfoot, the characteristics of the Galatians of Paul's day were determined by their Gallic ancestors, even though he did allow for some changes since the time they departed from their ancient homeland: "After centuries of intercourse with Greeks and Phrygians, with the latter especially, who were reputed among the most effeminate and worthless of Asiatics, the ancient valour of the Gauls must have been largely diluted."[114] Yet this did not fundamentally alter their character, Lightfoot maintained: "Beneath the surface the Celtic character remains still the same, whether manifested in the rude and fiery barbarians who were crushed by the arms of Caesar, or the impetuous and fickle converts who call down the indignant rebuke of the Apostle of the Gentiles."[115]

Jerome's assessment more than three centuries after Paul that the Galatian people were indeed "stupid" (supported by his contemporary Hilary) further cemented, for those who put stock in Jerome's claims, the conviction that the Galatian character had been stable over the span of many centuries. And Jerome was not the only late antique Christian author to confirm the collective character flaws of the Galatians. As previously noted, this was affirmed by several other voices as well.[116]

The combined testimony of early Christian sources and classical texts suggested that the Galatians had not significantly changed in the interval

[113] Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, 9, 12.
[114] Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, 13.
[115] Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, 13.
[116] See above n. 73.

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between Polybius and Caesar (second and first century BCE) and Jerome (fourth century CE). This rendered it plausible that the nineteenth-century descendants of these Galatians were still rather like them as well. As John Cunningham Geikie – a priest in the Church of England, "well known as a writer of popular books on biblical and religious subjects" and recipient of multiple honorary doctorates[117] – put it:

> The tenacity of national character showed itself as strongly among them, in the days of Paul, as in earlier times. The traits that distinguish one race from another are indeed, ineradicable … The same historical law was illustrated in the Galatians. Their language, indeed, survived long after the apostolic times … Jerome tells us. The characteristics of the Celt of all ages or countries, wherever he is found, marked the race in Asia Minor, as we see from many details of Paul's epistle … the Celts were the same in Galatia as Caesar had painted them in Gaul … So marked, in fact, was [the Celt's] proneness to betray confidence, that Caesar learned to count on it; feeling sure that, in case of any plot, he was sure to find informers ready to sell their brethren, a feature still characterising the Celtic Irish.[118]

Paul's letter, Caesar's account, and contemporary stereotypes conspired to affirm that "the traits that distinguish one race from another are indeed, ineradicable." Paul's letter to the Galatians was used, then, not only to legitimize derogatory stereotypes of Celtic peoples in the modern era but also to undergird the more fundamental conviction that racial characteristics were immutable.

In light of such claims about the distinctive and unchanging character of the Galatian or Celtic "race," it is unsurprising that many commentators on Galatians attended closely to ethnographical questions. Lightfoot, as previously noted, thought the matter important enough that he introduced it in the opening pages of his commentary. He likely agreed with the claim of his contemporaries Edward Headland and Henry Barclay Swete that "undoubtedly, the chief fact to be borne in mind in studying the Galatian Epistle is the *Celtic origin* of the majority of the people to whom it was addressed."[119] This view was far from idiosyncratic; as an anonymous author succinctly put it in the November 1867

[117] W. F. Gray, revised by Anne Pimlott Baker "Geikie, John Cunningham (1824–1906)," *ODNB* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[118] John Cunningham Geikie, *The Apostles: Their Lives and Letters* (London: Nisbet, 1895), 265–68, quoting here only key parts of a much longer indictment of the Celts/Galatians.

[119] Edward Headland and Henry Barclay Swete, *The Epistle to the Galatians: With an Introduction, Explanatory Notes, and Practical Thoughts and Prayers* (London: Hatchard, 1866), xi, emphasis original.

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issue of the *Magazine of the Wesleyan Methodist Church*, "Modern expositors have not failed to treat this subject ethnologically."[120]

CONCLUSION

Contemporary scholarship on Galatians differs considerably from such nineteenth-century approaches. While Victorian-era commentaries are still regularly cited, especially Lightfoot's, his claims about the collective character of the Galatians – which he himself regarded as quintessential to the letter's interpretation – are either glossed over or rejected. For instance, with respect to the argument that "the Gauls ... were fickle and superstitious, qualities that conform to Paul's characterization of his addressees," Richard Longenecker argues that this is "a selective reading of history, relegating such rather common human characteristics to only one people."[121] David DeSilva similarly deems it a "fallacious argument" and observes that "stereotypes of indigenous people groups formulated by the colonizers are naturally suspect, as they almost inevitably serve to justify colonizing (and thereby 'improving') these people groups."[122] It is, of course, understandable and laudable that modern scholars refuse to follow Lightfoot in construing Paul's addressees in terms of the "old Celtic blood still boiling in their veins." On many a definition of racism, Lightfoot's comments would qualify as such, and it is no doubt a good thing that New Testament scholars now generally reject this line of argument.

Yet in its appropriate rejection of ethnic essentialism, scholarship has regrettably neglected a valuable and illuminating trove of comparanda for the interpretation of Paul's letter. "The *Celtic origin* of the majority of the people to whom it was addressed" is no longer "the *chief* fact to be borne in mind in studying the Galatian Epistle" (Headland & Barclay Swete); quite to the contrary, for many commentators it is evidently something that can be safely ignored as irrelevant to the contents of the letter. Recent commentaries and studies of Paul's epistle to the Galatians, including

[120] Anonymous, "Horae Biblicae: XCIV – The Galatians," *Magazine of the Wesleyan Methodist Church* 90 (1867): 996.

[121] Longenecker, *Galatians*, lxix.

[122] David A. DeSilva, *The Letter to the Galatians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 39 n. 73. Cf. Charles B. Cousar, *The Letters of Paul*, Interpreting Biblical Texts (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 188 n. 18: "Attempts to describe the readers of Galatians as Gauls who were by nature fickle and unstable people, are hardly convincing."

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those that span hundreds of pages commenting on every jot and tittle of the letter, and include substantial discussions of the geographical and political realities of ancient Galatia, routinely ignore ancient authors' views of the character of the Galatai.

The present chapter has sought to demonstrate that ancient descriptions of the Galatians can significantly enhance our understanding of the context and content of Paul's letter if properly utilized; that is, if we read these texts not as straightforward social description (which Longenecker and DeSilva rightly point out is problematic) but as evidence of how the Galatians were generally perceived by their contemporaries. The focus here has been on the understanding of the Galatai as fickle (shifting course quickly and being wont to betray their allies), which is attested in a wide range of Greek and Latin authors. The intersections between this stereotypical view of the Galatians and Paul's construal of the recent developments in the assemblies in Galatia are substantial. At various points in Galatians, including in the letter body's opening statement in 1:6–9, Paul depicts the Galatai in keeping with how they are described by other Greco-Roman authors – as people who radically and abruptly shift course and betray their allies (see also Gal 3:1–5; 4:8–11, 14–18, discussed above). Paul's depiction of his addressees, including his remarkable scolding of the Galatai as ἀνόητοι (3:1, 3), fits with these stereotypical notions about the Galatian people. This overlap between ancient literary assessments of the Galatians' collective character and their image as it is conjured by Paul's letter suggest that his response to the developments in Galatia was influenced by and made strategic use of the ethnic stereotype of Galatian fickleness.

Paul's agreement with ancient sources on the fickleness of the Galatian people cemented this understanding of their character for a significant number of his modern interpreters and influenced how they viewed the Galatians' contemporary descendants, whether identified with the Irish, Welsh, Scots, or some other ethnic group. The correspondence of Paul's assessment with much older sources was also cited to support, more fundamentally, the view that ethnic and racial traits are immutable.

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