

BURDEN-BEARING AND THE LAW OF CHRIST: A RE-EXAMINATION OF GALATIANS 6:2

JOHN G. STRELAN

MARTIN LUTHER SEMINARY, LAE, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

"**B**EAR one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2). A survey of the recent history of the interpretation of this verse reveals that attention has been directed primarily to the unusual and seemingly paradoxical expression "the law of Christ." The majority opinion concerning the meaning of this phrase is still best expressed in Bengel's succinct comment: "Lex Christi, lex amoris."¹ Scant attention has been paid to the first half of Gal 6:2: "Bear one another's burdens." By common consent the phrase is thought to refer to the previous verse, which speaks of the need to restore the brother who is "overtaken in a trespass." The burdens (*ta barē*) of Gal 6:2a refer to the mistakes, sins, weaknesses, and guilt of the brother.²

The traditional approach to the interpretation of Gal 6:2 is open to question on at least two counts. It assumes that Gal 6:1 and 6:2 are a unit of thought. In fact, there is no connecting particle between the two verses.³ By way of contrast it may be noted that Gal 6:2 and 6:3 are connected by *gar*, which suggests that there is a logical relationship between these verses. At the very least the *gar* signals that Gal 6:3-4 contributes to the understanding of 6:2 as much as, if not more than, 6:1 does.

Furthermore, insufficient attention has been given to the fact that the two

¹ J. Bengel, *Gnomon Novi Testamenti* (3d ed.; London: Williams and Norgate, 1862) 692. Bengel follows Luther and Grotius and is in turn followed by, e.g., C. Ellicott, T. Zahn, J. Denney, M.-J. Lagrange, A. Viard, R. C. Lenski, M. Zerwick, G. Bornkamm, W. Gutbrod, E. Burton, A. Cole, V. Furnish. A notable exception is C. H. Dodd, who argues for the existence in the early church of a collection of traditional dominical sayings which were regarded as authoritative and in some sense a restatement and continuation of the law of God. These precepts of Christ were not statutory definitions like the Mosaic code, but they were intended to be indications of the quality and direction of action. See "The Gospel and the Law of Christ," The William Ainslie Memorial Lecture for 1946, repub. in *Christ and the New Humanity* (FBBS; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1965) 17-31; cf. *Gospel and Law* (New York: Columbia University, 1951) 64-83; "Ennomos Christou," *More New Testament Studies* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968) 134-48. Dodd thinks Gal 6:2b is a reference to Matt 18:15-17.

² The brief study by P. A. van Stempvoort ("Gal. 6:2," *NTT* 7 [1952-53] 362-63) is exceptional in that it relates Gal 6:2 to 6:3 rather than to 6:1. Van Stempvoort thinks that *ta barē* are "gewichtigheden."

³ Asyndeton is, of course, not unusual with imperatives and in parenthetic material. But would not this fact add to the significance of *gar* in 6:3?

halves of Gal 6:2 are linked by the words *kai houtōs*: "Bear one another's burdens *and so* fulfill the law of Christ." The manner in which the two parts of the verse are set in relationship to one another indicates that if one wishes to clarify the meaning of the phrase "the law of Christ," one must first uncover the meaning of the admonition "Bear one another's burdens."

In the present study, evidence is provided in support of a new interpretation of Gal 6:2a. The hypothesis to be investigated may be stated as follows: The phrase "Bear one another's burdens" is an exhortation to each Christian to shoulder his share of a common financial obligation. This new interpretation of Gal 6:2a will, I believe, throw fresh light on the puzzling expression in 6:2b, "the law of Christ."

Context is probably the single most important controlling factor in an investigation such as this. Therefore particular care must be taken to observe the principle of what has been called "cluster control" in determining the meaning of the words *ta barē*.⁴ I shall attempt to show that *ta barē* occurs in a financial or commercial setting with sufficient frequency to justify the suggestion that it could have a financial connotation in Gal 6:2. It will be argued, furthermore, that the context within which Gal 6:2 is set provides additional support for taking *ta barē* in a financial sense. Finally, the validity of giving a financial meaning to the verse will be tested within the total context provided by the Pauline epistles.

Is *ta barē* used in a financial sense in the NT and other Greek literature?

The plural form *ta barē* is a *hapax legomenon* in the Pauline corpus,⁵ in the NT, and in the LXX. This in itself suggests that the phrase deserves closer study. No examples of the plural form with a commercial connotation are readily available from classical Greek. From the papyri, however, examples may be adduced of the plural *ta barē* used in the sense of a "burden" of oppression and of taxation.⁶ Particularly instructive is the following example from A.D. 117: *epei oun ho kyrios hēmōn Hadrianos . . . ekouphisen tōn enchōriōn ta barē katholikōs dia programmatis, axiō tooutou ontos tou barous k.t.l.*⁷

The singular form (*to baros*), which occurs at the end of the above quotation, is used very commonly in the papyri in relation to taxes or to national expenditure.⁸ In the LXX *baros* occurs only five times.⁹ The "B" text of

⁴Cf. F. W. Danker, "Under Contract: A Form-Critical Study of Linguistic Adaptation in Romans," *Festschrift to Honor F. Wilbur Gingrich* (Leiden: Brill, 1972) 92.

⁵The Pauline corpus is here defined as Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and Philemon.

⁶Cf. F. Preisigke and E. Kiessling, *Wörterbuch der griechischen Papyrusurkunden mit Einschluss der griechischen Inschriften, Aufschriften, Ostraka, Mumienbilder usw. aus Ägypten* (Berlin: Hubert, 1925-31), I. 256; J. Moulton and G. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1952) 103.

⁷P. Giss. I, 7:13 (A.D. 117).

⁸Cf. G. Schrenk, "Baros," *TDNT* 1 (1964) 554.

⁹Judg 18:21; Jdt 7:4; Sir 13:2; 2 Mac 9:10; 3 Mac 5:47.

Judg 18:21 is of particular interest. It reads: *kai ethēkan ta tekna kai tēn ktēsīn kai to baros emprosthen autōn*. The *to baros* appears to be a rendering of the MT *hakkēbūdāb*, "abundance, riches."¹⁰

Another interesting passage is Sir 13:2, which reads: "Do not try to carry a burden (*baros*) too heavy for you; do not associate (*koinōnein*) with someone more powerful and wealthy than yourself."¹¹ In this verse the thought of "burden" is clearly connected with money and wealth.

The singular *to baros* occurs only twice in the Pauline letters and three times in the rest of the NT.¹² Worthy of note is 1 Thes 2:5-7:

You know very well, and we can swear it before God, that never at any time have our speeches been simply flattery, or a cover for trying to get money; nor have we ever looked for any special honour from men, either from you or anybody else, when we could have imposed ourselves on you with full weight (*en barei*), as apostles of Christ. (JB)

The phrase *en barei* is often taken as a reference to Paul's apostolic authority. The thought is certainly there. But so also is a reference to the apostle's right to maintenance. The two ideas, in fact, are by no means incompatible.¹³ The use of *epibarein* at 1 Thes 2:9, where the context indicates that the meaning is to "place a financial burden upon someone," speaks in favor of a financial emphasis in the *baros* of 1 Thes 2:7.

The other NT occurrences of *baros* do not appear to further our argument any. Matt 20:12 must be noted inasmuch as *bastazein* and *baros* appear in combination (as they do in Gal 6:2a). However, the only discernible connection with money in the Matthean passage is that the statement which the verse records ("we have borne the burden and heat of the day") is made by workers grumbling over the pay which they received.

The adjective *barys* occurs only once in Paul (2 Cor 10:10), as a description of Paul's letters. The negative adjective, *abarēs* (2 Cor 11:9), is a *hapax legomenon* in the NT and the LXX. But the context in which the adjective *abarēs* is used is instructive:

Or was I wrong, lowering myself so as to lift you high, by preaching the gospel of God to you and taking no fee for it? I was robbing other churches, living on them so that I could serve you. When I was with you and ran out of money, I was no burden (*katanarkan*) to anyone; the brothers who came from Macedonia provided me with everything I wanted. I was very careful, and I always shall be, not to be a burden (*abarēs*) to you in any way, and by Christ's truth in me, this cause of boasting will never be taken from me in the regions of Achaia. (2 Cor 11:7-10, JB)

¹⁰ BDB 459.

¹¹ The juxtaposition of *baros* and *koinōnein* in Sir 13:2 is noteworthy in view of the emphasis on "sharing" in Gal 6:1-10. See pp. 275-76 below.

¹² 2 Cor 4:17; 1 Thes 2:6; Matt 20:12; Acts 15:28; Rev 2:24.

¹³ Cf. G. Milligan, *St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952) 20-21. Milligan cites for comparison the Latin tag: "Honus propter onus."

These verses indicate clearly that the "burden" to which Paul refers is a financial one.¹⁴

Barys is fairly common in the LXX. Passages which might indicate a financial meaning for the word are 3 Kgs 12:4, 11; 2 Chr 10:4, 11, and especially Neh 5:18, in view of 5:15 where the verb *barynein* is used:

Now the former governors, my predecessors, had been a burden (*barynein*) on the people, from whom they took forty shekels each day as their subsistence allowance, while their servants oppressed the people too. (JB)

The verb *barein* and its compounds are grist for the mill. *Barein* does not occur in the NT; *barynein* is found only in three doubtful readings. *Bareisthai* occurs six times in the NT.¹⁵ Particular note may be taken of 1 Tim 5:16: "If a Christian woman has widowed relatives, she should support them and not make the Church bear the expense (*bareisthai*) but enable it to support those who are genuinely widows" (JB). According to G. Schrenk, "there are many instances of this (financial) usage" of *bareisthai* in the papyri, Polybius, and Josephus.¹⁶

The compound verb *epibarein* does not occur in the LXX, and it is used only three times in the NT.¹⁷ Reference has already been made to 1 Thes 2:9.¹⁸ In that passage Paul reminds his readers that he worked day and night for a living so that he would not be a burden on anyone (*pros to mē epibarēsai tina hymōn*).¹⁹ In 2 Thes 3:8 Paul repeats the phrase. He is urging idlers to get to work. He cites his own example of hard work. Paul and his colleagues accepted no board and lodging without paying for it. Instead,

we toiled and drudged, we worked for a living night and day, rather than be a burden (*pros to mē epibarēsai*) to any of you—not because we have not the right (*exousia*) to maintenance, but to set an example for you to imitate.²⁰ (2 Thes 3:8-9, NEB)

The compound verb *katabarein* (2 Cor 12:16) is a *hapax legomenon* in the NT and the LXX. The passage in which it occurs reads as follows: "But, granted that I did not prove a burden (*katabarein*) to you, still I was unscrupulous enough, you say, to use a trick to catch you" (NEB). The cluster

¹⁴ Cf. D. L. Dungan, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Churches of Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971) 36-39.

¹⁵ Matt 26:43; Luke 9:32; 21:34; 2 Cor 1:8; 5:4; 1 Tim 5:16.

¹⁶ TDNT 1 (1964) 561. F. Preisigke and E. Kiessling (*Wörterbuch*, 1. 256) list as the first meaning of *barein* "Jmd. mit Zahlungen hart beschweren."

¹⁷ 2 Cor 2:5; 1 Thes 2:9; 2 Thes 3:8.

¹⁸ See p. 268 above. Cf. D. L. Dungan, *Sayings*, 14-15, 22-30.

¹⁹ G. Milligan (*Thessalonians*, 20-21) gives examples from the papyri in which *epibarein* means being burdened financially.

²⁰ On the meaning of *exousia* here, see J. Blank, *Paulus und Jesus* (StANT 19; Munich: Kösel, 1968) 198-201; M. Milligan, *Thessalonians*, 114.

of semantic signals coming from the context in which this verse is set indicates a commercial or financial meaning for the verb *katabarein*.²¹

Summary: *Baros* and its cognates are used in the papyri in the specialized sense of a financial burden, often with reference to taxes. The same group of words is used in the LXX in a financial sense, though not very frequently; and in the NT, outside of Paul, hardly ever do the words have a financial or commercial meaning. Paul uses *baros* and its cognates eleven times: In five instances the words have no apparent financial connotation; five times a financial sense is probably intended. The remaining case is Gal 6:2. From Pauline usage, then, it cannot be argued that *ta barē* in Gal 6:2 must mean "financial burden," but we may legitimately argue that *ta barē* could bear such a meaning.²²

II

Does the proposed interpretation of Gal 6:2a make good sense in the context? Does the context lend any support to the proposal that Gal 6:2a should be understood as a reference to financial burdens?

The theme of Gal 5:25–6:10 is that of mutual concern for the brother. This note is sounded at the outset with the twofold *allēlous* (5:26). In Gal 6:1–10 Paul shows how Spirit-filled Christians bear the fruits of the Spirit. They render mutual aid and comfort, and do this in a spirit of humility (*praytēs*, a word which forms part of the Pauline "poor man" motif).²³

It should be noted that already at Gal 6:1 Paul begins to use the vocabulary of commerce. This, in fact, is one of the features of the whole section, Gal 6:1–10. The following words have a financial connotation in the NT and/or the papyri:

Gal 6:1	<i>prolambanein</i> ; <i>paraptōma</i> ²⁴
6:2	<i>baros</i> ; <i>bastazein</i> ; <i>anaplēroun</i> ²⁵

²¹ In 2 Cor 12:14–15 Paul uses the following commercial terms: *katanarkan*, *thēsaurozein*, *dapanan*, *ekdapanan*, *opheilein*.

²² A full-scale testing of our hypothesis would involve a study of the use of *bastazein* in the extant literature. The following points may be noted: Under *bastazein* Preisigke and Kiessling give as the first entry: "eine Steuerlast tragen." J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan (*Vocabulary*, 106) note under the entry *bastazein*: "Carry, in the figurative sense = endure, appears in a formula about taxation . . ." It would seem that the use of *bastazein* at Gal 6:2a in the sense of bearing a financial burden can be paralleled at least in the papyri.

²³ A. M. Leske, *The Implications for Christology of the Poor Man in the Teaching of Jesus* (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1971) 187–88.

²⁴ *Prolambanein*: Used with reference to money received previously, money advanced for travelling expenses, money paid as a retainer (to an architect); cf. J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *Vocabulary*, 542. *Paraptōma*: Used of an error in the amount of payments; cf. Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary*, 489.

²⁵ *Baros*: See pp. 267–69 above. *Bastazein*: See note 22 above. *Anaplēroun*: To pay in full, make up a debt, fulfill a contract; cf. J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *Vocabulary*, 37.

- 6:4 *dokimazein*; *ergon*²⁶
 6:5 *bastazein*; *phortion*²⁷
 6:6 *koinōnein*; *logos*²⁸
 6:7-8 *speirein* . . . *therizein*²⁹
 6:9-10 *kairos*³⁰

The presence of so many words with a financial reference raises the question whether, perhaps, Gal 6:1 refers to the help which should be given to a brother who is in difficulties over money matters.

Following immediately upon Gal 6:2 is the conjunction *gar* (6:3), which introduces a number of remarks intended to clarify and answer objections to the admonition contained in Gal 6:2. If a man balks at the thought of having to take his share of a common (financial) burden—perhaps on the grounds that he is too important³¹ for so mundane a task—such a man is full of conceit and self-deceit.³² No matter how important a man is or thinks he is, he is not relieved of the obligation to take a responsible share of the work in and for the Lord. And each man must needs be concerned with the quality of his "work." According to 1 Cor 3:13-15, apostles and missionaries will have their work (*ergon*) tested (*dokimazein*). In Gal 6:4 Paul urges every man—apostle, teacher of the Word, or supporter of those who teach the Word—to test (*dokimazein*) his own work (*ergon*). Such testing means, as R. Bultmann says, that "none can attain to his *kauchēma* by comparison with others, but only by self-scrutiny, by measuring his achievement in terms of the task which is set."³³

The explanatory material which began with the *gar* of Gal 6:3 is concluded with what appears to be a proverbial saying: *hekastos gar to idion phortion bastasei*.³⁴ This saying could mean that at the judgment each man will have to answer to God for the performance of his *ergon*. That is the *phortion*, the burden

²⁶ *Dokimazein* (*dokimos*, *adokimos*): Testing the genuineness of gold, silver, coins; e.g., Prov 8:10; 17:3; Epictetus, *Diss.* 1.7,6 (*drachmas dokimous kai adokimous*). *Ergon*: Used of trade and commerce; cf. Rev. 18:17 (*ergazontai*).

²⁷ *Phortion*: Freight, cargo, wares, merchandise; cf. J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *Vocabulary*, 674-75.

²⁸ *Koinōnein*: To give or contribute a financial share; cf. Phil 4:14, 15; Barn 19:8; P. Lond. 1794, 7. *Logos*: An account, account of expenses; cf. Phil 4:14, 15; Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary*, 379.

²⁹ See my comments on p. 272 below.

³⁰ On *kairos* in the sense of the time when a payment was due, cf. F. W. Danker, "Under Contract," 113-14.

³¹ Cf. 1 Cor 8:2; 2 Cor 12:11-18; Gal 2:2, 6.

³² Cf. 1 Cor 3:18: *Mēdeis heauton exapatō, ei tis dokei* . . .

³³ "Kauchēma," TDNT 3 (1965) 651. Is it only a coincidence that Paul introduces the matter of "boasting" in a number of places in which he speaks about financial support and the bearing of burdens (1 Cor 9:15-16; 2 Cor 9:2-3; 11:5-22)?

³⁴ Cf. R. Bring, *Commentary on Galatians* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1961) 275; A. Oepke, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater* (Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament, 9; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1964) 149.

each one has to bear. Another way to understand the verse is to take the future indicative *bastasei* as an imperatival future,³⁵ and recognize *bastazein* and *phortion* as commercial terminology. Then the phrase could mean: each man must carry his *phortion*, his proper, personal share of a common financial load; "everyone must pull his own weight."³⁶ This latter suggestion gains some support from the fact that the verse which follows (6:6) speaks of the support of those who labor in the Word.

Gal 6:6 opens with *de*, which is probably significant here, for one of its functions is to arrest a former topic before it disappears from view.³⁷ The idea of "sharing" is still present as is evidenced by the use of the verb *koinōnein*. It is possible, as we shall see, that the admonition of Gal 6:6 is an allusion to a dominical saying. For the present let it be noted that the verse is probably a reference to the material support of those who teach the Word.³⁸

In Gal 6:7-8 Paul uses a sowing/reaping analogy to reinforce the admonition of the previous verse. The only places in which he uses the precise combination "sowing . . . reaping" (*speirein . . . therizein*) are 1 Cor 9:10-11; 2 Cor 9:6 and Gal 6:7-9. In the two Corinthians passages the context is a discussion about money matters. It would appear that the same is true in Gal 6:7-9. It is instructive to compare the context in which the sowing/reaping analogy occurs in Prov 22:7-9 (a passage referred to in the Nestle margin at 2 Cor 9:6):

The rich man lords it over the poor,
the borrower is the lender's slave.
He who sows injustice reaps disaster (*speirein . . . therizein*)
and the rod of his anger falls on himself.
A blessing awaits the man who is kindly,
since he shares his bread with the poor.³⁹ (JB)

The sowing/reaping figure of Gal 6:7-8 possibly stimulated the language of 6:9, which appears to be a more general exhortation to well-doing, involving support of those who teach the Word. The sentiment, *to de kalon poiountes mē enkakōmen*, is expressed in similar language in 2 Thes 3:13. There the statement brings to a conclusion a discussion about the need for the Thessalonians to follow the apostolic example and work for their living, so that they are not a financial burden upon anyone.

Ara oun (Gal 6:10) introduces the conclusion to the discussion which began at 6:2 (or perhaps 6:1). This final verse offers a summary and a statement

³⁵ On the 3d sg. imperatival future form, see E. Burton, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1923) § 68.

³⁶ This phrasing is suggested by A. Jones, "Baros and *phortion*," *ExpT* 34 (1923) 333.

³⁷ J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (London: Macmillan, 1910) 217. Lightfoot thinks that Gal 6:6 is a resumption of the topic introduced in 6:2.

³⁸ K. Wieseler, *Commentar über den Brief Pauli an die Galater* (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1859) 482-85; J. B. Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 218.

³⁹ See note 50 below for the possible significance of the twofold reference to the poor here.

of the general principle which has been spelled out in detail in the previous verses.

Summary: An examination of the context in which Gal 6:2 is set indicates that the interpretation of Gal 6:2a in a financial sense fits smoothly into it. There is nothing in the context which militates against a financial meaning for 6:2a; on the contrary, there are indications that such a financial reference is required by it.

III

The aim of the penultimate section of this study is to show that the proposed interpretation of Gal 6:2a is not only a valid interpretation but also the one to be preferred. The key witnesses are the letters of Paul. Since a certain amount of recapitulation is involved, I will attempt also to further the total argument of the paper by endeavoring to determine more precisely the nature of the financial burden to which Paul refers in Gal 6:2.

The earliest Pauline epistle is probably 1 Thessalonians. When Paul and his co-workers visited Thessalonica they apparently refused to let the local congregation support them. They repeated this procedure at Corinth.⁴⁰ They supported themselves by working with their hands. Just why Paul and his associates did this is stated explicitly in 1 Thes 2:5-10. In this passage the thought of a "burden" (2:7, 9) is introduced in connection with the problem of the support of Paul and his fellow-workers. D. L. Dungan comments as follows:

The evidence indicates that the problem was essentially financial. The financial capacity of the congregations at Thessalonika and Corinth was such that Paul could not feel confident in asking them for financial support.⁴¹

In 2 Thes 3:6-12 Paul is dealing with the problem of idleness amongst the Thessalonians. He appeals to the brethren to follow the example set by him and his associates, who paid for their board and lodging and worked hard to support themselves. Paul insists upon his right to be supported by the Thessalonians, but he indicates that he did not exercise that right lest he might become a burden upon the Thessalonians. Once again, then, the idea of "burden" is introduced in close connection with the question of the apostolic right to support and Paul's decision to forego that right.⁴²

The ninth chapter of 1 Corinthians provides additional support for our thesis.⁴³ In this chapter Paul discusses his right to expect financial support and

⁴⁰ See D. L. Dungan, *Sayings*, 8.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 31; cf. p. 15. See also K. F. Nickle, *The Collection: A Study in Pauline Strategy* (SBT 48; Naperville: Allenson, 1967) 97 n. 174.

⁴² See p. 269 above.

⁴³ Of the many studies which have been done on this chapter, two are especially important for our purposes: C. H. Dodd, "*Ennomos Christou*," and D. L. Dungan, *Sayings*, 3-26.

his refusal to exercise that right in the light of his overall mission strategy.⁴⁴ 1 Corinthians 9 contains no direct reference to a "burden." Nevertheless, there are noteworthy points of contact with Gal 6:1-10. (a) One of the five analogies⁴⁵ which Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 9 is that of sowing and reaping (vss. 10, 11; cf. vs. 7). As we have already noted,⁴⁶ the same figure is used at 2 Cor 9:6 (in a financial context) and at Gal 6:7-9. (b) In 1 Cor 9:1 Paul refers to his *ergon*; in 9:15 he touches on the matter of *kauchēma*; in 9:27 he voices concern lest he become *adokimos*. All these thoughts are found compressed in Gal 6:4. (c) The dominical saying referred to in 1 Cor 9:14 has some similarity to Gal 6:6 (cf. the Nestle margin). (d) The only place in the Pauline correspondence in which there occurs a phrase like *ennomos Christou* (1 Cor 9:21) is at Gal 6:2b: *ho nomos tou Christou*. (e) Paul concludes his argument at 1 Cor 9:23 with the words: "All this I do for the sake of the gospel, to bear my part (*synkoinōnos*) in proclaiming it" (NEB). We have already observed that a basic theme in Gal 6:1-10 is that of "sharing" (cf. Gal 6:2, 6, 10).

In the light of so many parallels between 1 Corinthians 9 and Gal 6:1-10, one could properly argue that since the Corinthians passage has to do with the question of the financial support of the apostle, it is likely that Gal 6:1-10 deals with the same topic.

In 2 Corinthians Paul twice uses the idea of "burden" in a financial sense. In 2 Cor 11:7-15 he defends his policy of refusing support from the Corinthian congregations. He insists that one of his reasons for declining to accept support was that he did not want to be a burden (*abarēs*) to the Corinthians. In the next chapter (12:13-18) Paul continues aggressively to defend himself. He exclaims sarcastically in the opening verse of this section: "Is there anything in which you were treated worse than the other congregations—except this, that I never sponged upon you? How unfair of me! I crave forgiveness" (NEB). Then, in language taken from the realm of commerce and finance,⁴⁷ Paul explains that his object in refusing support from the Corinthians was so that he would not burden them (*katabarein*) unduly.

Phil 4:15-17 contains a reference to the material help which Paul had received from the people of Philippi. All that needs to be noted here is the reference to "sharing." Vs. 14 reads: "But it was kind of you to share the burden (*synkoinōnein*, cf. 1 Cor 9:23) of my troubles." The next verse is difficult: *oudemia moi ekklēsia ekoinōnēsen eis logon doseōs kai lēmpseōs ei mē*

⁴⁴ Cf. G. Bornkamm, "The Missionary Stance of Paul in I Corinthians 9 and in Acts," *Studies in Luke-Acts: Essays Presented in Honor of Paul Schubert* (eds. L. Keck and J. L. Martyn; Nashville: Abingdon, 1966) 194-207.

⁴⁵ On the analogies used in 1 Corinthians 9, see H. M. Gale, *The Use of Analogy in the Letters of Paul* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964). Gale concludes that "all five of the pictures introduced in 1 Cor 9:4-14 are employed simply for the sake of the one idea that they have in common: those who labor should receive their living from that labor" (p. 108).

⁴⁶ See p. 272 above.

⁴⁷ See note 21 above.

hymeis monoi. The NEB translates: "You alone . . . were my partners in payments and receipts."⁴⁸

Finally, as a matter of interest, we look at the Pauline-flavored passage 1 Tim 5:16-18. It is generally accepted that *bareisthō* (5:16) refers to financial burdens. In 5:17 the writer takes up the question of the support of the *presbyteroi*.⁴⁹ To reinforce his contention that the *presbyteroi* deserve liberal support, the writer quotes Deut 25:4 (cf. 1 Cor 9:9), and another saying: "The laborer is worthy of his hire." With this saying should be compared the saying recorded in 1 Cor 9:14; Matt 10:10; Luke 10:7; Gal 6:6.

At this point it becomes desirable and necessary to bring together all the evidence and to make a summary statement on the basis of the assembled data.

Baros and its cognates are used in the extant Greek literature in the sense of "financial burden." In at least fifty percent of the Pauline uses of the *baros* word-family, a "financial" sense is intended. Understanding *ta barē* (Gal 6:2a) as "financial burdens" makes good sense in the context provided by Gal 6:1-10. In the Pauline epistles, references to a financial burden occur in contexts concerning the material support of the apostles. Also involved are such matters as "sharing" in the gospel, and the apostle's right to expect maintenance. The cumulative effect of this evidence is to support the hypothesis that the phrase "Bear one another's burdens" (Gal 6:2a) is an exhortation to each Christian to shoulder his share of a common financial obligation.

What is the common financial burden of which Gal 6:2a speaks? It is the obligation to provide for the material support of Paul and his co-workers. This seems the most likely answer. Less likely, perhaps, but more provocative, is to understand the phrase "Bear one another's burdens" as an exhortation to each Christian to share in the common task of contributing to the collection for the "poor" in Jerusalem.⁵⁰ A third possibility lies in the combination of the

⁴⁸ C. H. Dodd ("The Mind of Paul: A Psychological Approach," *BJRL* 17 [1933] 95) comments: "He [Paul] can scarcely bring himself to acknowledge that the money was welcome to him, and covers up his embarrassment by piling up technical terms of trade, as if to give the transaction a severely 'business' aspect."

⁴⁹ On the meaning of *presbyteroi* in this passage, see J. P. Meier, "Presbyteros in the Pastoral Epistles," *CBQ* 35 (1973) 325-37.

⁵⁰ Points to be considered when weighing this suggestion include the following: (a) In 1 Cor 16:1 Paul indicates that he had already commanded the churches in Galatia to attend to the matter of the collection. The *diataxis* could, of course, have been by word of mouth. It could also have been by letter, i.e., Gal 6:1-10. Curiously, in 1 Cor 16:1 Paul uses the expression *tais ekklesiāis tēs Galatias*, which is the identical expression used in Gal 1:2. (b) J. Bligh claims that Gal 1:11-2:10 is chastically parallel to Gal 5:11-6:11. See *Galatians in Greek* (Detroit: University of Detroit, 1966) 4. (c) A comparison of Rom 15:27 with 1 Cor 9:10-14 shows that Paul applied the argument of reciprocity both to encourage the support of teachers of the Word and to encourage contributions to the collection. (d) *Allēlōn* occupies a position of emphasis in Gal 6:2a: the burdens are to be shared. In Gal 6:6 Paul uses the verb *koinōnein*, which expresses an important theme in his theology of the collection (cf. Rom 15:26-27; 2 Cor 8:4; 9:13; also K. F. Nickle, *The Collection*, 106-6; 122-25). On the other hand, Paul also introduces the thought of *koinōnia* into his discussion concerning his right to receive financial

two previous suggestions. Perhaps the "poor of the saints in Jerusalem" (Rom 15:26) are the Jerusalem leaders who labor in the Word. They were following in the footsteps of Jesus, the poor man. Hence, Gal 6:2 is an admonition to contribute to the support of the Jerusalem apostles by participating in the collection organized by Paul.

IV

We come to the final question: What is the meaning of the phrase "the law of Christ" in Gal 6:2b? If C. H. Dodd's argument is accepted—that the reference is to a specific dominical saying⁵¹—and if the argument of this paper is accepted—that Gal 6:2a refers to the bearing of a financial burden, specifically, the support of those who labor in the Word—then the answer to the question seems obvious. The "law of Christ" is the dominical saying quoted, paraphrased, or alluded to in various forms in 1 Cor 9:14; Matt 10:10; Luke 10:7; 1 Tim 5:18; Did 13:2, and probably Gal 6:6.⁵²

support (cf. 1 Cor 9:23; Phil 4:14). (e) The sowing/reaping analogy in Gal 6:8 has a parallel at 1 Cor 9:11 (apostolic support) and 2 Cor 9:6 (the collection). Note the references to the "poor" in the OT parallel, Prov 22:7-9. (f) Gal 6:10 possibly has more point if it is understood as a concluding admonition to contribute to the collection ("especially for members of the household of faith"). (g) J. B. Lightfoot and H. Lietzmann both interpreted Gal 6:7-10 as a reference to the collection (cf. K. F. Nickle, *Collection*, 59 n. 55.) (h) In the chronology of the Pauline letters, Galatians is often placed in close connection with the Corinthian correspondence and/or Romans. This placement, coupled with Paul's remark in 1 Cor 16:1, leads one to expect that Paul would refer to the collection in his letter to the Galatians. If Gal 6:2-10 is not concerned with the collection, then the only possible allusion to the collection is at Gal 2:10. See L. E. Keck, "The Poor among the Saints in the New Testament," *ZNW* 56 (1965) 122 n. 77, for comments on the absence of references to the collection in Galatians.

One problem with interpreting Gal 6:2-10 as a reference to the collection is that the argument of reciprocity implied in Gal 6:6 would, if it referred to the collection, be hard to reconcile with the thoughts expressed in the opening chapters of Galatians. The last thing Paul would admit is that the Galatians received the gospel from Jerusalem (via Paul).

On the whole question of the collection, see K. F. Nickle, *The Collection*; D. Georgi, *Die Geschichte der Kollekte des Paulus für Jerusalem* (Theologische Forschung, 38; Hamburg-Bergstedt: H. Reich, 1965); R. Batey, *Jesus and the Poor* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972) 52-67.

⁵¹ "Ennomos Christou," 146-47. Dodd thinks that Gal 6:2b is an allusion to the saying preserved in Matt 18:15-17.

⁵² The painstaking work of D. L. Dungan relieves one of the necessity of trying to determine which version of the saying Paul had in mind. He finds that the original dominical saying completely excluded any idea of a fixed stipend. Matthew's version is closest to the original: *axios gar ho ergatēs tēs trophēs autou*, "The workman is worthy of his food" (Matt 10:10). Dungan thinks that in 1 Cor 9:14 Paul is assuming the Matthean version of the saying. Very likely the same assumption can be made with regard to Gal 6:2b. See *Sayings*, 50-80.

