

A Response to Steve Gibson's *Galatians 6:10 and the Great Collection**

By Martin Pickup

PART 1

During the debate over Institutionalism in the 1950's and '60's, a question arose concerning the proper objects of church benevolence. Was a local church to be thought of as a general benevolence society, providing church funds to anyone regardless of whether they were a Christian? Or was general humanitarian benevolence an individual Christian's responsibility, with church benevolence limited to needy saints?

Institutional brethren pointed to Galatians 6:10 and argued that it was speaking of church benevolence to non-Christians as well as Christians: **“So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”** The problem with this, of course, was that the language throughout Galatians 6:1-10 is markedly individual. Paul is speaking about a Christian's personal obligations. There seems to be nothing in the context to indicate that what Paul says would necessarily apply to congregational action. There is nothing to suggest that he is advocating collective church benevolence to non-Christians.

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Steve Gibson is now arguing that there is something in the context to suggest that Galatians 6:10 is speaking of collective church benevolence--church benevolence, in fact, which was directed to non-Christians. In his recent book, *Galatians 6:10 and the Great Collection*,¹ brother Gibson affirms that the language Paul uses in Galatians 6:2-10 suggests that he is referring to the Jerusalem Collection, the relief effort which Gentile churches undertook for the needy saints in Jerusalem. Paul discusses this work of the churches in I Corinthians 16:1-4, II Corinthians 8-9, and Romans 15:25-28. Gibson maintains that if Galatians 6:10 is also discussing the Jerusalem Collection, then this means that unbelievers must have been among the recipients of these church funds.

The thrust of Gibson's argumentation is that the language Paul uses in Galatians 6:7-10 is similar to the language he uses in II Corinthians 9:6-13 when he urges the Corinthians to participate in the Jerusalem Collection. In both places Paul uses the metaphor of "sowing" and "reaping," speaks of doing what is "good," and refers to "all men." Since these expressions in II Corinthians are used to speak of church contributions in the Jerusalem relief effort, Gibson argues that Galatians 6 refers to the same thing. On a previous occasion Paul must have broached the subject of the Jerusalem Collection to the churches of Galatia, and now in his letter he urges them to carry through with the contribution. On the basis of this construction of the historical background, Gibson understands the entirety of Galatians 6:10 to be speaking of those who would receive the Jerusalem Collection. Paul is saying that these funds would go to "all men" and "especially to the household of faith."

Brother Gibson feels that if his interpretation of Galatians 6:10 is accepted, then this would solve the division that has occurred over church-sponsored orphanages and institutions

for the elderly.² This overlooks, of course, the fact that the issue of church-sponsored benevolence institutions involves more than the question of whether churches may relieve non-Christians. It also involves whether churches may create and support organizations to do work which God assigned to each local church. Gibson never addresses the latter question. Nevertheless, he has addressed one important aspect of the issue, and a response is warranted.

Linguistic Parallels

I think brother Gibson does a good job in pointing out the linguistic parallels between Galatians 6:7-10 and II Corinthians 9:6-13. One can make a case that Paul is speaking of benevolence in Galatians 6 when he talks about “sowing” and “reaping.” Still, this does not have to be so. Paul uses the same language when he speaks about his preaching relationship with the Corinthians: “If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we should reap material things from you?” (I Cor. 9:11). Paul may have commonly used such imagery when talking about any kind of giving.³ But even if we assume that Galatians 6:7-10 is speaking of benevolence, this still does not mean Paul’s individual language must be applicable to church activity. Nor does it demand that the Jerusalem Collection in particular is under discussion. As we shall see, there are good reasons for denying that this is so.

The Date of Galatians

For the book of Galatians to refer to the Jerusalem Collection it must have been written about the time of Paul’s 3rd Missionary Journey, the time when these relief funds were collected. This requires a Late Date for Galatians. Gibson affirms a Late Date as well as the

Northern Audience View (i.e., that the epistle was written to churches in the Territory of Galatia). But there are problems with the Late Date/Northern View which Gibson does not address. For example, it is not certain that Paul ever evangelized in the Territory of Galatia. Acts 16:6 and 18:23 are the only passages which might suggest that he did, yet it seems more likely that in these passages the Greek phrase *Galatiken chorān* ("Galatian region") is referring to the area in the southern portion of the Province of Galatia (the location of the churches of Iconium and Antioch-Pisidia). Even if Acts is referring to the Territory of Galatia to the north, the text does not say that Paul established any churches there; it only says that he passed through that region.

One could avoid this difficulty by adopting the Southern Audience View (i.e., written to churches in the southern portion of the Province of Galatia), but there are still problems with a Late Date. For example, it seems strange that Paul would make no mention in Galatians of the decrees of the Jerusalem Conference which by that time he had already delivered to these churches (Acts 15:22-29; 16:4). These decrees had addressed the Judaizing heresy, the very issue which Paul is discussing in Galatians. The Southern View makes more sense with an Early Date (i.e., written at least before Paul's 2nd Missionary Journey).

Whichever view of destination one adopts, there are difficulties involved in identifying Paul's Jerusalem visit of Galatians 2 with his visit recorded in Acts 15. For example, this would mean that in the survey Paul gives of his visits to Jerusalem (Galatians 1-2) he omits any reference to the visit of Acts 12:25 – a surprising omission since Paul's Judaizing opponents might claim he was not being forthright about his Jerusalem contacts. This may pose a problem for any date which places Galatians after Acts 15.⁴

The date of Galatians is one of the most uncertain matters in the field of New Testament literary criticism. We just can't be sure when this epistle was written. Scholars are quite divided over the issue⁵. Yet Gibson's view that the Jerusalem Collection is under discussion in Galatians 6:10 demands a Late Date. If an Early Date is correct, then Gibson's position on the verse crumbles.⁶

The Fundamental Flaw

For the sake of argument, however, I could grant Gibson's contentions concerning all of the above matters. I could grant that a Late Date is correct and Galatians was written while Paul was on his 3rd Journey. I could grant that the Jerusalem Collection underlies Paul's comments in Galatians 6 and that Paul is employing individual language to speak distributively of collective church action. I could even grant that Paul has the Jerusalem Collection in mind in v.10 when he urges the Galatians to do good "to the household of the faith." For the sake of argument, I could grant all of this.

But even if all of this were so, this still does not warrant our assuming that all of v.10 must be speaking of the recipients of the Jerusalem Collection. In other words, there is no reason to think that Paul means that the Jerusalem Collection would provide funds to "all men" as well as to "the household of faith." Brother Gibson does not seem to have considered another possibility: the Jerusalem Collection could simply be what Paul has in mind as the special means of doing good to the household of faith. Paul could be urging the individual Christians in Galatia to be sure to engage in general benevolence to all men, and especially to engage in benevolence to fellow Christians by having a part in the Jerusalem Collection which the Gentile churches were sending to needy Jerusalem saints. This is all that any parallel

between II Corinthians 9 and Galatians 6 need call for. Gibson has assumed that all of v.10 must be indicating the recipients of the Jerusalem Collection funds, and has ignored another possible interpretation⁷. This is what I see as the fundamental flaw in Gibson's argumentation.

I believe that other New Testament statements about the Jerusalem Collection would compel the interpretation I am suggesting (that is, if it is so that the Collection does underlie Galatians 6). We need to allow clear passages to help us understand any passage that is not so clear; it should not be the other way around. I & II Corinthians and Romans speak expressly about the Jerusalem Collection. We need to let Corinthians and Romans clarify what Paul could be meaning in Galatians 6:10 as to who might receive the funds of the Jerusalem Collection. The following explicit passages from Corinthians and Romans identify the recipients of the Collection only as saints:

I Cor 16:1 – “the collection for the saints.”

II Cor 8:4 – “the support of the saints.”

II Cor 9:1 – “this ministry to the saints.”

II Cor 9:12 – “supplying the needs of the saints.”

Rom 15:25 – “serving the saints.”

Rom 15:26 – “poor among the saints in Jerusalem.”

Rom 15:31 – “to the saints.”

In addition, the other statements Paul makes about the nature and purpose of the Collection do not reasonably fit a group of recipients which included non-Christian Jews: (1) Romans 15:27. Paul says that Gentile Christians ought to participate in the Jerusalem Collection because they were obligated to minister in material things to those who had given them their

spiritual things. It was the Jewish Church, not unbelieving Jews, who had ministered spiritual things to the Gentile Christians. (2) II Corinthians 9:12-14; 8:14. Paul says that those who received the funds would glorify God for the Gentiles' obedience to the gospel and the liberality of their contribution, would pray and yearn for them, and would reciprocate the act of charity should the Gentile Christians ever become needy. Only Jews who were Christians would do such things.⁸

The abundance of this evidence cannot be ignored. Over and over again the Jerusalem Collection is expressly designated for indigent saints. In light of this, it is absolutely unreasonable to choose to interpret Galatians 6:10 as saying that the Collection went to "all men" when the verse need only be saying that these funds went to "the household of the faith." The latter interpretation is the one which fits precisely with what the rest of the New Testament clearly states about the Collection.

I have tried to point out in this article some of the problems involved in trying to connect the Jerusalem Collection with Galatians 6:10. Beyond this, I have tried to show that even if one were to grant the connection, this passage should still not be interpreted as indicating that New Testament churches were using their funds to render benevolence to non-Christians. In fact, the very scholars whom brother Gibson cites in his book do not understand Galatians 6:10 to be indicating this. A full discussion of this matter is forthcoming in the next article.

**A RESPONSE TO STEVE GIBSON'S
*GALATIANS 6:10 AND THE GREAT COLLECTION***

PART 2

Steve Gibson has affirmed that in Galatians 6:10 Paul is speaking about collective church action and not individual Christian duty when he says, **“So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”**⁹ Brother Gibson argues that Paul is talking about the Jerusalem Collection, the contribution which Gentile churches made for the needy saints in Jerusalem. If so, Gibson says, this passage would indicate that these relief funds went not just to “the household of the faith,” but also to “all men”—i.e., to both believers and unbelievers. Therefore, church-sponsored benevolence institutions for non-Christians would be scriptural.¹⁰

In the previous article I discussed some of the problems involved in trying connect the Jerusalem Collection with Galatians 6:10. Also, even if the connection were granted for the sake of argument, it is not necessary to think that Paul means the Jerusalem Collection was a way of rendering benevolence to the “all men” of this verse. Gibson fails to consider another, more reasonable interpretation: If Paul is thinking of the Collection in this passage, he is thinking of it only as one way for the Christians of Galatia to do good to “the household of the faith.” Paul would be urging the individual Christians of Galatia to render benevolence to all men, and to especially render benevolence to the household of the faith by participating in the relief effort which the Gentile churches were undertaking for the needy saints in Jerusalem. Clear New Testament passages repeatedly designate the recipients of the Jerusalem Collection as “saints”;

this must govern how one interprets Galatians 6:10. It is an unwarranted assumption to say that in Galatians 6:10 Paul must be including “all men” among the recipients of the Jerusalem Collection (if he is even alluding to it at all).

The Commentators Cited

In support of this, I would refer the reader to the very commentators whom Gibson himself cites in his book. He appeals to various commentators who believe that the Jerusalem Collection is under discussion in Galatians 6:10. But from the way Gibson cites them, a reader may easily get the impression that these men agree with his ultimate conclusion that the relief funds went to “all men.” But these scholars are not saying this at all. They are actually affirming the Jerusalem Collection-view of Galatians 6:10 which I have presented above.

Commentaries – like biblical passages – must be properly interpreted. If brother Gibson thinks these commentators are in full agreement with his position, he has misread them. Yes, they connect Galatians 6:10 with the Jerusalem Collection; but they do not assume, as Gibson does, that all of this verse must be speaking of those who would receive the Collection. They suggest only that Paul is thinking of the Collection as a special way for the Gentile brethren to do good “to the household of the faith.”

Gibson appeals to **J. B. Lightfoot**, one of the first to suggest that the Jerusalem Collection underlies Galatians 6. But Lightfoot never suggests that the recipients of this benevolence included non-Christians. He speaks only of Paul having solicited “alms for the suffering brethren of Judea.”¹¹

Gibson quotes the following comment by **C. K. Barrett** to try to give support to his position:

Paul was at work in Galatia on his collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem.

Perhaps the Galatians had not been as generous as he thought they ought to have been. It is verse 10, with its reference to members of the household of faith, that suggests this possibility.¹²

Notice that Barrett says it is Paul's comment about "the household of faith" which suggests a reference to the Jerusalem Collection. He does not connect the phrase "to all men" with the Collection. Barrett identifies the recipients of the Collection only as "saints." If Gibson had read Barrett's commentary on II Corinthians, it would have become even more evident whom Barrett thinks received the Collection. Commenting on the final phrase in II Corinthians 9:13 ("and with all"), Barrett writes, "that is, with all Christians; Paul is not here thinking of charity beyond the bounds of the Christian society, within which there is a special mutuality of love; cf. Gal vi.10."¹³

Gibson asserts that **Larry Hurtado's** "landmark article...argues the very thesis set forth in this book."¹⁴ Gibson is reading something into Hurtado's words. Though Hurtado thinks the Jerusalem Collection is under discussion in Galatians 6:10, a careful reading of his article will show that he is not saying recipients of the Collection included unbelievers. Hurtado merely suggests that since the Collection provided tangible proof of massive Gentile conversions, Paul hoped this fact could aid in persuading more Jews to accept the truth of Christianity.¹⁵ Where does Hurtado say that the funds of the Jerusalem Collection were for both believing and unbelieving Jews?

I could make the same point regarding the other scholars whom Gibson cites to bolster his position. They connect the Jerusalem Collection with Galatians 6:10, but they do not say that its recipients included non-Christians. **Lloyd Gaston** says only that the Collection was “for the Jerusalem Church.”¹⁶ **Samuel Mikolaski** describes this relief effort as “the collection for the afflicted Christians at Jerusalem.”¹⁷ **John Strelan** only connects the words “especially for members of the household of faith” with the Jerusalem Collection.¹⁸ In a very extensive discussion, **Philip Hughes** always speaks of the Collection being given to saints.¹⁹ **Frank Gaebelein**, in a section of his work entitled “The Recipients” of the Jerusalem Collection, says, “The offering was destined for the Hebrew Christians at Jerusalem, who may have referred to themselves as ‘the poor.’”²⁰ He never mentions non-Christians as possible recipients of this relief fund.

It should be evident from the above discussion that just because a scholar suggests that the Jerusalem Collection is in view in Galatians 6:10 does not mean that he thinks these funds went beyond “the household of the faith.” It bothers me greatly that in brother Gibson’s writings on this subject he leaves the impression that scholars fully agree with him when, in reality, they do not. It is fine to cite scholars who say that Galatians 6 is discussing the Jerusalem Collection, but Gibson should make it clear to his readers that these men do not agree that these funds went to unbelievers.²¹

Now why is it that these scholars do not believe the Jerusalem Collection went to unbelievers? Surely the reason why is because of the many explicit passages in the New Testament which speak only of the Jerusalem Collection going to saints. Neither the biblical text nor the scholars support Gibson’s position.

The “Opportunity” in Galatians 6:10

Perhaps why Gibson thinks that all of Galatians 6:10 must be talking about those who would receive the Jerusalem Collection is because of how he has interpreted the clause “as we have opportunity” at the beginning of the verse. Gibson makes much of the fact that the text says “opportunity” (singular), and not “opportunities.” He concludes that it must be referring to the opportunity of contributing to the Jerusalem Collection. He suggests this interpretive paraphrase: “Since we have an opportunity, right now at this present time, to supply the want of those in Jerusalem, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”²² But is this what Paul means by the word “opportunity”? Gibson quotes **Hans Betz** to help support his interpretation of “opportunity” and, once again, the casual reader will probably get the impression that Betz agrees with Gibson.²³ Betz does believe that the Jerusalem Collection is underway as Paul writes Galatians, but he does not believe that the clause “as we have opportunity” means the opportunity of the Jerusalem Collection. Betz specifically says, “The clause means that the Christian’s ethical responsibility is limited to the time in which he lives *en sarki* [in the flesh].”²⁴ Betz understands the “opportunity” under discussion to be a Christian’s earthly life.

Of all the commentators Gibson cites who believe that the Jerusalem Collection underlies Galatians 6:10, I have not seen any of them take the word “opportunity” to mean the Jerusalem Collection. Paul is saying that our earthly life is our opportunity to render service to others. There is no warrant, therefore, for Gibson to conclude that the entirety of Galatians 6:10 must be indicating those who would receive the Jerusalem Collection.

Some Other Collection for Jerusalem?

Throughout his ministry Paul seems to have encouraged Gentile churches to relieve the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.²⁵ If Paul is not alluding in Galatians 6:10 to the Jerusalem Collection of his 3rd Journey, one might ask if he could be alluding to some earlier relief effort carried out by the churches of Galatia? Gibson suggests this possibility if a Late Date for Galatians is not adopted.²⁶

If this theory is true, there is still no reason to think that non-Christians would have been among the recipients of this earlier relief effort. The recipients of other contributions from Gentile churches did not include non-Christians. The Jerusalem Collection is said only to have been sent to “saints,” and the contribution from the church at Antioch, spoken of in Acts 11:29-30, is said to have been for “the brethren living in Judea.” There is no reason to think that benevolence sent from the churches of Galatia to Jerusalem on another occasion would have involved other (i.e., non-Christian) recipients. There is certainly no warrant for taking Galatians 6:10 to indicate that it did, anymore than if the Jerusalem Collection of the 3rd Journey were being referred to.

Alan Cole is a commentator who believes that a relief effort earlier than Paul’s 3rd Journey is under discussion in Galatians 6. Gibson cites Cole as one of those scholars who supports his view. But again, this is only partially true. Gibson’s readers need to understand that Cole doesn’t take Galatians 6:10 to be indicating that unbelievers were among the recipients of these funds. Cole only employs terms like “fellow-Christians,” “the brothers,” and “poor saints” to designate the ones who received the contribution.²⁷

The main purpose of this second article has been to point out that even the scholars whom brother Gibson uses to lend support to his position do not agree that Galatians 6:10 is speaking of non-Christians receiving benevolence from the Galatian churches. Gibson's position is totally unfounded and, as far as I can see, it is completely unsupported by any of the scholars whom he tries to "place in his corner." The final article of this series will examine Gibson's assertions regarding II Corinthians 9:13 and the phrase "to all men."

**A RESPONSE TO STEVE GIBSON'S
GALATIANS 6:10 AND THE GREAT COLLECTION**

PART 3

The Jerusalem Collection was an important aspect of Paul's work during his 3rd Missionary Journey. In II Corinthians 9:12-13 Paul explained to the church at Corinth what he hoped this gift from Gentile churches to the needy saints of Jerusalem would accomplish:

¹² The ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God. ¹³ Because of the proof given by this ministry they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all.

When Paul speaks of the "contribution to them and to all" in v.13, the word "them" obviously refers to the poor saints in Jerusalem. But to whom does the word "all" refer? Since Paul repeatedly identifies the Jerusalem Collection as a ministry to "saints," the most reasonable interpretation is that "all" refers to all Christians. But Steve Gibson argues that "all" refers to all men – both believers and unbelievers.²⁸ Institutional brethren want to interpret the verse in this way because it would nullify one of the arguments made against church-sponsored benevolence institutions, viz., that New Testament churches never used their funds to relieve non-Christians.

Brother Gibson admits that he interprets II Corinthians 9:13 in light of Galatians 6:10, a verse which he claims is listing unbelievers as recipients of the Jerusalem Collection.²⁹ If Gibson's view of Galatians 6:10 is not correct (and my previous articles have tried to show that

it is not), then his argument for seeing unbelievers in II Corinthians 9:13 is greatly weakened. Still, in this final article I would like to respond to the specific assertions which Gibson makes about II Corinthians 9:13.

The Meaning of II Corinthians 9:13

The Jerusalem Collection was a work of benevolence, but it was also something much more. As an offering from Gentile churches to Jerusalem saints, it demonstrated that Gentile believers now shared a common faith with Jewish believers. It manifested the Gentiles' spiritual bond, not only with the Jewish saints at Jerusalem, but with all others (Jew or Gentile) who had accepted the gospel which had gone forth from Jerusalem. For this reason, Paul says that the recipients of this benevolence would glorify God for the "contribution to them and to all." The contribution was sent to needy saints in Jerusalem, yet it signified unity with every Christian.

Despite the fact that the New Testament repeatedly identifies the recipients of the Jerusalem Collection as "saints," brother Gibson says that saints were only the *main* recipients. He says that the words "and to all" in II Corinthians 9:13 indicate that unbelievers also received these funds. This view creates several problems for anyone who holds it.

First of all, it must be admitted that from the beginning of Paul's discussion of the Jerusalem Collection in 8:1 until the end of chapter 9, he never refers to anyone other than saints receiving these funds. If, at the close of the discussion, the words "and to all" mean that the funds were going to unbelievers also, then Paul has introduced a completely new idea which he had not previously mentioned. Not even in his first letter to Corinth had Paul said that unbelievers were included in the relief effort; I Corinthians spoke only of "the collection for the

saints” (16:1). All Gibson can do is assume that on some prior occasion Paul had made it clear to the Corinthians that this was also a collection for non-saints. And yet, how strange that when Paul writes to the church at Rome and informs them of his mission to Jerusalem, he describes it only as follows: “Now I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem” (Rom. 15:25-26). If unbelievers were also receiving the Jerusalem Collection, why didn’t Paul say so when he informed the church at Rome about the Collection?

Paul’s Terminology

Another problem for Gibson’s view is the terminology Paul uses when referring to the Jerusalem Collection. The Greek word for “contribution” in II Corinthians 9:13 is *koinonia*, a word which means “sharing” or “fellowship.” Throughout the New Testament *koinonia* denotes the spiritual sharing-together of saints with God, with the things of God, or with other saints. Paul employs this word in II Corinthians 8:4 to refer to the Jerusalem relief effort, and again in 9:13 and Romans 15:26 to denote the contribution itself. Paul’s use of this term indicates that the contribution was a sign of Christian fellowship between those giving it and those receiving it. As Joseph Thayer says, it was “an embodiment and proof of fellowship.”³⁰ Persons outside the fellowship of Christ could not have been the intended beneficiaries of this contribution.

Gibson tries to circumvent this argument by pointing out that religious fellowship is not always implied in a monetary transaction between Christians and sinners. He says that if *koinonia* were used to designate a contribution to sinners, it would simply denote a sharing of funds with no suggestion of religious fellowship.³¹ But throughout the New Testament *koinonia*

is used to refer to religious sharing, not transactions between Christians and sinners. More specifically, the context of II Corinthians 8-9 makes it clear that Paul is using the word to refer to religious sharing. He speaks of the “*koinonia* of the ministry to the saints,” and says that “because of the proof given by this ministry they will glorify God for your obedience” (8:4; 9:13). There is no way around the fact that when Paul uses *koinonia* to refer to the Jerusalem Collection, he means that the contribution signified religious fellowship. The word must bear this connotation in 9:13 when Paul speaks of the “*koinonia* to them and to all.”

Gibson admits that *koinonia* indicates religious fellowship when it is used of a contribution from saints to other saints.³² But this is exactly what we have in 9:13 with the words “*koinonia* to them” (which Gibson agrees is referring to Jerusalem saints). If “*koinonia* to them” suggests religious fellowship, then “*koinonia* ... to all” must suggest the same thing. The phrases “to them” and “to all” are both connected syntactically to “*koinonia*” in this sentence. The contribution could not signify religious fellowship with some recipients, yet not signify it with other recipients.

Paul also uses another term which indicates that the Jerusalem Collection was a sign of religious fellowship. The word for “collection” in I Corinthians 16:1-2 is *logeia*. Adolf Deissmann says that in the Greek world *logeia* was “used chiefly of religious collections for a god, a temple, etc.”³³ Paul obviously used this term because the funds of the Corinthian church were a religious collection for the saints of God. It does violence to Paul’s language to say that these funds were also intended for those who were not worshipers of Christ.

Future Contributions?

Some scholars believe that “and to all” in II Corinthians 9:13 is not referring to beneficiaries of the present relief effort, but to those who might receive benevolence from Corinth in the future. If this view is correct, then Gibson suggests that Paul is including unbelievers among the recipients of these future contributions.³⁴ Again, the stated purpose of the present contribution and Paul’s use of the words *koinonia* and *logeia* negate Gibson’s suggestion. Even the sources Gibson cites to support this view (viz., J. W. McGarvey and the *Interpreter’s Bible*) do not claim that Paul is talking about unbelievers in this passage. McGarvey says that Paul “took no collection for [non-Christian Jews], and...they were in no manner in his thought in this connection.”³⁵ The *Interpreter’s Bible* specifically states that “and to all” refers to “other acts of helpfulness to ‘all’ other Christians as opportunities arise.”³⁶

“*Pantas*”

The Greek word for “all” in II Corinthians 9:13 is *pantas*. Gibson devotes a good deal of attention to this word as he seeks to prove that “and to all” refers to non-Christians. One argument Gibson makes is that *pantas* is used in Galatians 6:10 to refer to “all men” (both believers and unbelievers). Gibson says that it should be understood exactly the same way in II Corinthians 9:13. The King James Version even translates *pantas* in II Corinthians 9:13 “all men.”

Several facts about this word and its usage need to be understood, however. First of all, *pantas* is an adjective.³⁷ A Greek adjective does not always modify a noun; it is often used as a substantive (i.e., as a substitute for a noun). When an adjective is used in this way, translators sometimes insert an English noun into the text to assist in bringing out the substantive idea to

the English reader. The insertion is called an interpolation.³⁸ The important thing to realize is that context always determines an adjectival substantive's referent. In the words of grammarian Nigel Turner, "The absence of the noun ... occurs in adjectival and other kinds of attributes ... and the context supplies its lack."³⁹

When the King James Version renders *pantas* in II Corinthians 9:13 "all men," the word "men" is merely an interpolation; it is not in the Greek text. The context must determine to whom the word "all" refers. In Galatians 6:10 the context clearly indicates that *pantas* there means "all men" in the sense of believers and unbelievers. The context of II Corinthians 9:13 is different. In this verse Paul is concluding a discussion of the ministry to the saints in Jerusalem, and the context indicates that *pantas* here refers to all other saints.

Gibson affirms, however, that *pantas* as used in II Corinthians 9:13 must mean "all men" in the sense of believers and unbelievers because this is how Joseph Thayer defines the word. Actually, Thayer never refers specifically to II Corinthians 9:13 in his remarks, but Gibson appeals to Thayer's general discussion of *pantas* when used "without any addition" (i.e., without another word grammatically connected to it).⁴⁰ Gibson makes this statement: "Thayer says that when such a plural form appears 'without any addition,' the meaning is 'all men.'" Therefore, Gibson says, "*pantas*, by definition, includes non-saints."⁴¹

Gibson is misreading Thayer. Thayer is not saying that this use of *pantas* always means "all men." He is saying that it sometimes means "all men," and at other times it means a more limited group. Gibson overlooks the following passages which Thayer includes in his examples of *pantas* used without addition. Consider who is being referred to in these verses:

Matt. 21:26 = all the multitude in the temple.

I Cor. 8:1 = all the members of the church who had knowledge.

I Cor. 8:7 = all the members of the church.

John 3:26 = all the Jews who were coming to be baptized.

Matt. 14:20 = all the multitude at the feeding of the 5000.

The context of each of these passages limits the “all” under discussion to a particular group of people. Gibson errs greatly when he says that Thayer supports the view that *pantas* in II Corinthians 9:13 must include unbelievers. In reality, Thayer’s comments only confirm the fact that context must determine whom this word is designating.

Do the Scholars Really Agree With Gibson?

Those brethren who see unbelievers in II Corinthians 9:13 are hard-pressed to find scholars who agree with them. Gibson lists several as endorsing his position,⁴² but his construction of their statements is dubious at best. Because the translators of the **New International Version** render *pantas* “everyone else,” Gibson concludes that they understand it to include unbelievers. But “everyone else” can just as easily mean every other Christian. The same is true of the short explanatory notes by **Albert Barnes** (“all others whom you may have the opportunity of relieving”) and **John Wesley** (“who stand in need of it”).⁴³ These men may simply be talking about other Christians. How can Gibson confidently claim otherwise?

Matthew Henry says that the contribution was proof of the Corinthians’ “true love to all men.” Gibson says he means by this that the contribution was given to both believers and unbelievers. It is more likely, however, that Henry is referring to the matter of Jew-Gentile

relations within the Church. Whenever Henry speaks expressly about the recipients of the Jerusalem Collection, he identifies them only as saints.⁴⁴

Commentator **Hans Betz**, in a footnote to II Corinthians 9:13, refers the reader to Galatians 6:10 and his commentary on that verse. Gibson concludes from this that Betz believes II Corinthians 9:13 speaks of unbelievers receiving the Jerusalem Collection. I fail to see how Gibson can draw this conclusion. Betz never even mentions the Collection in his comments on Galatians 6:10. Whenever Betz does speak about the Collection in his commentary, he says only that it was for the Jerusalem saints.⁴⁵

Gibson is guilty of clear misrepresentation in several instances. I have already discussed how he misconstrues what **Thayer** says about *pantas*. He does the same thing with the comments of **Alfred Plummer**. Because Plummer paraphrases the last part of II Corinthians 9:13, “contribution to their need and to the general good,”⁴⁶ Gibson says that he must understand *pantas* to include unbelievers. But Plummer means the good of brethren generally; he is not talking about unbelievers. In a later commentary he specifically states that *pantas* means “a benefit conferred on the brethren at Jerusalem is a benefit to the whole body of Christians.”⁴⁷

Gibson also misrepresents the view of **Ralph Martin**. Martin gives the following explanation of the phrase “and to all” in II Corinthians 9:13: “We must take the phrase to be a general one in praise of the generous spirit that moves the readers, and would move them wherever there may be a need.” Gibson assumes that “wherever there may be a need” means the needs of unbelievers. But Martin is talking about the needs of Christians. He specifically refers the reader to the commentary of R. V. G. Tasker which, he says, gives the same

interpretation as the one he has presented.⁴⁸ Tasker's commentary says this: "The Corinthians' contribution is for the poor saints at Jerusalem only; but the fellowship which was expressed in it was, the apostle assumes, felt for all other Christians."⁴⁹

Final Thoughts

Steve Gibson's view that the Jerusalem Collection went to unbelievers is untenable. Neither Galatians 6:10 nor II Corinthians 9:13 teach it. I cannot help but be disturbed by Gibson's misuse of scholarly writings to try to shore up his position. The scholars do not affirm what Gibson says they affirm; often they affirm just the opposite. The word of God deserves better treatment than this.

Institutional brethren need to accept the fact that there is no New Testament example of church funds being used in benevolence to non-Christians. There must have been many indigent persons in Jerusalem and elsewhere during the first century – both Christians and non-Christians. But New Testament churches relieved only needy Christians. Surely this should teach us something about the work of a local church. Individual Christians are to do good to all men, but through the local church Christians render a special good to the household of the faith.

Endnotes

¹ Steve Gibson, *Galatians 6:10 and the Great Collection* (Taylor, Tx: published by the author, 1990). Gibson also gives a synopsis of his views in "The Meaning of Galatians 6:10," *The Restorer* (August, 1990), pp. 11-13.

² *Ibid.*, p. 96.

³ See F. F. Bruce, *Galatians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), p. 266.

⁴ A fuller discussion of these and other problems involved in the dating of Galatians can be found in any good critical introduction.

⁵ Gibson's assertion (*ibid.*, pp. 14-15) that the arguments against the Late Date are really just the result of liberal criticism is incorrect. One will find liberal and conservative scholars on both sides of the question.

⁶ If a Late Date is not correct, Gibson suggests that an earlier relief effort involving the Galatian churches may be in view in 6:10. This suggestion will be discussed in the second article of this series.

⁷ The reason why Gibson assumes that the entirety of the verse must be speaking of the recipients of the Collection is apparently because he takes the word "opportunity" to refer specifically to the Collection. This will be discussed in the next article.

⁸ Gibson's re-examination of II Corinthians 9:12-14, in which he tries to get around the force of this argument, is based upon the assumption that his position on Galatians 6:10 is true – thus begging the question (*ibid.*, pp. 76-81).

⁹ Steve Gibson, *Galatians 6:10 and the Great Collection* (Taylor, Tx: published by the author, 1990); "The Meaning of Galatians 6:10," *The Restorer* (August, 1990), pp. 11-13.

¹⁰ The issue of church-sponsored benevolence institutions involves more than the question of whether churches may relieve non-Christians. It also involves whether churches may create and support organizations to do work which God assigned to each local church. Gibson never addresses the latter question.

¹¹ J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (London: MacMillan, 1866), p. 55; see also pp. 25, 110, 216.

¹² C. K. Barrett, *Freedom and Obligation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985), pp. 82.

¹³ C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 241.

¹⁴ Gibson, *Galatians 6:10...*, p. 18.

¹⁵ Larry Hurtado, "The Jerusalem Collection and the Book of Galatians" *Journal for the Study of the NT* 5 (Oct, '79), pp. 46-62.

¹⁶ Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), pp. 109, 223.

¹⁷ Donald Guthrie and J. A. Motyer, eds., *The New Bible Commentary* (Carmel, NY: Guideposts, 1970), p. 1104.

¹⁸ John Strelan, "Burden-Bearing and the Law of Christ: A Re-examination of Galatians 6:2," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 94 (1975), pp. 266-276.

¹⁹ Philip Hughes, *New International Commentary on II Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), pp. 283-342.

²⁰ Frank Gaebelin, *Expositor's Bible Commentary Vol. 10* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), pp. 503, 311.

²¹ Gibson says in his introduction, "While the 'saints only' view was hammered out as a refuge amid heated controversy and bitter division, the present proposal has actually had the widespread support of detached scholars for generations." He then gives a list of the major scholars who allegedly support his proposal (*Galatians 6:10...*, p. viii). I refer to each of these scholars in this series of articles – and I show what they really say – with the exception of John Bligh and Stephen Neill, whose works I have not yet been able to access. I suspect, however, that these two scholars do not fully agree with Gibson any more than the other scholars do.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 67-69.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

²⁴ Hans Betz, *Galatians* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), p. 310.

²⁵ See Gal. 2:9-10; Acts 11:30; 12:25.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

²⁷ Alan Cole, *Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), p. 179.

²⁸ S. Gibson, *Galatians 6:10 and the Great Collection* (Taylor, Tx: published by the author, 1990), pp. 76-93.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

³⁰ J. Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the NT* (Grand Rapids: Associated Publishers and Authors), p. 352.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 88-91.

³² Ibid., p. 90.

³³ A. Deissmann, *Light From the Ancient East* (New York: Harper, 1922), p. 105.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 79-80.

³⁵ J. W. McGarvey and P. Pendleton, *Commentary on Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans* (Delight: Gospel Light, 1875), p. 219.

³⁶ *The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. 10 (New York: Abingdon, 1953), p. 379.

³⁷ *Pantas* is the masculine, accusative, plural form of *pas* which means "all, every."

³⁸ An interpolated word is usually italicized in our Bibles.

³⁹ J. H. Moulton and N. Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, Vol. III (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), p. 16.

⁴⁰ See Thayer, p. 492.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 79, 95.

⁴² Ibid., pp. 82-85.

⁴³ A. Barnes, *Notes on II Corinthians and Galatians* (New York: Harper, 1856), p. 202; J. Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament* (London: Mason, 1842), p. 464.

⁴⁴ M. Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (New York: Revell), n.d., pp. 628-634.

⁴⁵ Hans Betz, *Galatians* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), pp. 101-103, 310-311.

⁴⁶ A. Plummer, *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903), p. 165.

⁴⁷ A. Plummer, *International Critical Commentary*, Vol. 28 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1915), p. 267.

⁴⁸ R. Martin, *II Corinthians* (Waco: Word Books, 1986), p. 294.

⁴⁹ R. V. G. Tasker, *II Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), p. 129. The only commentators Gibson references whom I have not addressed are the following, whose works have been unavailable to me: D. D. Wheddon, C. H. Zahniser, F. Carver, and G. R. Beasley-Murray.