

STEPHAN JOUBERT

Paul as Benefactor

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*

124

Mohr Siebeck

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Martin Hengel und Otfried Hofius

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Stephan Joubert

Paul as Benefactor

Reciprocity, Strategy and Theological Reflection
in Paul's Collection

Mohr Siebeck

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To Andrie du Toit, Jan van der Watt
and Hans-Josef Klauck

Preface

After the completion of my doctoral studies in 1987, I had always wanted to analyse the Pauline Collection from a different angle. I wish to thank the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation for the scholarship in 1997, which enabled me to study in Germany. During my stay at the University of Würzburg, Hans-Josef Klauck encouraged me to re-examine the collection critically, incorporating an understanding of the social background(s) of the New Testament, with a close reading of relevant texts. His two short but significant commentaries on 1 and 2 Corinthians, as well as his influential *religionsgeschichtlichen* studies on the world of the New Testament served as examples, and paved the way for indepth research.

The influential works on the Pauline Collection by Georgi and Nickle, have for long been the standard authorities on the subject. Apart from a few less prominent voices attempting to participate in the debate, their insights went unchallenged. Without disregarding the contributions of Georgi and Nickle, it is hoped that this study will express the need for an on-going search for new answers to old questions regarding the Pauline Collection.

This project would not have been possible without the assistance and encouragement of Hans-Josef Klauck, with whom I had the opportunity of spending pleasant hours in discussion during 1997. My thanks also go to Frau Hannelore Ferner, secretary in the Department of New Testament Studies at the University of Würzburg, for all her assistance in practical, everyday matters while I was resident in Germany.

I would also like to thank the members of the "Oberseminar" (1997) at Würzburg, who painstakingly assisted me in the long process of reading numerous primary texts on patronage and "euergetism". A word of gratitude is also due to my colleague at the University of Pretoria, Prof. Jan van der Watt, for his words of advice throughout the course of this project. In the same breath, I would like to mention Proff. Bruce Malina, Jerome Neyrey and Thomas Söding for their friendship and formative theological advice. A last word of appreciation to our Dean at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Pretoria, Prof. Cas Vos, for his kind assistance, and Me. Elize Henning as well as Mr Petrus Maritz, who, in their own ways, contributed to the completion of the manuscript. Not least, I am indebted

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To Marietjie, Tarien and Elani, thank you!

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Abbreviations

AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AncB	Anchor Bible
AJP	American Journal of Philology
AncSoc	Ancient Society
ANRW	H. Temporini – W. Haase (eds.) Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt. Geschichte und Kultur im Spiegel der neueren Forschung. Berlin – New York.
AThANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
AthD	Acta Theologica Danica
AUSS	Andrews University Seminary Studies
BBB	Bonner Biblische Beiträge
Bib	Biblica
	Biblical Interpretation
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BU	Biblische Untersuchungen
BZ	Biblische Zeitschrift
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CQ	Classical Quarterly
EHS.T	Europäische Hochschulschriften. Reihe 23, Theologie
EKK	Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar
EpRe	Epworth Review
EQ	Evangelical Quarterly
EvTh	Evangelische Theologie
ExpT	Expository Times
FzB	Forschung zur Bibel
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GaR	Greece and Rome
GTA	Göttinger Theologische Arbeiten
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HSCP	Harvard Studies in Classical Philology
HTHK	Herder's Theologischer Kommentar
HTR	Harvard Theological Review
HUCA	Hebrew Union College Annual
ICC	International Critical Commentary
Interp.	Interpretation
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JRS	Journal of Roman Studies

JSNT	Journal for the Study of the New Testament
JSNTS	Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series
JSOTS	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series
JThS	Journal of Theological Studies
KEK	Kritisch-Exegetischer Kommentar
KThS	Kohlhammer Studienbücher Theologie
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
MSSNTS	Monograph Series. Society for New Testament Studies
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
Neotest.	Neotestamentica
NTA	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen
NTD	Neues Testament Deutsch
NTS	New Testament Studies
NT.S	Novum Testamentum. Supplements
ÖTK	Ökumenischer Taschenbuchkommentar zum Neuen Testament
Rexp	Review and Expositor
RNT	Regensburger Neues Testament
SBL.DS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBL.SBS	Society of Biblical Literature Sources for Biblical Study
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SKK	Stuttgarter kleiner Kommentar
ThHK	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
ThZ	Theologische Zeitschrift
TynBul	Tyndale Bulletin
UTB	Uni-Taschenbücher
VF	Verkündigung und Forschung
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZNW	Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
ZPE	Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik

Chapter 1

Introduction

The Current Communitarian Opinion on Paul's Collection

New Testament scholars frequently emphasise the importance of Paul's collection for Jerusalem (hence: '*the collection*'). In particular: the theological motives of the different parties involved in the collection, as well as the chronological framework of this project have presented themselves as important topics for discussion.¹ Although scholars have always been aware of the caritative functions of the collection, and have frequently stressed the importance thereof, most have, in the end, opted for a strictly 'theological' understanding of this imaginative project. As a matter of fact, according to the present scholarly consensus, Paul understood the collection as a means by which to achieve some 'higher theological aims,' as the following quotations indicate:

The real significance of the collection is not the money as such or the amount of help it will bring, but the demonstration of unity between Jews and Gentiles within the Church.²

... sie [the collection] - war mehr als eine Hilfsleistung für die Armen der Urgemeinde.³

The collection was not merely a means of alleviating want; it was also a recognition of Jerusalem's special status as the mother church of the new Israel, an acknowledgement on the part of the Gentile Church of their indebtedness to Jerusalem as the origin of spiritual blessing (Rom 15,27).⁴

¹ The importance of the collection is reflected in almost all monographs dealing with the chronological framework of Paul's ministry. Cf. Suhl, *Paulus und seine Briefe*; Lüdemann, *Paulus, der Heidenapostel I*; Hyldahl, *Die Paulinische Chronologie*; and Riesner, *Die Frühzeit des Apostels Paulus*.

² Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, 38.

³ Eckert, "Die Kollekte des Paulus für Jerusalem", 66.

⁴ Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 102-103.

Auch muß vornherein gesagt werden, daß es nicht genügt, die Sammlung nur als Hilfsaktion für in materieller Not befindliche Glaubensbrüder und -schwestern anzusehen.⁵

It is not difficult to see why the collection has frequently been related to, and explained, in terms of theological factors. Even a superficial reading of Paul's references to the collection, dispersed throughout his four so-called 'main-letters' (e.g. 1 Cor 16,1-4; 2 Cor 8-9; Gal 2,10; Rom 15,25-31),⁶ indicates that this was no 'ordinary' fund raising project. The collection had far-reaching implications for all the parties involved. But what functions did the collection actually fulfil within the early Christian movement? Was it a visible means to give expression to the unity between Jewish and Gentile Christians?⁷ Or was it a conscious effort on the part of the apostle to emphasise the legitimate position of Gentile Christianity "*als Frucht am Baum im Weingarten Israel?*"⁸ Or should one rather, together with Johannes Munck, understand the collection from the perspective of Paul's final journey to Jerusalem in the company of a contingent of non-Jewish Christians as part of a 'provocative' missionary strategy to fill the Jews with envy at the very sight of Gentiles bringing a monetary offering into the Holy City?⁹ Does Dieter Georgi's modified version of Munck's thesis perhaps uncover the *traditionsgeschichtlichen Hintergrund* of the collection with his view that Paul, in line with [den] *Zeichenhandlungen der alttestamentlichen Propheten*, understood this project as an eschatological demonstration for Jerusalem? Is he correct when he assumes that

⁵ Gnlika, "Die Kollekte der paulinischen Gemeinden für Jerusalem", 301-2.

⁶ According to Trobisch, *Die Paulusbriefe und die Anfänge der christlichen Publizistik*, 103, Paul's collection, which is only referred to in his four main letters, was decisive in grouping these letters together in the early Christian canon. In his own words: "der Spendenaufwurf für Jerusalem verbindet alle vier Briefe: Der Galaterbrief erklärt, wie es zu dieser Aktion gekommen ist. Am Ende des 1. Korintherbriefes beschreibt Paulus, wie diese Kollekte in den Gemeinden in Galatien wie in Korinth organisiert werden sollte. Im 2. Korintherbrief bildet dieser 'Dienst an den Heiligen' (2 Kor 9,1) das zentrale Thema des Spendenaufwurfes in 2 Kor 8-9. Und der erfolgreiche Abschluß dieses Projektes ist Röm 15,26 vermeldet."

⁷ In this regard Hainz, *Koinonia*, 152, understands the collection "als eine Konkretion bzw. als Ausdruck und Beweis der zwischen Jerusalem und den heidenchristlichen Kirchen bestehenden 'Gemeinschaft'." Brändle, "Geld und Gnade (zu II Kor 8,9)", 270, also shares the same view: "Eindeutig scheint mir, daß die Kollekte für Paulus in erster Linie die Zusammengehörigkeit der heidenchristlichen Gemeinden mit der Muttergemeinde in Jerusalem repräsentieren sollte."

⁸ Bartsch, "Wenn ich ihnen diese Frucht versiegelt habe", 107.

⁹ Munck, *Paulus und die Heilsgeschichte*, 298-302. According to Munck it was Paul's "...Absicht, die Juden zu erretten, indem er sie auf die Heiden eifersüchtig macht, die in grosser Zahl das Evangelium annehmen." As the deliverer of the collection, he therefore acted like a 'Moses-like' figure who aimed at bringing the unbelieving Jews to repentance.

the collection was intended to visibly remind the Jews of the pilgrimage of the nations to Jerusalem?¹⁰ Or should one rather follow some of the new notions, such as Klaus Berger's understanding of the collection as an act of almsgiving on the part of Gentile Christians to the poor in Jerusalem as a substitute for their own circumcision?¹¹ Or Furnish's promising suggestion that Paul's churches probably understood their gifts to Jerusalem as an act of patronage, which placed the Judean believers under obligation to them as client congregations?¹² Perhaps it may be more sound to interpret the collection as an undertaking which had diverse significance for the respective participants,¹³ and which simultaneously fulfilled different theological functions within the various socio-historical contexts in the early church?

1.1. *Uniting body and soul again*

Despite some new opinions concerning the collection, the views of Munck and Georgi have provided the conceptual framework for the current understanding of the collection.¹⁴ It appears as if they did 'solve' the most puzzling questions related to the collection to the satisfaction of the majority of scholars. That this would be the case is illustrated by similar understanding regarding the collection being found repeatedly in academic publications that directly or indirectly deal with this project.¹⁵ Recent research has not

¹⁰ Georgi, *Der Armen zu gedenken*, 84-85.

¹¹ Berger, "Almosen für Israel", 180-203.

¹² Furnish, 2 *Corinthians*, 413.

¹³ So, e.g., Nickle, *The Collection*, 100-143, who understands the collection as an act of Christian charity, as well as a visible expression of the unity of the church. At the same time, the collection also fulfils an important eschatological function in terms of Paul's own apostolic ministry and the position of Israel in the '*Heilsgeschichte*'. See in this regard also McKnight, "The collection".

¹⁴ Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 423, is of the opinion that the studies of Georgi and Nickle have had the most impact on scholars' understanding of the collection, but that the work by Georgi has been more influential.

¹⁵ In the most recent commentaries the significance of the collection is, to a large extent, still interpreted in terms of the views developed by Munck and Georgi (cf. e.g., Wolff, *Der zweite Brief des Paulus an die Korinther*, and Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*). In many recent works on Paul's theology, the authors do not even bother to address the collection issue in any detail (e.g., Barrett, *Paul*, and Lohse, *Paulus*). Even more puzzling is the fact that biblical scholars, who make use of sociological theories to interpret the social framework of Paul's ministry, do not pay much attention to the collection either. One would have at least expected these researchers, in their attempts to explain the 'social dynamics' of Pauline Christianity, to deal with the impact of social factors on Paul's conceptualisation of this project in a much more constructive manner than what the present case is (e.g., MacDonald, *The Pauline Churches*). Research articles also do not offer much that is new on the collection (cf. e.g., Legrand,

really broken much new ground. Most scholars still proceed from the assumption that Paul understood the collection mainly as an 'eschatological provocation' to Jerusalem, and as a symbol of unity between the early Christians. Although (some of) these interpretations might be correct, they do not distinguish clearly between various interpretations of the collection by Paul and by Jerusalem respectively. Scholars focus mainly on Paul's theological understanding of the collection, while ignoring the basic interpretative framework of meaning, which he attached to this project, and which also constituted his various theological reflections in this regard.

To a large extent, Paul and the other parties involved in the collection project are portrayed as a group of intellectuals who developed complex cognitive interpretations in service of some higher theological ideals. The fact that they were people of flesh and blood, who formulated solutions to specific problems they faced within the confines and constraints of their own life-world(s), has largely been ignored. The most recent example of such a consistently theological interpretation of the collection, with little consideration for the socio-historical and ideological frameworks, within which this project was undertaken and within which it attained specific meaning(s), is presented in the study of Beckheuer. According to him, Paul's eschatological interpretation of Trito-Isaiah led him to develop a *Rettungsgeschichte für Heiden und Juden*, which articulated the collection during all its phases.¹⁶ Even when Paul dealt with practical questions related to the organisation of the collection, he did it *in der Sprache der theologischen Reflexion* (1 Cor 16,1-4).¹⁷

"That We Remember the Poor"). The short study by Reumann, "Contributions of the Philippian Community to Paul and to Earliest Christianity", at least addresses the possible involvement of the Philippians in the collection, while a technical discussion on the background of certain concepts used by Paul when dealing with the collection is presented by Ascough, "The Completion of a Religious Duty". A ray of hope toward a more satisfactory interpretation is, however, to be found in a materialist analysis of the collection by Horrell, "Paul's Collection: Resources for a Materialist Theology". According to Horrell, Paul's use of theological language in terms of the collection should not lead us to 'over-spiritualise' his concerns, since his main concern was essentially and unavoidably material, namely the collection and redistribution of money. Horrell correctly states that the so-called 'spiritual' and 'material' dichotomy in terms of the collection is a false and "ultimately unsustainable distinction ... The spiritual and material, the social and theological, are here inextricably intertwined" (p. 79).

¹⁶ Beckheuer, *Paulus und Jerusalem. Kollekte und Mission im theologischen Denken des Heidenapostels*, 81.

¹⁷ Beckheuer, *Paulus und Jerusalem*, 271. His interpretation of 2 Cor 9,5f. where the collection is understood as a blessing to the people of Jerusalem along the lines of Is 65, 9, reflects his own theological pre-occupation: "Dieser religiöse Sinnhorizont aus TriJes verdeutlicht dem Heidenapostel die Gewißheit der Segensfülle, die er auf das Kollektununternehmen bezieht. So wie bei TriJes der Übergang von der früheren Gerichtsprophetie zur Heilsverheißung vollzieht, so verkündigt Paulus im Zusammenhang mit der

The theoretical question to be addressed in this study is whether this strong emphasis on the 'theology of the collection' does not restrict a more holistic understanding of this project. A more encompassing approach that focuses on the consistent interplay of all the relevant social and theological factors related to the collection is long overdue. Since the collection formed a central facet of Paul's apostolic ministry, and also determined his apostolic self-understanding and social status¹⁸ within the early Christian movement, present 'scholarly consensus', needs to be challenged by new perspectives that will again unite the 'body and soul' of early Christianity.

Ideologies, conventions and processes inherent to the social environment within which the early Christians found themselves largely determined their understanding of reality. These factors also instilled meaning to the collection, from its 'theological conception' to its organisation and the eventual delivery thereof. Paul's theological reflection on this project carried with it particular values and beliefs from his environment. His theological views also informed and transformed some of these beliefs and values. Therefore, the *socio-historical context* of the collection cannot merely be viewed as 'background information', as a sort of a vantage point from which to proceed to the 'actual theological understanding' of this project. It should rather be seen as the interpretative framework, as both decor and foreground within which symbols, beliefs, perceptions, and social forms of interaction of Paul and the other role players in the collection took shape and attained specific socio-religious meanings.

In the light of the lacunae in present research, and the theoretical questions posed, the aim of this study is the investigation of the interaction between various social and theological facets concerning the collection. In other words, the collection will be approached as a venture by Paul to help solve the poverty of the believers in Judea, and in so doing, to give concrete expression to his role as 'benefactor' of the believers in Jerusalem. At the same time, the interaction between Paul and the leadership of the Jerusalem community, who viewed themselves as benefactors within the early Christian movement, will also be analysed.

Organisation der Sammlung den gnädigen handelnden Gott, der mit seinem geschichtlichen Eingreifen durch Jesus Christus den Übergang vom Unheil zum Heil demonstriert."

¹⁸ 'Status' is used in this study to indicate social standing of individuals within their respective groups and within society. Status thus functions as a social position. But status also functions as a value, since one's status is invariably assessed in terms of what others perceive one's position to be worth. Cf. in this regard also the views of Kidd, *Wealth and Beneficence in the Pastoral Epistles*, 50-55, and Malina & Neyrey, "Conflict in Luke-Acts", 97-124.

1.2. Hypotheses and aims of the investigation

The following hypotheses will be tested in this study:

A. The collection is to be understood in terms of the social convention of *benefit exchange*. Reciprocity was at the heart of all forms of benevolence in the ancient Graeco-Roman world. The bestowal of gifts initiated the establishment of long-term relationships that involved mutual obligations and clear status differentials between the transactors.

1. Paul interpreted the request from the leadership of the Jerusalem church at the Jerusalem meeting, not to forget the poor (Gal 2,10), in terms of the principles inherent to reciprocal relationships within the Graeco-Roman world. In this relationship the Jerusalem leadership functioned as the initial *benefactors*, since they, by recognising Paul's Law-free gospel, indebted him to them.

2. In response to their benefaction to Paul, the Jerusalem church 'requested' from him and Barnabas, as representatives of the Christian community in Antioch, and as *beneficiaries* in this reciprocal relationship, to address the needs of the socially destitute in Jerusalem (Gal 2,10). By this 'request' the Jerusalem leadership publicly acknowledged that Paul (and Barnabas) had access to material means, which were not routinely available to them.

B. In order to fulfil his obligations towards Jerusalem, but also because the church in Antioch did not live up to their responsibilities in this regard, Paul took it upon himself to organise a collection in the Christian communities in Galatia, Achaia and Macedonia (and Asia?) under his control. Throughout the project these Christian communities, under Paul's control, were included as *beneficiaries* in the reciprocal relationship between him and the Jerusalem church.

1. In terms of the so-called 'coherence-contingency'¹⁹ scheme of Paul's hermeneutic, he used the 'stable, constant elements' which underlay the 'ideological' basis of his gospel to persuade his communities to participate in the collection. He also employed new strategies and theological motives, which were necessitated by specific situations that he had to deal with, in order to reveal the 'true' nature of the collection. In this regard, Paul constantly emphasised the religious nature of this project, which involved his communities in a reciprocal relationship not only with Jerusalem, but also with God. Although the theological principles basic to Paul's convictional framework, such as the impact of God's grace and the Christ-event on the lives of believers, played a central role in his understanding of the collection, he also intertwined his thinking with praxis. In other words, by

¹⁹ Cf. in this regard Beker, "Recasting Pauline Theology: The Coherence-Contingency Scheme as Interpretative Model", 15-24.

allowing the contingent situation of the moment to constantly shape his own understanding of the collection, Paul took care not to 'fossilise' his understanding of this project into a static system of thought.

2. Paul utilised specific rhetorical strategies and 'contextual theologies' in the course of the collection project, not only to ensure the completion of this project, but also to secure his future role as benefactor of Jerusalem. In other words, these 'theological motives' also functioned to support the apostle's socio-religious position and status within the early Christian movement. From Paul's point of view, his ability to realise the initial expectations of the Jerusalem church to provide in the needs of their poor, was the basis of his socio-religious credibility within the parameters of the early Christian movement. In order to ensure the completion of the collection, Paul offered various contextual (re)interpretations of the nature, function and advantages of this project for all parties involved by constantly relating it to the basic framework of benefit exchange.

C. The conflicting ideologies of Paul and Jerusalem threatened the eventual acceptance of the collection. A negative response to the collection would imply an abrupt end to the reciprocal relationship between Pauline Christianity and the Jerusalem church, as the two most important 'interest groups' within the early Christian movement. In anticipation of a possible rejection of the collection, Paul presented a new ideological angle to the collection at a late stage in this project (Rom 15,25ff), over against his previous theological reflection that focussed on securing the successful completion of this project (cf. 1 Cor 16,1-4; 2 Cor 8-9; Gal 2,10).

1. Paul's expectation of a negative response to the collection by Jerusalem compelled him to reinterpret his own obligation, as well as that of his communities, towards the Jerusalem church (Rom 15,25ff). He did this by shifting the emphasis away from the generally accepted views on reciprocity ('gifts must be rewarded with counter gifts'), to giving according to the principles of selfless service, and the fulfilling of one's responsibilities, irrespective of the response on the side of the recipients. Paul thus turned the collection into an 'eleventh hour success' from his own communities' point of view.

2. Although Luke is not well informed on the Pauline collection, he offers a brief overview of Paul's final visit to Jerusalem to deliver the collection (Acts 21,17ff.). From the available information it may be inferred that Paul and James devised an emergency solution to ensure the eventual acceptance of the collection by the Jerusalem church. However, the capture of Paul in the Temple brought an abrupt end to this imaginative project, at least from the perspective of his early Christian biographers. Nevertheless, we are left with a picture of the provisional acceptance of the collection by the Jerusalem church, with Paul briefly acting as their

benefactor, by using money from the collection to pay for the Nazarene vows of some of their members.

In summary: the basic objective of this investigation is to come to terms with the Pauline collection from the perspective of *social exchange*.²⁰ Within the parameters of this investigation, we shall firstly focus on various forms of social exchange within the ancient Graeco-Roman world, in order to determine the basic interpretative framework for the collection. Thereafter, the respective theological understandings of these principles by the major role players involved in this project, namely Paul, the Jerusalem church, and the Pauline communities, will be analysed.

1.3. Theory underlying a 'holistic' understanding of the collection

A comprehensive picture of the collection demands consideration of two theoretical aspects namely: (a) the various ideologies/theologies of the early Christian movement, which, in turn, should be analysed in terms of (b) the larger 'social and ideological scripts' prevalent in the Graeco-Roman and Jewish worlds during the first century CE. It is not sufficient to study the collection in isolation, or merely to decipher the *traditions-geschichtliche* background(s) of the various role players. Ideologies do not take shape or develop separately from their contemporary social and historical realities, but they do so in interaction with, and in response to particular social processes and beliefs.

1.3.1. Ideological factors and the collection

Ideology gives verbal, visual and symbolic expression to, and at the same time also defines the collective beliefs and behaviour of particular groups. This is done by means of the articulation of specific forms of conduct, the conceptualisation and legitimisation of specific values and practices, the integration of social phenomena and symbolic realities in encompassing systems of meaning. Obviously, the ideas, concepts, beliefs and traditions espoused and promoted by a group are those "which are most compatible with the self-interests of its members and/or their leaders."²¹ The self-interests of individuals and groups often generate ideas which, when

²⁰ In this study, social exchange, as opposed to institutionalised forms of economic exchange, refers to the reciprocal relationships that are established and/or maintained between parties involved in an exchange of services and/or gifts.

²¹ Elliott, *What is Social-Scientific Criticism?*, 52.

organised and employed, "explain and justify these self-interests, [and so] constitute an ideology."²²

Ideology, in its function of maintaining, protecting and promoting sectional, or personal interests, can easily be misappropriated to sustain and legitimise asymmetric relations of power between respective partners, but also between group members and outsiders who hold on to conflicting interpretations of reality. Anthony Giddens,²³ identifies three principal modes of ideological function, namely: the representation of sectional interests as universal interests, the denial of contradictions, and reification, where a situation or historical state of affairs is represented as natural, permanent and eternal.

In this study, the ideologies of the early Christian movement are approached with reference to the beliefs, practices, norms and values of the various individuals and communities involved in the collection.²⁴ These ideologies provide the theological basis and the concomitant conceptual framework(s) for the practical '*Gestalt*' of the collection during its various phases.²⁵

The ideologies of the various early Christian groups functioned as the binding force, the cement, that kept them together and gave them a distinct social identity and a shared consciousness of their special religious status

²² Elliott, *What is Social-Scientific Criticism?*, 52. Cf. also the views of Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*, 4, and Eagleton, *Ideology*, 43. Eagleton, who refers to at least six ways of defining ideology (pp 28-31), points out that ideology cannot be studied without understanding the social contexts; the various forms of discourse, and the ways in which concepts are used in the communication process by the various persons and groups involved (p. 223).

²³ Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory*, 6; 193ff. understands ideology in terms of "the capability of dominant groups or classes to make their own sectional interests appear to others as universal ones." The theoretical insights of this eminent social theorist have been applied to the field of the New Testament by Horrell, *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence*.

²⁴ Theology is 'religious ideology', that is, a religious interpretation of reality. When reality is understood from the perspective of metaphysical intervention, ideology refers to all the beliefs and values, as well as to the language structures that are produced to verbalise and to reflect upon these symbolic realities.

²⁵ Obviously, the 'ideological' point of departure of the researcher determines his/her approach to any investigation of ideology in the New Testament. There is clearly no such thing as a neutral (objective) approach to this 'ideological' concept: ideology! Cf. also the views of Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, 7-13. The various theoretical paradigms presently operative within the field of New Testament research are no safeguards against personal prejudices on the part of researchers. All approaches, be it the trusted historical-critical methods, or new literary or social-scientific approaches, are by their very nature perspectives. They have a certain innate distorting quality since they approach the New Testament from a preconception of what is to be looked for. But then again, whoever looks for nothing finds nothing.

before God. But these ideologies did not remain abstract ideas and idealistic thought-structures. They were embedded and visibly expressed in specific socio-religious structures, practices, and stereotyped patterns of interaction.²⁶ At the same time, the believers also utilised a common body of verbal signs, that is, a 'verbal repertoire', to give expression to their beliefs, and to signify the various phenomena they encountered. The verbal repertoire of the various early Christian communities thus, not only served as 'storehouses' of their acquired knowledge,²⁷ but also as 'expressions' and further substantiation of their ideologies.²⁸ However, the various religious statements that they produced were more than mere expressions and confirmations of their social and symbolic realities. In fact, it was part of a dynamic, ongoing process of establishing, maintaining, and at times, adjusting or completely altering, specific meanings and practices.

In order to come to terms with the ideological factors involved in the collection, we must, on a lower level of abstraction, take cognisance of the various 'theologies' of the major role players in the collection. These include: *Paul*, the protagonist responsible for the organisation; theological conceptualisation and practical execution of the collection; the *churches* in Galatia, Macedonia and Achaia involved in the actual 'Sammlung,' as well as the views of the ever-changing *leadership* of the church in Jerusalem.²⁹ However, there are a number of impediments: Firstly, the New Testament only presents us with the basic outline of the collection from which we must try to construct the views of the various parties involved. Secondly, this information stems mainly from Paul's letters. In order to construct an idea of the views of Jerusalem and that of the churches responsible for the collection, we are dependent on a few indicators in his letters, such as the ways in which these role players are addressed; references to their respective statuses (and possible variations in this regard); the forms and contents of the intra-textual discourses; reflections on their beliefs; etc. At best, this remains a precarious undertaking, since Paul and the other parties

²⁶ The early Christian communities constructed their own life-worlds in which all forms of interaction and behaviour were shaped by socially constructed norms, to give meaning and social shape to their existence. Cf. in this regard the views of Berger & Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 13, on people's 'world-building' activities.

²⁷ In this role, language usually routinises and stabilises social interaction - Luckmann, *Life-world and Social Realities*, 79.

²⁸ The ideology/ies of a group permeates all its texts. It determines and directs the structure and contents of all forms of oral and written communication.

²⁹ The ever-changing face of the leadership of the Jerusalem church is reflected in various texts in the New Testament. They are known as: *die Zwölf* (Apg 6,2), *die Apostel* (15,4), *die Geltenden* (Gal 2, 26) bzw. *die sog. Säulenapostel* (2,9), *die Herrenbrüder* (1 Kor 9,5) und *die Ältesten* (Apg 15,4) - cf. Lang, "Paulus und seine Gegner in Korinth und in Galatien", 420.

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