

AN INTERPRETATION OF GIVING GIFTS IN 2 CORINTHIAN 9:1-15 FROM A KIRIBATI PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Te karea is the giving of a set amount of monetary contribution to the Kiribati Uniting Church by her members for her mission. Currently *te karea* becomes an issue as this set amount of contribution always comes below the annual budget set by the Church's General Assembly. The problem is that *te karea* as a set amount contribution discouraged the church members from giving. The objective of this study is to seek an understanding of giving from the bible. I have chosen to explore 2 Corinthians 9:1-15 because this text has been and is still considered one of the traditional texts about giving. In doing so, I will use a traditional understanding of *te karea* (ingredients) in *te motiboi* (perfuming) as a hermeneutic where its aspects *te makuri ae akea boona* (work with no charge) and *te kaniwanga* (reward) will be utilized as a lense to see the chosen text. This hermeneutic, together with socio-rhetorical criticism will be used as a method of reading, to revisit and explore the text.

DECLARATION

I, Tieem Meetari Teangoa,

hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Malua Theological College or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in this thesis. Any contribution made to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Malua Theological College or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. A new change in the world of hermeneutics

The continuing changing of the ways people see the world gave rise to a new change in the world of hermeneutics.¹ The traditional approach in biblical interpretation that focuses on the author, now considers the world of the reader, which brings a new dimension. It is a shift from the classical hermeneutical approach to the humanistic and critical approaches.² It considers the importance of each person's bringing of his or her own questions to the interpretations of the text, and in this way shapes his or her interpretation. It recognizes that finding a meaning of a text is shaped by the questions and issues that the reader brings from his or her contemporary situation. For this study, to find the meaning of the text, I begin with the issue that evokes for me the questions. These questions lead me to developing a Kiribati-Christian understanding that will be utilized in this study as the hermeneutic, to see the selected text, 2 Corinthians 9:1-15.

2. *Te karea* the issue

The issue is *te karea*.³ *Te Karea* is the annual giving of money contributions by members of our Kiribati Uniting Church for the church, to help maintain and improve its

¹ The scope of this paper does not allow me to give an overview of what hermeneutics is in relation to the field of biblical studies. As this study focuses on the use of my understanding of giving from my Kiribati-Christian context as a hermeneutic to see the selected text, therefore, I have mentioned here only the shift from 'classical hermeneutics to humanistic emphasis' which considers important my world as a reader. It is to highlight the importance of my location as a reader in my church community of Kiribati in this study.

² The historical outline of the progress of hermeneutics is briefly explained in, David Jasper, *A Short Introduction to Hermeneutics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 104-06. See also, Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutical Philosophical Description with special references to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer and Wittgenstein* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1980), 24-47; Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 356-57.

³ Hiram Bingham, *A Gilbertese-English Dictionary* (London: Lowe and Brydone, 1908), 121. *Te karea* can either be a verb or a noun. In this case it means a noun, an offering or a sacrifice.

many developments. It is one of the problems the church is facing. More members are leaving the church because they cannot afford to keep up with the demands of *te karea*. As a result, the amount of money received by the church every year is falling. The church administration responsible for the managing of this money, struggles to carry out proposed tasks set out in annual budgets, which are approved by the Church Assembly each year. As a member of the Kiribati Uniting Church, I have witnessed and experienced many factors that may have caused the rise of this problem.

One example is the lack of commitment from church members in fulfilling the demands of *te karea*. One of the reasons for this is that *te karea* as the giving of money, in which a set amount is to be contributed by a church member. It seems to discourage people from giving.⁴ For example, the church members who cannot afford the set amount end up either refraining from going to church or opting to go to another church, such as one of the para-churches.⁵ The obvious impacts of leaving the church are that not only the church will lose one of its church members, but one of its money donors. This problem gave rise to the questions that encouraged me to take up this study.

The questions were: Does *te karea* – a set amount of monetary contribution by each church member – reflect the social and cultural meaning of *te karea* in our Kiribati social and cultural world? Is this the meaning of giving in accordance with the teaching and ministry of Jesus Christ? From these questions, I came to realize that how we define and practice *te karea* in the contemporary society of Kiribati contradicts my Kiribati-Christian⁶ understanding of giving. My Kiribati-Christian understanding is ‘*te karea* is a

⁴ Taateti Taumwa, "Te Karea for the Kiribati Protestant Church: A Critical Analysis on the Concept of Giving in the Kiribati Protestant Church" (BD Thesis, Tangintebu Theological College, 2010), 1.

⁵ For example is the Assembly of God Church.

⁶ The Kiribati-Christian understanding I am referring here is my own seeing the world today in Kiribati.

free offering. A church member has to give from what he or she feels from his or her heart. I will further explain this understanding in Chapter One.

From my Kiribati-Christian understanding, this study aims to revisit and explore voluntary giving of money and gifts in 2 Corinthians 9:1-15. The result of this study should provide us (as church members of our Kiribati Uniting church) more understanding of what giving is, in reference of Paul's proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Hopefully, this understanding could help formulate a biblical basis for the practice of *te karea* in our Kiribati Uniting Church.

3. 2 Corinthians 9:1-15 as the chosen text

I have chosen 2 Corinthians 9:1-15 as the text to explore in relation to the following three reasons. One, while 1 Corinthians describes reconciliation among the church members in the Corinthian house churches, 2 Corinthians explains reconciliation between Paul and the church in Corinth.⁷ Paul in 2 Corinthians raises many issues that are church-related such as giving money and gifts to the church.⁸ In addition, Paul as the person responsible for the managing of the money and gifts that the Corinthian church gives for the saints in Jerusalem reminds me of our church administration and their role in managing the money contributed by church members every year. Thus, I see 2 Corinthians 9:1-15, as a passage about giving and managing as a relevant text for me to explore.

⁷ Ben Witherington III, *Conflict & Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 328.

⁸ According to Lim, there has been a widely accepted view that Paul's consideration of the poor is not one of the apostle's emphases in his letter. However, Lim argues that it is and 2 Corinthians 8-9 shows that. This is a very important point for this study because it shows the poor people as other people that Paul wrote to. See Kar Yong Lim, "Generosity from Pauline Perspective: Insights from Paul's Letters to the Corinthians," *ERT* 37, no. 1 (2013): 20-33.

Two, as revealed in the gospel's presentations of Jesus' ministry, Jesus is the one and only true example of what giving is all about.⁹ Paul's attempt in proclaiming the teachings of Jesus, in his mission to the Gentiles, exemplifies applying that teaching of giving to the reality of the world the Christians encounter. Therefore, Paul's letters in the New Testament are important sources that tell and show those applications. For an example is 2 Cor. 9:1-15.

Three, we have learnt in Sunday schools and church youth clubs that 2 Cor. 9:1-15 contains teaching about voluntary giving. Importantly, we have learnt that voluntary giving in this text has rewards. We did not ask any questions about giving because we regarded those teachings as traditions of the church. However, witnessing the struggles of our church in trying to convince our church members to give more for our church, have raised questions concerning what voluntary giving in relation to 'reward.' The purpose of this paper is to revisit 2 Cor 9:1-15 seeking answers to these questions.

4. Thesis format

This thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter One has two purposes. First, I will explain my understanding of *te karea* as a Kiribati-Christian understanding. It will be used in this study as my Kiribati hermeneutic to see the text. From this understanding, I will ask questions that will be considered as the main questions to guide the exploration of the text. Second, I will lay out how the interpretive analytic of socio-rhetorical criticism will be utilized as a reading method to interpret and to analyze the selected text from that hermeneutic. Chapter Two will deal with the analysis of 2 Cor. 9:1-15 as a

⁹ I am generally referring here to the work of salvation revealed in the four gospels which reveals Jesus' offering of his life as a voluntary offering to die for the world. For example is Matt 8:17 (*He took our infirmities and bore our diseases*).

rhetorical unit. Chapter Three is the intertextual, and social and cultural textual analyses of the chosen text. The conclusion will draw out the implications of this study.

II. CHAPTER ONE: HERMENEUTIC AND READING METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. Firstly, I will explain my understanding of *te karea* and how it will be used as a hermeneutic in this study. Secondly, I will explain socio-rhetorical criticism as the reading methodology to explore 2 Corinthians 9:1-15 from the adopted hermeneutic.

1. My Kiribati-Christian Understanding

1.1. My experience of *te karea*

My understanding of *te karea*, which I consider as a Kiribati-Christian understanding, is influenced by my own experience as a member of my church in the Kiribati society. The arrival of Christianity brought in by missionaries had a huge impact on how our people saw the world. It is a way of life led by the missionaries' proclamation of Jesus' birth, ministry, death, and resurrection as revealed in the Scripture. It is a way of life in which a follower of Christ has to follow the examples set by Jesus, such as sacrificing of one's life to help those in need. I have witnessed my grandparents and my parents living this kind of life without any criticism of the church. Regardless of the less money they earned, they offered what they could afford to the church. Despite words of discouragement from some church members for their inability to contribute the set amount, it did not bother or stop them from attending and serving the church. For them, their undertaking of *te karea* is based on what they are able to contribute in the eyes of God. This is the Christian way of life I was brought up in and I argue that it is not a new

value or way of life for our people. It is part of Kiribati culture from the beginning, which I will explain in the following section.

1.2. Giving in traditional Kiribati social and cultural world

The act of giving has always existed in the lives of the Kiribati people. In fact, the act of giving is an integral part of *te I-Kiribati*¹⁰ everyday culture. Normally the act of giving is notable in the Kiribati setting and context. It begins at family level. Giving at family level was the norm before the missionary set foot on the fragile coral islands of Kiribati. The indigenous people of Kiribati usually lived in clique of clans or in *kaainga/utu* (extended families).¹¹ They exercised giving through sharing of food among themselves and within the boundaries of each respective extended family. The act of giving prior to the coming of the missionaries was founded more or less on family purposes to show the common bond of love and caring for one another.

The Kiribati people back in the days lived in isolation from other *kaainga/utu*. Each *kaainga* truly respected and honored giving within their shores because this was the only means of sustaining and preserving their *kaainga* from being destroyed by other *kaainga*. Everyone in the family would give in terms of sharing whatever foods they gathered. A good catch of fish and the abundance of harvested *b'ab'ai* (giant talo), pandanus, coconuts and toddy (sweet syrup collected from coconut) were meant for members of the *kaainga* only. However the family's knowledge and talent in acquiring foods was something valuable that needed to be guarded diligently. The reason behind

¹⁰ *Te I-Kiribati* is someone who is originated from Kiribati either by birth or through the official endowment of citizenship.

¹¹ Alaima Talu and et. al., *Kiribati: Aspect of History* (Suva: The Institute of Pacific Studies and Extension Services of the University of the South Pacific 1979).¹²

keeping the *kaainga* knowledge and talent secretly was for the benefit and for the wellbeing of the *kaainga*. For instance, each *kaainga* could not expose their expertise in terms of knowledge and talent to other *kaainga* because once they were exposed that *kaainga* would get stronger. Because the land and the resources were limited, every *kaainga* competed for survival.

Another important aspect of giving practiced by the indigenous *I-Kiribati* basically involved giving to the *kaainga* gods and ancestors. The purpose in giving to the gods signifies their total submission and reverence they ought to draw and denote to their individual gods. Traditionally, each *kaainga* gave traditional foods like *te manam* (food made from *b'ab'ai* -giant taro, and coconut)¹² and many more including garland. These goods were given to the *ibonga* (priest) of the *kaainga*. There offering was made while the *ibonga* through chanting with the gods interceded for the needs of the *kaainga*. *Te kaainga's* needs may include protection and guidance during war with other *kaainga*, healing power in times of sickness and distress caused from spells and black magic, and assistance with blessings of chores such as fishing – that they might have good catch.¹³

In other traditional understanding, *te karea* means the ingredients added to coconut oil for the purpose of scenting – *motiboi* (the traditional way of processing body oil). *Te karea* in this case is the ingredients in the form of the flowers of *te uri* tree (another species of frangipani), *te ngeaiarabo* (soft part of a dying branch of *te ngea* tree) or *te bonubonu* (sea worm that can be found in shallow water). The significance of *te karea* as the ingredients added to coconut cream is that the given ingredients must be something of good and pleasant aroma.

¹² Taumwa, "Te Karea for the Kiribati Protestant Church," 9.

¹³ Harry C. and Honor E. Maude, *An Anthology of Gilbertese Oral Tradition* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1994), 53.

The concept of giving before the arrival of the missionaries is founded on family love. The love is exclusive, for it does not relate or involve other families. The act of giving in terms of sharing of foods and helping one another in the family, truly define the idea of nurturing one's own identity. It truly exemplifies giving in terms of sharing at a family level. It really portrays the existence of giving in traditional Kiribati. Yet giving to the gods signifies seeking a reward and perhaps great assurance from the gods. It also draws an impression that the goods – *te karea* – offers to the gods are simply token of great dependence on the supernatural being or deity. In fact the ingredients used in perfuming or by traditional perfumers could only be something with a pleasant and powerful aroma that mesmerizes its recipients. The following section will show how I use these traditions and understandings of *te karea* as a hermeneutic which I call 'my Kiribati hermeneutic.'

1.3. *Te karea* as my Kiribati hermeneutic

From the cultural experience, knowledge and understanding of *te karea* that I have explained, came the hermeneutic that I see as 'my Kiribati hermeneutic.' I call it '*te karea* in *te motiboi*.' It is translated 'giving as pleasant aroma.'

The traditional undertaking of *te karea*, as a family responsibility has restrictions. Some knowledge and talent are not shared but kept within the family. The reason for this practice is not to let other families know the secrets behind our family good food and material production. As a Kiribati in today's world, I see this restriction of family knowledge and talent as a weakness of the traditional practice of *te karea*. It has boundaries which may hold back a family member from sharing his/her knowledge and understanding. *Te karea* in this way may have an influence on a church members'

undertaking of giving in the sense that he or she may hold back giving all the money they can afford to offer.

As a Kiribati in contemporary Kiribati society, sharing anything that would benefit our Kiribati church community is important. The unrestricted sharing goes beyond family boundaries. It is depicted and expressed in the traditional understanding of *te karea* in *te motiboi* – the ingredients added to coconut oil which give this oil its powerful aroma, that reaches out beyond boundaries. This oil has various uses in our Kiribati world such as for healing and for perfuming. In this way, I see *te karea* as *te karea* in *te motiboi* – giving that has a beautiful and powerful scent reaches beyond boundaries. Thus, *te karea* in *te motiboi* is ‘my Kiribati hermeneutic.’ Its aspects mentioned below will be used in this study as hermeneutical lenses to see the text.

First, *te karea* is a service - *te makuri ae akea boona* (work with no charge). This service is giving or offering help from *anganano*. *Anganano* is made up of two words. One is the word *anga* meaning to give. The other is *nano* meaning deep or from within. Thus, serving one another from *anganano* is a work carried out from the heart. This work is done for free to help people in need. In this way, I consider *te karea* as a service (*te makuri ae akea boona* – work with no charge) as the first lens that will be used to guide exploring of the text. This service considers the importance of timing and the necessity of giving, especially for those in need. This service is to be carried out with utmost ability. Not doing so will make the doer of this service and his/her family shameful. Sometimes, the consequence for not doing *te makuri ae akea boona* properly is that you will not be helped by other people in the village. *Te karea* in *te motiboi* is a local shared-task and is part of *te makuri ae akea boona*. As a shared local task the local donors are local people

who have a sense of belonging to a local place or space. The key question for this hermeneutic to explore the text is: 'How does the language of the text show voluntary giving as a work with no charge?'

Second is *te kaniwanga* (rewards) and *te karea* in *te motiboi* has rewards. One of the questions in undertaking *te karea* in Kiribati is: Does voluntary giving have rewards? One of the beliefs we have, as part of the Christian traditions we learned, is that one day God will reward you for your generous giving. There is reward mentioned in the text of 2 Cor. 9:1-15. The most popular interpretations among our people of this reward is that one day God will reward the generous giver. An example of this reward is materialistic. From my hermeneutic of *te karea* in *te motiboi*, I agree that voluntary giving has rewards, but not materialistic. This reward is the feeling of joy of the giver, when the person in need enjoys life and thanks God for the given-gifts. The following questions from this lens guide the analysis of the text. How does the language of the text show offering of gifts having reward/s? What are these rewards?

To use these lenses to see the text, I will utilize the interpretive analytic of socio-rhetorical criticism. How the socio-rhetorical approach will be used as the reading method to interpret the text from the above-explained hermeneutic will be described in the following section.

2. Socio-Rhetorical Criticism: the Reading Method

2.1. What is Socio-Rhetorical Criticism?

Vernon K. Robbins pioneered socio-rhetorical criticism as a reading method that integrates social science with more literary based advances in biblical studies.¹⁴ His goal is to develop a rhetorical approach that combines literary, social, cultural and ideological issues in texts. The approach focuses on finding the meaning of the text by examining the values, convictions and beliefs in the world of the text.¹⁵ It examines how those values help shape meaning and as readers, we compare or contrast them with the world in which we live in, in order to make meaning relevant to us.¹⁶ For the purposes of this study, I will bring my world as a Kiribati man, in a Kiribati-Christian society, into dialogue with a socio-rhetorical reading of 2 Cor. 19:1-15.¹⁷

2.2. Vernon K. Robbins' Stages of Socio-Rhetorical Reading

Robbins' socio-rhetorical approach has five stages. They are: 'innertexture', 'intertexture', 'social and cultural texture', 'ideological texture', and 'sacred texture'. This study will use only the first three stages.

2.2.1. Innertexture

¹⁴ Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to the Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1996), 1.

¹⁵ Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 1.

¹⁶ Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1996), 26.

¹⁷ Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 11.

An innertextual analysis explores the ways the text uses words, such as word structures, devices, and contraries.¹⁸ For this study, in the examination of the innertexture, a progressive texture is revealed in Paul's words on voluntary giving in 2 Cor. 9:1-14.¹⁹ These questions from the hermeneutic will guide this analysis. How does the language of the text show giving as a voluntary giving? Do literary features of 2 Cor. 9:1-15 as a rhetorical unit show the carrying out of voluntary giving as *te makuri ae akea boona* (service with no charge)? How do the language and literary features of the text show that there is a reward in voluntary giving?

2.2.2. *Intertexture*

Inter texture is the second arena of Robbins' idea.²⁰ This part of the methodology looks at how other phenomena speak through 2 Cor. 9:1-15. Intertextual analysis explores how Paul's recitation of Psalm 112:9, Isaiah 55:10 and Hosea 10:12 explain how Paul emphasizes reward of giving. This question from the hermeneutic will guide this analysis. How does Paul's recitation of selected Old Testament texts describe the reward of voluntary giving, revealed in the innertextual reading?

2.2.3. *Social and cultural texture*

The author's construction of a text is influenced by the world around him/her. Given that the second letter to the Corinthians was written in the first century Mediterranean world, indicates that the author, Paul, must have had an understanding of that world's social, cultural and political systems. This section focuses on analysing the

¹⁸ Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 7.

¹⁹ "Progressive texture resides in sequences (progressions) of words and phrases throughout the unit." See Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 9.

²⁰ Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourses*, 96.

social and cultural values embedded in the social and cultural codes of the language of the text.²¹ It explores Paul's use of rhetorical compositions commonly used and understood in the first century, such as the rhetoric of praise and blame, to emphasize his message of giving to the members of the Corinthian church. This reflects the social and cultural values of "honour and shame."²² The question that will guide the analysis is: How does the social and cultural nature and practice of honor and shame shown in the language of the text depict the voluntary giving Paul emphasizes in 2 Cor. 9:1-15?

3. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explained my Kiribati-Christian understanding of *te karea* in *te motiboi* as the hermeneutic to see the text. It is followed by my explanation of how socio-rhetorical criticism serves as the reading method to read 2 Cor. 9:1-15 from that hermeneutic. It will be the task of the following Chapters to show the analysis of the text from this reading methodology.

²¹ Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 71.

²² One of the characteristics of the Mediterranean Families and societies. Halvor Moxnes, "What is Family: Problems in Constructing Early Christian families," in *Constructing Early Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor*, ed. Halvor Moxnes (London: Routledge, 1997), 20.

III. CHAPTER TWO: INNERTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF 2 CORINTHIANS 9:1-15

In this chapter, I will analyse 2 Corinthians 9:1-15 as a rhetorical unit, exploring how Paul's ministry to Achaia as encoded in the text, might be read through my Kiribati hermeneutic of *te karea* in *te motiboi*. The lenses from this hermeneutic will guide the exploration of the text are: *te makuri ae akea boona* (work with no charge); and *te kaniwanga* (reward).

An innertextual analysis focuses on exploring the ways the text uses words, such as word structures, devices, contraries, and modes of text.²³ For this study, in the examination of the innertexture, a progressive texture is revealed in 2 Cor. 9:1-15 which discloses giving as a voluntary offering according to Paul's teachings.²⁴ These questions from the hermeneutic will guide this analysis: How does the language of the text show "giving" as *te karea* in *te motiboi*? Do literary features of 2 Cor 9:1-15 as a rhetorical unit show giving as *te makuri ae akea boona* (work with no charge)? If it does, explain how. If it does not, explain why not. Does the language of the text and its literary features show giving as *te kaniwanga* (reward)? If it does, explain how. If it does not, explain why not.

To do this analysis, I will begin with a brief description of a rhetorical structure of 2 Corinthians. This study considers important this rhetorical structure because it indicates the importance of the placement of the studied passage (2 Cor. 9:1-15) in the whole letter. It will be followed by an explanation of the progression of 2 Corinthians as a letter

²³ Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 7.

²⁴ "Progressive texture resides in sequences (progressions) of words and phrases throughout the unit." See Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 9.

according to that rhetorical structure from the beginning of the letter to the placement of 9:1-15 in the whole letter. Explaining this progression is important. It will show that voluntary giving as the apostle describes in 9:1-15 has a significant connection to the main proposition of the letter mentioned in the beginning of the letter (2 Cor 2:17). The final section of this Chapter is the analysis of 9:1-15 as a rhetorical unit from my hermeneutic of *te karea* in *te motiboi*.

1. The structure of 2 Corinthians utilized in this analysis

There are various structures of 2 Corinthians. For this study, I will use Ben Witherington's rhetorical structure for the following reason; 2 Corinthians as either one or more separate documents has been a contentious issue among scholars.²⁵ According to Witherington, the scholars who see 2 Corinthians having separate documents "have not taken into account Paul's use of ancient rhetorical conventions."²⁶ From my use of the socio-rhetorical approach in this thesis, I consider important this view because in Witherington's rhetorical structure of 2 Corinthians, 9:1-15 is considered a part of the *probatio* (arguments) of the *propositio* (main proposition) of the letter. This proposition is stated in 2 Cor. 2:17.

²⁵ For example, H. D. Betz argues that 2 Corinthians 8-9 should be looked at as one or two separate documents from the whole letter. See H. D. Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9: A Commentary on Two Administrative Letters of the Apostle Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985). For a view that challenges Betz' argument, see Jan Lambrecht, "Paul's boasting about the Corinthians: A study of 2 Cor. 8:24-9:5," *NovT* 40, no. 4 (1998): 352-368. Another example is a consensus that 2 Corinthians contains two separate letters. The first is 2 Cor. 1-9 and the other is 2 Cor. 10-13. Some of these scholars are: W. G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the NT* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), 287-93; C. K. Barret, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper, 1973), 5-21; V. P. Furnish, *II Corinthians* (New York: Doubleday, 1984), 35-41.

²⁶ See Witherington, *Conflict & Community in Corinth*, 327-33.

Witherington sees 2 Corinthians a letter written in forensic²⁷ language.²⁸ This claim is based on the consideration of this letter as Paul's attempt to remind the members of the Corinthian church the teachings he made, as the true teachings of the good news of Jesus Christ. One of those teachings is voluntary giving of gifts – the main subject of 9:1-15. I will explain in brief, Witherington's structure of 2 Corinthians in order to show how 2 Cor. 9:1-15 fits in, in this structure. It will show that Chapter 9 is not a separate document as other scholars claim but part of 2 Corinthians as a whole letter unit.

Ben Witherington's rhetorical structure of 2 Corinthians²⁹

1. The epistolary prescript (1:1-2)
2. The epistolary thanksgiving and *exordium*³⁰ (1:3-7)
3. The *narratio*³¹ (1:8-2:14), which explains some of the facts that occasioned the letter and climaxes with a further thanksgiving and transition (2:15f).
4. The *propositio*³² (2:17), which states the basic fact under dispute.
5. The *probatio* and *refutatio* (3:1-13:4), which includes:³³
 - a. Paul's characterization of his ministry and of his anti-Sophistic rhetorical approach (3:1-6:13),
 - b. a deliberative digression (6:14-7:1), in which Paul puts his audience on the defensive, urging them to stop attending temple feasts with pagan friends.

²⁷ The forensic type of discourse is used in the court to defend or accuse someone in a court case. It deals with the past and ends with the just or unjust. See Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, trans. J. H. Freese (Massachusetts: Harvard, 1991), xxxvii.

²⁸ Witherington, *Conflict & Community in Corinth*, 333.

²⁹ Witherington, *Conflict & Community in Corinth*, 335-36.

³⁰ "The *exordium* is the beginning part and is aimed at making the audience open and indeed well-disposed toward what follows." Witherington, *Conflict & Community in Corinth*, 44.

³¹ "The *narratio* ...explains the nature of disputed matter." Witherington, *Conflict & Community in Corinth*, 44.

³² The "*propositio* which follows the *narratio* ...is where the essential proposition(s) of the speaker and perhaps also of the opponent are laid out." Witherington, *Conflict & Community in Corinth*, 44.

³³ "The *probatio* brings in arguments to support the speaker's case. [The] *refutatio*...is...the opponent's arguments are disproved or weakened." Witherington, *Conflict & Community in Corinth*, 44.

- c. Paul's defense of the severe letter (7:2-16)
 - d. a largely deliberative argument concerning the collection (chs. 8 and 9), and
 - e. a rhetorical *synkrisis*³⁴ (comparison) of Paul and his competitors in Corinth, the false *apostoloi*, with a strong emotional appeal.
- 6. The *preroratio*³⁵ (13:5-10).
 - 7. The closing epistolary greetings and remarks (13:11-13)

The rhetorical structure, as shown above reveals in a rhetorical order the message Paul is trying to pass on to the people of the Corinthian church. As mentioned, it is a letter of defense presented in forensic language. It is a letter not to criticize the church members of Corinth. Instead it is for the apostle to apologetically clarify some of the issues that is causing a conflict between the apostle and some church members in Corinth. One of these issues is 'voluntary giving.'

2. The placement of 9:1-15 in the whole letter

I will now describe in brief the progress of the letter as shown in the structure leading to the placement of chapter 9. According to Witherington, the rhetorical structure of 2 Corinthians begins with an epistolary prescript (1:1-2) where the name of Paul is mentioned as the writer, and the Corinthian church as audience the apostle writes to.³⁶ It is followed by the *exordium* (1:3-7) which is the apostle's words of thanks for the good

³⁴ *Synkrisis* was an exercise comparing two individuals or things...." George Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 23.

³⁵ The *peroratio* recapitulates the main points of the *probatio*...." Witherington, *Conflict & Community in Corinth*, 44.

³⁶ Witherington, *Conflict & Community in Corinth*, 353-55.

work the Corinthian church is doing as a Christian community.³⁷ The letter then shows the situation stated as *narratio*³⁸ (1:8-2:14)³⁹ that prompted the apostle to write this letter. As Witherington explains, “[a]pparently a minority had come to reject Paul’s authority, probably under the influence of the false *apostoloi*.⁴⁰ Paul seeks to overcome this....”⁴¹ In other words, the *narratio* speaks of Paul seeking reconciliation between him and this group of Christians in Corinth. He tries to regain the trust of these church members of Corinth. The *narratio* is followed by the *propositio* (2:17)⁴² where the main proposition of the letter is mentioned:

For we are not peddlers of God’s word like so many; but in Christ we speak as persons of sincerity, as person sent from God and standing in his presence.

It states Paul’s explanation of their apostleship. These apostles are Paul, Titus and Silvanus. The letter then moves on to showing the *probatio* and *refutatio* (arguments) that support the main proposition.

The *probatio* begins in 3:1-6:13. This part of the *probatio* speaks of Paul’s defending of himself and his co-workers’ characteristics as apostles.⁴³ He begins by

³⁷ Witherington, *Conflict & Community in Corinth*, 356-59.

³⁸ Witherington, *Conflict & Community in Corinth*, 360-70.

³⁹ For Ralph P. Martin, 2:14 is part of 2:14-7:4 which he refers to as describing the “[f]irst defense of the apostolic ministry.” From my hermeneutic of *te karea* in *te motiboi*, I am interested in Martin’s comments on 2:14-3:6. He writes that 2:14-3:6 is about “[t]he faithfulness of the apostle.” He adds that these verses speak of “the Christian apostle [a]s the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved.” My hermeneutic speaks of *te karea* in *te motiboi* as voluntary giving that is like a body oil which its aroma breaks boundaries and reaches out to any context or any space. From my hermeneutic, I see this Martin’s interpretation in relation to my exploring of voluntary giving in 9:1-15 to show that the aroma of ‘voluntary giving’ depends on the aroma of an apostle as a Christian – the aroma of God’s grace reaching out to those in need. This is what Paul is trying to defend in this part of the 2 Corinthians. Despite the different structures proposed by the 2 Corinthians scholars such as Ralph P. Martin and Ben Witherington, they all see the 2 Corinthians as a defensive letter. Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, WBC 40 (Texas: Word Books, 1986), xxxvi - xxxviii.

⁴⁰ This situation is described in 1 Cor. 1:11-17.

⁴¹ Witherington, *Conflict & Community in Corinth*, 360.

⁴² Witherington, *Conflict & Community in Corinth*, 371-74.

⁴³ Witherington, *Conflict & Community in Corinth*, 375-401.

saying to the intended readers of the church of Corinth that he does not need to commend again them as ministers of the New Covenant (3:1-3). What Paul means is that the Corinthian church members' knowledge and understanding of God's mercy in and through Jesus Christ is proof of their ministry. Paul reminds them again the teachings that made them true Christians in the first time. For an example, according to Paul, the faith in Jesus Christ (the light of the glory of God) is the basis of living life for any Christian (3:12-18). Thus, Paul defends himself as an apostle. It implies that his ministry is a ministry of reconciliation, bringing unity to the church in Corinth, not only among church members but also between him as an apostle and the church.

After Paul's explanation of his character as a minister of the New Covenant, the letter then speaks of the second argument (2 Cor 6:14-7:1).⁴⁴ This argument is presented as a literary digression⁴⁵ where the focus of attention in the writing shifts from the main character to a different character. It is a rhetorical way for a writer or compiler not to depart utterly from the main subject of the letter, but to bring in another character or idea, that would help make stronger the argument of the writing. Witherington in his interpretation of this part of the letter argues against Betz suggestion. For Betz, this part as digression means there is non-Pauline materials in it. Witherington says that "there is nothing un-Pauline about this passage, in light of 1 Corinthians 8-10."⁴⁶

I agree with Witherington in relation to the progress of the letter that I have explained so far. It is relevant in this time of the letter to shift focus away from Paul, as

⁴⁴ Witherington, *Conflict & Community in Corinth*, 402-06.

⁴⁵ According to Witherington, "Quintilian writes that a digression may occur at any point in a rhetorical discourse and that it may be characterized by greater freedom of speech than the surrounding argument or arguments. [One example of digression is that] after a list of the services of the defendant, the opponent or ...the audience can be denounced for ingratitude." Witherington, *Conflict & Community in Corinth*, 402.

⁴⁶ Witherington, *Conflict & Community in Corinth*, 403.

the main subject, to another character as a rhetorical way of gaining the attention of the readers. This other character is the Corinthian Christians who are the intended readers. Paul now challenges how the Corinthian church members live their lives as Christians in relation to their attending of temple feasts with pagans. Revealed in the words of Paul, the Corinthian Christians engaged in fellowship and gatherings with non-believers where they got materialistic benefits. The implication of this digression is that the Corinthian Christians, who are critical of Paul's undertaking of his role, are not living life as Christians. Paul reminds them that he taught them not to associate with unbelievers – it makes them unclean. Thus, 2 Cor 6:14-7:1 weakens the point behind the Corinthian Christians' criticism of Paul's work.

This is followed by the next argument revealed in 2 Cor 7:2-16⁴⁷ where the letter shows Paul's return to the main subject of the letter. It is shown in his defending of the so-called 'severe letter.'⁴⁸ The severe letter was sent with Titus. Paul begins his defense of the severe letter with the words *Make room in your hearts for us*. I see these words as Paul's exhorting of his audience to bear with him in his explanation of the issues that caused the conflict in their relationship. It is a rhetorical way of encouraging the audience to continue paying attention to the writer's explanation of those issues.

Like the first two arguments, 2 Cor 7:2-16 as the third argument states Paul's telling the Corinthian church that he and his co-workers have not corrupted or have taken advantage of anyone. It supports the main proposition of the letter in 2 Cor 2:17. Paul is arguing that he and his brothers in the ministry are not peddlers of God's word.

⁴⁷ Witherington, *Conflict & Community in Corinth*, 407-10.

⁴⁸ This 'severe letter' is also known as the 'tearful letter' written by Paul from Ephesus after a visit he made to Corinth called the 'painful visit.' The severe letter as indicated in 7:8 according to some scholars could be shown in 2 Cor 10-13. See Martin, *2 Corinthians*, xxxiv.

Despite the conflict occurring between Paul and some church members in Corinth, the apostle finishes the third argument with an assertion of his having complete confidence in the Corinthian church. Thus, 2 Cor 7:2-16 as the third argument prepares the audience to hear one of the important issues coming next in the letter – ‘collection of gifts as voluntary giving.’ (2 Cor 8-9). It is where the main text (2 Cor 9:1-15) is placed.

My interest in Witherington’s rhetorical structure is to lead the progress of Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians, to the passage this thesis focuses upon – 9:1-15. This is important in the sense that the meaning of voluntary giving in 2 Cor 9:1-15 has a significant part to play. It is the fourth argument in supporting Paul’s defense as an apostle, in order to bring reconciliation between him and the church in Corinth. This reconciliation is the essence of the whole letter. Thus, in the following section, particular attention will be given to 2 Cor 9:1-15, where my analysis of this passage from my hermeneutic of *te karea in te motiboi*.

3. Analysis of 2 Cor 9:1-15 as a rhetorical unit⁴⁹- the fourth argument⁵⁰

The fourth argument of the letter’s main proposition (2 Cor 2:17) is presented in Chapters 8 and 9. In order to understand how Paul comes to dealing with the issue of voluntary giving in Chapter 9, an understanding of Chapter 8 is important. I will begin my analysis of the fourth argument (what voluntary giving is) from Chapter 8, using my hermeneutic, *te karea in te motiboi*.

⁴⁹ George Kennedy in his explanation of rhetorical criticism states “a determination of the *rhetorical unit*” as its first stage. Kennedy describes a rhetorical unit as having a “beginning, middle, and an end.” See Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 33.

⁵⁰ Witherington, *Conflict & Community*, 429-441.

One of the issues I raised in my explanation of my hermeneutic is the question about ‘trust of the administrators’ in dealing with the collected-gifts. From my hermeneutic, *te karea* in *te motiboi*, the words of Paul in Chapter 8 reflect the idea that some members of the church in Corinth are having doubts in trusting Paul and his co-workers in administering the collection of gifts. This is the implication of 8:20-21:

We intend that no one should blame us about this generous gift that we are administering, for we intend to do what is right not only in the Lord’s sight but also in the sight of others.

Before Paul says these words, he mentions in the beginning of this chapter (8:1-4), the spirit of offering behind the churches in Macedonia’s giving of gifts for the church in Jerusalem. According to Paul, this spirit of giving is *the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia* (8:1). From my hermeneutic of *te karea* in *te motiboi*, I see this spirit of giving as *te makuri ae akea boona* (work with no charge). And this spirit of giving as Paul explains is the grace of God. It is χάρις (grace).⁵¹ This spirit of giving is amplified in Chapter 9 which I will explore in the following section.

From my hermeneutic of *te karea* in *te motiboi*, I see 2 Cor 9:1-15 as a rhetorical unit and its placement in this part of Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians, is the assertion of the spirit of giving. Paul states this in Chapter 8 as ‘the grace of God.’ *Te karea* in *te motiboi*, as I explained in my hermeneutic, is the undertaking of giving as body oil that is of good and pleasant aroma. It symbolizes giving as a shared local task and its use is not restricted within the boundaries of the local place. It is to be carried out beyond those boundaries. Part of that sharing is to consider giving as a task that is to be undertaken in accordance with the time and situation in which it is needed. From *te karea*

⁵¹ Χάρις in Hellenism is a “fixed term for the “favor” shown by rulers.” Paul uses this meaning to explain the favor that God has done for the world in the life of Jesus Christ. See “Charis” *TDNT*, 1301, 1303-308.

in *te motiboi*, the opening and closing signs of 2 Cor 9:1-15 as a rhetorical unit reveals the importance of time in the undertaking of voluntary giving. And carrying out of this giving according to this unit is a shared-local task. The analysis of the rhetorical unit is based on the following threefold structure.

- | | |
|---------------|---------|
| (1) Beginning | 9:1-5 |
| (2) Middle | 9:6-12 |
| (3) End | 9:13-15 |

Seeing 2 Cor. 9:1-15 as a rhetorical unit from *te karea* in *te motiboi* has opening and closing rhetorical signs. One of the hermeneutical lenses of my hermeneutic is *te makuri ae akea boona* (work with no charge). One of its important undertaking of giving food or money as a shared-task is ‘time.’ It is important to carry out the service of giving in accordance with the time it is needed by those who are in need. From that lens, I see that the beginning of the unit is marked by the use of the word *Now*, which indicates the time of Paul’s dialogue. One, it indicates urgency. Two, it indicates the present. *Now* is part of the translation of a ‘preposition genitive’ Περὶ followed by the ‘particles’ μὲν and γὰρ as they appeared in the Greek New Testament. The employment of such words in the original text is significant – a meaning that is not conveyed when translated into English. However putting these words together Περὶ μὲν γὰρ literally it is translated ‘*concerning now*’. The Greek language is more flexible in word order,⁵² while English Language always seeks meaning with proper word ordering. Hence Περὶ μὲν γὰρ is translated as ‘*Now concerning*.’ The meaning of the preposition Περὶ and the particle γὰρ imply an

⁵² Jeremy Duff, *The Elements of New Testament Greek*, (3rd ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 61.

element of contrasting.⁵³ For instance is the time of the writing of this chapter, in contrast to the previous event/s in chapter 8.⁵⁴ It also points towards the kind of action that is done in the present (right now) and with urgency. *Now* indicates the time of doing the service of collecting gifts, which is referred to by Paul.

The unit ends with verse 15 where Paul sums up the voluntary giving and moves to discuss the indescribable gift of God. The Greek word that begins this verse is χάρις. From my hermeneutical lens of *te makuri ae akea boona*, which considers important the giving of food or offering of help as a service with no charge, I can say that the indescribable gift of God that Paul explains in this passage is a God-given gift with no charge. From my hermeneutic of *te karea* in *te motiboi*, I see these opening and closing signs as rhetorical frames of 2 Cor. 9:1-15 as a rhetorical unit, showing the urgency of making the service of voluntary giving and the consideration of giving as God's. Inside the rhetorical frames of this unit is Paul's explanation of what voluntary giving is, which is in relation to *Now* and the *gift of God*. This will be the focus of the following analysis.

3.1. Beginning of the unit (vv. 1-5)

The use of the word *Now* can be interpreted as a literary transition from Paul's words in Chapter 8, to his elaboration upon in Chapter 9. I see that elaboration begins with juxtaposition⁵⁵ in verses 1 to 5. The juxtaposition of what is not necessary and what is necessary as shown in these verses.

⁵³ Lambrecht, "Paul's boasting about the Corinthians," 353.

⁵⁴ Stanley K. Stowers' exploring of 2 Cor. 9:1 clearly states the consideration of Περὶ μὲν γὰρ as part of what precedes. Stanley K. Stowers, "Περὶ μὲν γὰρ and the Integrity of 2 Cor. 8 and 9," *NovT* 32 (1990): 340-348. See also Lambrecht, "Paul's boasting about the Corinthians," 352-368. According to Lambrecht, there is connection of boasting in 9:1-5 to boasting in 8:24. Thus, Lambrecht agrees with Stowers' claim.

⁵⁵ Juxtaposition comes from the word the verb juxtapose meaning "put side by side". *Collins Dictionary*, 453.

“it is not necessary for me to write to you about the ministry to the saint (v. 1)...I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you” (v.5).

The juxtaposition is to highlight the purpose of sending his co-workers. The reason being is for the church members in Achaia to complete the collection of gifts. The time to do that is now, before Paul comes with the Macedonians to Achaia. Paul commends the church in Achaia for the good work they did in the past but he has a concern which is indicated by the use of the conjunction δὲ (but). The concern of the apostle is the completion of the collection of gifts. This is revealed in Paul's speaking about his humiliation if he goes to Achaia with the Macedonians and finds that the collection of gifts as expected is not happening. This reminds me of undertaking *te karea* as *te makuri ae akea boona*. It brings shame not only to the family of a person undertaking the service of giving if he/she does not carry it out to the best of his/her ability in the eyes of the village. The people in the village can easily tell who is not doing that service thoroughly and properly. The worst outcome of this type of service is that other villagers may not be willing to share their food when they have abundance of resources.

The beginning of the unit ends with Paul states why it is necessary to urge the brothers to go ahead to Achaia. Thus, the juxtaposition carries on to chapter 9, the forensic mood of the letter revealed in the previous chapters. In this way, Paul continues to defend apologetically their stand as ministers of the word of God and in this time is in relation to the collection of gifts.

In the beginning of the unit, Paul praises the church in Achaia's character of giving gifts. He boasted of it, to the Christians in Macedonia. It shows that Paul continues to convince the church members in Achaia that they should continue to trust his service

as an apostle. I see this language of praise from the lens of *te makuri ae akea boona* as Paul's encouragement of them to continue with the reciprocal relationship in sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ, through their own actions. In other words, the offering of gifts and his administering it, is the shared-undertaking of putting into action the grace of God in this world. However, like most of Paul's letters, he pursues the specific community followed by issues or problems that they face. This is shown in this rhetorical unit indicated in the use of the conjunction δὲ in verse 3. Δὲ as a conjunction has multiple functions in a sentence such as transition, continuity, and contrast.⁵⁶

In this part of the unit, δὲ links the first part (vv. 1-2) of the beginning of the unit to the second part (vv. 3-5). Δὲ as a transition marks the shift of what Paul says is not necessary, to what he thinks is important to focus upon in this time of the letter. Δὲ as indication of contrast, it signals the contrast between his not talking about the saints in Jerusalem and his speaking about the sending of the brothers to Achaia. Δὲ as marker of continuity, it points to Paul's sending of the brothers as a continuation of his willingness for the Christians in Achaia to complete their collecting of gifts for the saints in Jerusalem. I consider this sending of the brothers as the rhetorical situation of 2 Cor 9:1-15 as a rhetorical unit. A rhetorical situation is where a person is called upon, to make a response to a question or an issue raised by another person or a group of people.⁵⁷ In this part of the unit, Paul's sending of his brother in the ministry is part of his response to the issue of voluntary giving. This is part of his defence as ministers of the word of God. Verse 3 to verse 5 begins the reason why he sends his co-workers which Paul elaborates

⁵⁶ See Stephanie Black, *Sentence Conjunctions in the Gospel of Matthew: καὶ, δὲ, τότε, γάρ, οὖν, and Asyndeton in Narrative Discourse* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 142-78.

⁵⁷ Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 35.

in the middle part of the unit (vv. 6-12). According to Paul, the reason for sending the brothers is:

“...in order that our boasting about you may not prove to have empty in this case, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be; otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we would be humiliated – to say nothing of you – in this undertaking.” (9:3-4)

It arises the rhetorical problem in this particular part of the unit. What is Paul’s concern? Is he sending his brothers for the sake of their reputation? Is he sending them to protect the good reputation of the church in Achaia? Is it for the sake of the Gospel? The end of verse 5 gives us a glimpse of why he sent the brothers. It is to ensure that the gift they have promised is made *as a voluntary gift not as an extortion*. The implication of these words of Paul is that there is a problem with the way the people in Achaia make their offering of gifts. It is not the quantity of the offering. Instead, it is how they give these gifts in accordance to their Christians’ belief and understanding – that is based on the grace of God. In other words, Paul is challenging their way of giving in relation to their faith in Jesus Christ. This type of giving is clarified in the next part of the unit – the middle part (9:6-12).

3.2. Middle part of the unit (vv. 6-12)

In the middle part of the unit is the elaboration of voluntary giving as bountiful gift. It begins with the words, *the point is*. And the point Paul is speaking about here is delivered in deliberative language.⁵⁸ My hermeneutic of *te kaniwanga* speaks of reward as something achieved in the future. Paul’s use of deliberative language reveals the

⁵⁸ Deliberative language is when the writer persuades the reader to take some action in the future. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 19.

reward of voluntary gift giving. But the question is: ‘What is this reward?’ The point Paul is referring to in the middle part of the unit begins with an enthymeme.⁵⁹

An ‘enthymeme’ begins with a main premise and is followed by minor premise and ends with a conclusion. Verse 6 states, “*The point is, [he says], the one who sows sparingly will also reap bountifully, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.*” These words show the major premise. The major premise shows that there is reward for doing voluntary giving. I will elaborate on reaping bountifully later in the analysis. Getting that reward depends on how the gift is offered, which is explained in the minor premise of the enthymeme stated in the beginning of the next verse – verse 7. “*Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion.*” The minor premise speaks of giving as offering made from when you made up your mind. In other words, it should be made from how you feel about giving from your heart. It is offering of gifts in accordance with what you have. The last part of verse 7 which is “*for God loves a cheerful giver*” is the conclusion of the enthymeme. It reveals clearly the point that Paul indicates in the beginning of the enthymeme, which is the type of giver that God loves is a ‘cheerful giver.’

Verses 8 to 12 as part of the middle unit, is amplification of that enthymeme. This amplification stresses the blessing or reward the cheerful giver receives from God. This blessing is clarified by Paul’s recitation of Psalm 112:9 in verse 9, and Isaiah 55:10 and Hosea 10:12 in verse 10. I will deal with this clarification in the intertextual analysis section. The blessing or the reward is that the cheerful giver is considered a righteous person, and as such it is an endless achievement. The rest of the middle unit from verses

⁵⁹ An ‘enthymeme’ is a rhetorical syllogism that is deduced from general and special truths. Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, xxxvi-xxxvii. Paul Holloway, “The Enthymeme as an Element of Style in Paul,” *JBL* 120 (2001): 329-339.

10 to 12 dwell on this blessing or reward, mainly emphasizing the word of giving as a ministry that is done for those who need help, such as the saints in Jerusalem. More importantly, the recipients worship and give thanks to God for the good work done by the donors.

3.3. Ending of unit (vv. 13-15)

In the ending of the unit (vv. 13-15), Paul then says that this ministry of giving is a test of one's life as a Christian. By doing it, is glorification of God. Paul in this part of the unit brings home that the person is perceived as a cheerful giver. He/she is considered an obedient follower of Christ – the one who accepts “*the confession of the gospel of Christ*” (9:13). Verse 15 (“*Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!*”) as the last verse of the unit sums up the unit. This verse reveals that it is God-given gift, God's grace, that makes a Christian donates gifts for others – the so-called voluntary or generous giving.

4. Conclusion

The inner textual analysis from my hermeneutic of *te karea* in *te motiboi* reveals that voluntary giving is giving that is centred on the grace of God. As such, it is to be done without expectation of any materialistic reward. However, there is reward or blessing from it. As shown in the analysis, it is the joy and happiness felt by the donor or giver of gifts for sharing God-given gifts he/she has with others. This is *te kaniwanga* – a reward for giving gifts and money for others from *anganano*. The following Chapter will elaborate on this reward in light of Paul's recitation of some Old Testament texts. Part of this Chapter is exploring how the language of 9:1-15 show voluntary giving and its reward as depiction of the Mediterranean social and cultural values of honor and shame.

IV. CHAPTER THREE: INTERTEXTUAL, AND SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANALYSIS

1. Intertextual Analysis of 2 Cor 9:1-15

Section Two is the intertextual analysis which examines Paul's recitation of Psalm 112:9, Isaiah 55:10, and Hosea 10:12 as amplification of the type of giving Paul teaches. Section three deals with the social and cultural texture of 2 Cor 9:1-15, which will enable me to explore Paul's proclamation of giving, in the social and cultural context of the world of Corinth as encoded in the text. I will examine whether Paul's vision of giving gifts makes meaning within the social and cultural world of the first century Mediterranean world.

As shown in the inner textual analysis of the text, in the beginning of the unit (2 Cor. 9:1-5), Paul stresses to the church in Achaia the importance of completing their promise – the collection for the saints in Jerusalem. Paul talks about that fore announced collection as *eulogiav* (v.5) a blessing. In other words, voluntary giving is a blessing. This is linked to Paul's explanation of giving of gifts as 'generous undertaking' in 2 Cor 8:6-7. The NRSV translate the words χάριν in 8:6 and χάριτι 8:7 as "generous undertaking." The root word of these words come from is χάρις (grace). So the promised blessing Paul talks about is gracious giving. Based on the meaning of the word χάρις (offering as favor), carrying out giving as blessing, is offering of a gift without expectation of a reward from it. In other words, it is offering of a gift as a favor for the person in need. By doing this not only brings joy to the one in need but also to the giver when it is done for the glory of God (v. 13). This is the blessing of giving Paul emphasizes. The intertextual

analysis of 9:1-15⁶⁰ will show how Paul's recitation⁶¹ of Psalm 112:9, Isaiah 55:10, and Hosea 10:12 is affirmation of voluntary giving as blessing.

1.1. Paul's recitation of Psalm 112:9

Psalm 112 is part of the series of songs named Egyptian Hallel (Psalm 111-118).⁶² Hallel is a song of praise sung in the Jewish homes at the Passover meal to celebrate the mighty acts of God in the protection and guidance of His Chosen People – Israel. This Egyptian Hallel series is part of Book Five or the final book of the Psalms – Pss. 107-150. This book is made up of liturgies. It is also considered by some scholars as songs organized around the time of Ezra, after the return of Israel from exile in Babylon.

Psalm 112:9 (NRSV)

They have distributed freely, they have given to the poor; their righteousness endures forever; their horn is exalted in honor.

2 Cor. 9:9

As it is written, "He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."

⁶⁰ Bart B. Bruehler said, "2 Cor 9.6-15 is crucial for understanding Paul's collection for Jerusalem...." Bart B. Bruehler, "Proverbs, Persuasion and People: A Three-Dimensional Investigation of 2 Cor 9.6-15," *NTS* 48 (2002): 209-224. I agree with Bruehler. Bruehler's study investigates how the language of 2 Cor 9.6-15 as *logos* and *pathos* show the different socio-economic statuses of the Corinthians. According to Bruehler in page 209, "Paul employs deliberative *logos* in vv. 6-10 as he addresses those in lower socio-economic levels of the church, while he primarily employs *pathos* in vv. 12-14 and addresses those in the higher socio-economic levels of the church." In my analysis, I consider 2 Cor. 9:6-12 (the middle part of 2 Cor 9:1-15 as a rhetorical unit) as Paul's amplification and clarification of voluntary giving he stated in 9:1-5.

⁶¹ According to Robbins, "[r]ecitation is the transmission of speech or narrative, from either oral or written tradition, in the exact words in which the person has revealed the speech or narrative or in different words." Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 41.

⁶² Jack W. Hayford, ed., *Hayford's Bible Handbook: The Complete Companion for Spirit-Filled Bible Study* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 139.

Georgi saw Paul's use of this Psalm as showing the apostle's familiarity with Hellenistic Jewish Wisdom.⁶³ For Betz, the whole argument of 9:6-15 in which Psalm 112 is used, is ancient folk-wisdom that is agriculturally-based.⁶⁴ For my analysis, Paul's recitation of this Psalm and other Old Testament references, simply brings not only a Jewish understanding but also a historical and theological affirmation (is related to God's relationship to Israel) into Paul's explanation of voluntary giving as a blessing. This is the emphasis of this intertextual analysis.

The words, *As it is written*, draws the attention of the readers to this reference from Psalm in order to help them understand voluntary giving as blessing in light of the Holy Scripture. In Psalm the subject of the sentence or the person/s who gives freely to the poor and who is considered to have endured righteousness forever, is the one who fears the Lord. Simply put, the one who obeys and does God's will. It is one of the tasks that should be carried out by the people of God's chosen nation – Israel. As obedient people, they are looked upon as people having everlasting righteousness. Paul's recitation of Psalm 112:9 therefore portrays the kind of person who does voluntary giving as revealing one's fearing of the Lord. But voluntary giving is not just a blessing, it brings more blessing to the giver and the people in need. Paul's recitation and recontextualisation of Isaiah 55:10 and Hosea 10:12 in verse 10 clarify this point.

⁶³ Dieter Georgi, *Remembering the Poor: The History of Paul's Collection for Jerusalem* (rev. ed.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1992), 95.

⁶⁴ Betz, *2 Corinthians*, 98.

1.2. Paul's recitation of Isaiah 55:10 and Hosea 10:12

Isaiah 55:10 (NRSV)

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater

Hosea 10:12

Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek the Lord that he may come and rain righteousness upon you.

2 Cor. 9:10

He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.

In the context of Isaiah 55, the prophet speaks of the blessings bestowed upon those who are ready to receive the coming of the Messiah. The debate of who this coming Messiah is as mentioned in Isaiah 53 is still a contentious issue. Isaiah 53 and 55 are part of the book of Isaiah that speaks of Israel's return from exile in Babylon. It was the time when the Persian Empire under the leadership of Cyrus destroyed the Assyrian empire.⁶⁵ Considering that background, some scholars identified the Messiah as Israel. Others identified the Messiah as Cyrus, while some saw the Messiah as a prophet himself. Different attempts identify who the Messiah is in this part of the book of Isaiah, however,

⁶⁵ See, Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, NICOT (Louisville: WJK, 1998), 1-2; John D. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, WBC (Texas: Word Books, 1987), 227-29; John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 7-10.

that is not the important aspect here. What is important is that in Isaiah 55, the prophet talks about the coming of blessings to the people of Israel who have returned from exile. It is God supplying food for them by giving seed to sow and bread to eat. Isaiah speaks of God's helping Israel literally. But for Paul, his recitation of Isaiah is spiritual.

In the context of the book of Hosea, chapter 10 is part of Hosea's oracles about politics and cults in Israel.⁶⁶ It is where God is portrayed as the loving parent and Israel as the rebellious son. Despite the sinful acts of Gomer as Israel, there is a sign of hope for the people of Israel. And this is manifested in Hosea 10:9-15. This passage is looked upon as an exhortation that comes with judgments shown in verse 12.⁶⁷ More importantly it brings fertility into the land and people of Israel. Hosea 10:12 is about God and his people working together to bring fertility back to the land, both literally and spiritually. In other words it is bringing righteousness to the unrighteous – the disobedient people of Israel.⁶⁸ Paul's use of Hosea's prophecy like Isaiah is to bring that spiritual sense of God's relationship to Israel into undertaking of voluntary giving.

In all three contexts (Psalm, Isaiah, Hosea) the Israel's relationship to God is the main subject. In this relationship, despite Israel's disobedience God continues to have mercy on them. It is about bringing hope to something that is hopeless. More importantly they reveal that God is in control. God who provides for the people of Israel will supply and multiply the seed for the church members in Achaia, for sowing and increase the

⁶⁶ Beverly Roberts Gaventa and David Petersen, ed., *New Interpreters Bible : One Volume Commentary* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 721-22.

⁶⁷ Gaventa and Petersen, *The New Interpreters Bible*, 722.

⁶⁸ These scholars assert this point of bringing fertility as bringing of righteousness. Andersen and Freedman write that these "three verbs describe related actions: plowing virgin soil, sowing seed, reaping the harvest. All this is symbolic of life in the land characterized by righteousness and loving-kindness." Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Bible: Hosea* (New York Doubleday 1980), 568.

harvest of their righteousness. What this means according to Paul is explained in verses 11 and 12:

You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflow with many thanksgivings to God.

This is the blessing Paul talks about in this rhetorical unit. It is the thanksgiving given to God by the recipients of gifts because of the good work of the donors.

2. Social and Cultural textural analysis

The Mediterranean world is the social, cultural, and political context of the Corinthians' community. Therefore, it is certain that the social and cultural values of the Corinthian's community in the Mediterranean world will be reflected in the text.⁶⁹ The following analysis focuses on the social and cultural texture embedded in the language of the text which will advance the reading being undertaken in this thesis. Therefore this part will be focusing only on the pivotal values of 'honour and shame' as social and cultural values.

2.1. Honour and shame in 2 Cor. 9:1-15

'Honour and shame' are pivotal values of antiquity. They are part of the daily life of people in the Mediterranean world.⁷⁰ These values are considered important because

⁶⁹ Bruce J. Malina, "Understanding New Testament Persons," in *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation*, ed. Richard Rohrbaugh (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), 42-43. Here, Malina suggests that to be fair to the writers of the New Testament, it is important to understand how they understood people in their world.

⁷⁰ These books provide very useful explanation of 'Honour and Shame'. See de Silva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 43-93; Halvor

they bring an understanding of the difference between being honored and being shamed in social, cultural, religious, and economic situations of the first century. In the Mediterranean society, people receive and achieve honor when they are acknowledged in public.⁷¹ On the other hand, ‘shame’ is the reverse of ‘honor’. Although there is negativity in ‘shame’, it has a social and cultural recognition in the Mediterranean world.⁷² Shame was accepted as a cultural norm. Coming to biblical interpretation, readers need to pay attention to the rhetoric of the text in which these values are embedded. According to ancient rhetoric in Greek, these values are embedded in the language of a text as ‘rhetoric of praise and blame.’ This rhetoric is one of the main elements of ‘progymnasmata’⁷³ – a Hellenised way of writing and thinking. This method was commonly used in the Mediterranean world. The ‘rhetoric of praise and blame’ is an ‘epideictic speech’⁷⁴ which explains an important subject elucidated by a comparison of praise and blame.⁷⁵ The importance of the message held by that speech should be reflected in the life and character of the speaker. This is why it is important to consider that message in the presence of the speaker in the present in relation to the speaker’s life in the past. That consideration is significant as it will make certain the continuity of the

Moxnes, “Honor and Shame,” in *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation*, ed. Richard Rohrbaugh (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), 19-40.

⁷¹ John H. Elliot, *What is Social-Scientific Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 130, 133-134.

⁷² Moxnes, “Honour and Shame,” 31-33.

⁷³ Progymnasmata is where a student learns compositions in writing such as styles and forms of compositions. George A. Kennedy, *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), ix-xiv. Kennedy in this book has provided a very useful and valuable study and historical account of ‘progymnasmata’ in the introduction.

⁷⁴ Aristotle writes that there are three kinds of rhetoric: “(1) deliberative; (2) forensic; (3) epideictic” which he explains: “The business of the deliberative kind is to exhort or dissuade, its time the future, its end the expedient or the harmful; of the forensic to accuse or defend, its time the past, its end the just or unjust; of the epideictic praise or blame, its time the present (sometimes the past or the future), its end the noble or the disgraceful.” Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, xxxvii.

⁷⁵ Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, xxxvii.

importance of the message of that speech. Such a comparison identifies ‘honour’ and ‘shame’.

I can see in the 2 Corinthians the use of the rhetoric of praise and blame. It presents the characterization of Paul as ‘ethical’, ‘emotional’ and ‘logical’.⁷⁶ Paul’s ethical character is shown by way of his characterization as an apostle. It is shown in the epistolary prescript of the letter 2 Cor. 1:1-2. Here Paul is described as the apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. Paul in 3:1 says he does not need to commend themselves – he and his co-workers – because the Corinthian Christians as Christians are products of Paul’s teachings. He started the church there and visited there sometimes. Coming to our passage (2 Cor. 9:1-15), Paul’s sending of Titus and co-workers to Achaia, implies that as the one who sends these brothers of him in the ministry makes himself a person of good ethical character as Christian to do so. Paul’s ethical character can also be traced to his missionary journeys. During these journeys his teachings and preaching of the Gospel was publically recognized by many people. There were times he displayed this ethical character by undertaking healings and miracles.

Paul’s emotional character is expressed by his compassion for the churches or Christians he wrote to. For example, in 2 Cor. 3:2-3, the words he uses reveal his emotional character:

You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all; and you show that you are a letter of Christ prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

⁷⁶ Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, xxxvi; writes that ‘artificial proof in rhetoric has three kinds; (1) ethical, derived from the moral character of the speaker; (2) emotional, the object of which is to put the hearer into a certain frame of mind; (3) logical, contained in the speech itself when a real or apparent truth is demonstrated.’

Paul's logical character is shown by his use of prophecies and some historical events of Israel's relationship to God to underpin his teachings. A good example of this is Paul's use of Psalm 112:9, Isaiah 55:10, Hosea 10:12 to assert his teaching on voluntary giving as a blessing from God. Paul's ethical, emotional and logical characteristics as noted above describe Paul as the character in the 2 Corinthians. He is competent as an apostle of Jesus Christ who understands and knows the type of Christians in the church of Achaia and who deserves praise and honour in light of the Gospel.

In my social and cultural textural analysis of 2 Cor. 9:1-15, I see in this passage Paul's use of the rhetoric of praise and blame to show 'honour' and 'shame' in the undertaking of collecting gifts for the saints in Jerusalem. This is revealed in Paul's praising the church in Achaia for their eagerness to collect gifts:

I know your eagerness, which is the subject of my boasting about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year; and your zeal has stirred up most of them. (v.2)

Part of this praising is the apostle's use of another character's reaction to strengthen the point he is trying to put through. But this praise is followed by a blame indicated by the conjunction *but*. According to Paul, although there is eagerness among them, he is not sure if they will do it as they promised. The blame is reflected in these words of Paul: "*But I am sending the brothers in order that our boasting about you may not prove to have been empty in this case....*" (v.3). The implication of these words of Paul in verses 2 and 3 is that the one who is eager to give generously has honor, and the one who is not is shame. This is also reflected in Paul's recitations of the Old Testament texts. The one who is blessed or honored in the eyes of God is the person who is supplied with more seed to sow and bread for food. The implication of this point is that those who

are not given any seed and bread are the shamed ones. Thus, the use of the rhetoric of praise and blame in the text (2 Cor. 9:1-15) is to display the cheerful or generous giver that God loves.

3. Conclusion

The intertextual analysis has shown that Paul's recitation of the Old Testament references affirm the type of giving he has spoken about. It reveals that voluntary giving as a generous and cheerful giving is full of blessings. That is to feel joy for doing something good for those in need. The social and cultural textual analysis has extended that interpretation by showing that those who do voluntary giving are honored people in the kingdom of God.

V. CONCLUSION

This study is my attempt as an I- Kiribati-Christian to revisit 2 Cor. 9:1-15, a text that has been traditionally considered to contain a biblical and theological understanding of giving or offering of gifts. One of the motivations behind this work is to find some answers to some of the questions raised in our Christian community about giving. Questions such as: What does voluntary giving really mean? Is it giving of a set amount? Is there reward from giving? If there is, what is it?

The approach I utilized in this study is a combination of a hermeneutic and a reading methodology. I have used a Kiribati perspective on giving as a hermeneutic, to see the text and then utilized socio-rhetorical criticism as a reading tool. It explored the text from that hermeneutic. My hermeneutic is a ‘Kiribati hermeneutic’. It is *te karea* in *te motiboi*. It speaks of giving as a pleasant aroma that its scent reaches out beyond boundaries to other spaces. The two lenses of this hermeneutic are *te makuri ae akea boona* (work with no charge), and *te kaniwanga* (reward).

I undertook a socio-rhetorical analysis of the inner texture, intertexture, and social and cultural texture of 2 Cor 9:1-15 as a rhetorical unit. In the innertextual analysis, I found that voluntary giving is a blessing. It is an offering from the heart based on the teaching of the grace of God, as shown in and through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this way, offering of gifts to help those in need has no set amount – it is the quality that matters not the quantity. It is *te makuri ae akea boona* – a service with no charge. It has a reward and that reward is similar to *te kaniwanga* in *te karea* in *te motiboi*. The reward of voluntary giving according to Paul is again based on the meaning and significance of χάρις – a favor done for the person in need. As a favor, there is no

expectation for a reward. However, the reward that Paul talks about is the feeling of joy felt by the donor or giver, when glory is given to God by the recipients of gifts, through their prayers of thanksgivings. This feeling of joy is more felt by the giver that gives with *anganano* – from within.

To my suggestion based on the innertextual analysis of the text, having *te karea* as a blessing, a voluntary gift, *te makuri ae akea boona* (work with no charge), a favor (*χάρις*), *anganano* (from within) and that it has a reward (*kaniwanga*), it is important to consider the significance of time factor. If *te karea* is meant to be a pleasant aroma, there must be a need of planning ahead of the scheduled time otherwise *te karea* remain an extortion to the church. Church members need to consider the importance of working the monetary contribution prior to the allocated time. This will helpful as there is no rush and yet pressure associated with extortion is contained.

Paul in his attempt of encouraging generous giving begins with reconciliation through his renewal of the trust and the bond he shared earlier with the Churches at Corinth. The church administration needs to do likewise. The church (Kiribati Uniting Church) has been undergoing difficulties with the church administration. Suspicion and doubt about how *te karea* is managed and used needs to be made clear. To the Corinthians it is crystal clear the purpose of giving gifts. It is for the poor in Jerusalem. In our case it is for the church and its mission. The poor servants of the Church, pastors and their families, teachers who are working at the church schools are relying on the people's *karea*. *Te karea* that is a *χάρις* – a favor offered to someone in need.

The intertextual analysis have shown that Paul's recitation of the Old Testament texts were to affirm the voluntary giving and its reward that Paul begins to talk about in 2

Cor 8. According to these recitations, God continuously supplies and multiplies the seed and bread. Its implication is that those who give generously, these gifts of God, will forever receive the reward of that giving. God is the sole provider and that is the emphasis of the recitation of the Old Testament texts. Church members though they have commitments other than their prominent and cherished offering to the Church, they need not to discourage for God will provide every means of blessings that will contribute to their righteousness. Giving to the Church is a mean of praise and appreciation of God's *χάρις* – the favor that cannot be ceased but continue to abide His people every time and in every way despite the hindrances.

The generous and cheerful givers, according to the social and cultural analysis are the so-called honored people in the eyes of God. The fact that the churches in Corinth were honored is because of their receptive of the challenge laid before them as Christians. They were once declared publicly that they were willing to offer their selves for the benefit of their fellow Jerusalem brothers. In response they need to fulfill the publicized task otherwise their reputation of being righteous is in vain. My fellow church members, I-Kiribati Christians also deserve the name honored people for their receptive of the Good News in Jesus Christ; yet they ought to reflect it by living accordingly. Voluntary giving is one of the many characteristics of being an honored Christian.

I have mentioned in the introduction to this thesis that I hoped a result of this study could offer a biblical basis for our practice of *te karea* in our Kiribati Uniting Church. I say that I can recommend some suggestions from this study. Firstly, the traditional understanding of *te karea* in *motiboi*, for me could be a good Kiribati understanding to base upon a development of a Kiribati biblical and theological teaching

or understanding of what should be *te karea* in our Kiribati-Christian world. Secondly, the elements of this understanding which I have utilized in this thesis as hermeneutical lenses can be used as biblical and theological categories of *te karea* in *te motiboi*. This recommendation is based on the result of my study here. As mentioned, I have found that the meaning of voluntary giving Paul talks about is no different from looking at giving as *te makuri ae akea boona* (work with no charge). It has *te kaniwanga* (reward) which is a blessing. Thus, the practice of *te karea* should not be enforced on the church members as a set amount. Instead, they need to be encouraged to give in the way Paul has shown – that is to give for the church from *anganano* – that is led by the grace of God.

GLOSSARY

Anganano: the willingness to give in terms of giving money or a helping hand that expects nothing in return. It can be separated in two words; anga means give whereas nano means deep or from within the giver.

B'ab'ai: another species of talo but bigger in size (giant swamp talo)

Bonubonu: a sea worm that lives in the shallow waters. The worm has a sweet smell

Ibonga: someone who is set aside for worship purposes. A chanter or priest.

Kaainga: a particular place or piece of land allotted as a heritage to an extended family. Te utu (family) can also mean te kaainga.

Kaniwanga: a reward or prize given to someone for an outstanding work.

Karea: can either be referred as a noun or a verb. In the case of the noun it means something, an offering to the gods or in other traditional understanding it means an ingredient added to the coconut oil to give pleasant aroma. An act of giving is also mean te karea in both traditional and contemporary Kiribati.

Manam: a traditional Kiribati food made from *b'ab'ai*, and coconut.

Motiboi: a traditional Kiribati way of perfuming or extracting the scent of *te karea* (ingredients) through heating up of the coconut oil.

Ngeaiarabo: a soft part of *te ngea* tree. It is one of the well known ingredients in traditional Kiribati of perfuming.

Te: definite article 'the'.

Te makuri ae akea boona: work with no charge.

Toddy: Sweet syrup extracted from coconut tree. *Te karewe* is its name in Kiribati.

Uri: another species of frangipani and *tiare*. *Te uri* flower has a pleasant smell.

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