

The Glory of God Manifest: Interpreting Titus 2:13

(First draft)

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Because of its highly ambiguous construction and seemingly controversial theological implications, Titus 2:13 is a long disputed text. Caught in the middle of a sentence that reaches from vs. 11 through 14, the chain of genitive nouns τῆς δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ has divided both linguists and theologians between three different interpretations: (1) the text refers to both God the Father (τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ) and to Jesus (σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ), and the glory that will appear at the Parousia belongs to both of them (cf. KJV); (2) the whole phrase is referring to Jesus Christ, called “our great God and Savior,” whose glory will be seen at His Second Coming; (3) Jesus Christ is described as “the glory of our great God and Savior.”

The first interpretation is dismissed by most scholars as highly unlikely.¹ An established grammatical rule (Granville Sharp’s Rule) asserts that both nouns θεός and σωτήρ refer to the same person.² Also, the idea of both God the Father and Jesus appearing at the Parousia is strange to the NT. Because of its few advocates and both linguistic and theological improbability, it will not be discussed in this essay.

The second interpretation is the traditional, long-standing consensus among scholars. It asserts that “Jesus Christ” stands in apposition to “the glory of ... God,” applying Sharp’s rule to affirm that “God” and “Savior” refer to the same person. This would place Titus 2:13 alongside 2 Pet 1:1, where a similar construction appears, among a few of the most

¹ See, e.g., Gordon D. Fee, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), 443–444; William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC 46 (Nashville: Nelson, 2000), 421; George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 322.

² Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 270.

important Christological texts in the NT, for it would explicitly identify Jesus as “God.” Most objectors to this view argue based on theological premises instead of Greek grammar.³

However, the advent of the fairly new third interpretation, which still has few proponents,⁴ has brought a new possibility to light, leading scholars to analyze the text more thoroughly. Since both the traditional and the new interpretations are based on the same grammatical rule and on non-contradicting theological assumptions, a closer look to the individual arguments is necessary. After an analysis of grammatical and syntactical observations of the passage, special attention will be given to the theology of the text in light of the third view.

Grammatical Observations

Both interpretations appeal to Granville Sharp’s Rule to support their reading of Titus 2:13. The validity of Sharp’s Rule is corroborated by most grammarians since the nineteenth century till today.⁵ The assertion that both nouns in an article-substantive-καί-substantive construction refer to same person finds no exception within the NT, considering the limitation set by Sharp that both nouns be personal, singular and non-proper, with the article preceding only the first noun.⁶ This includes two texts that claim to have Christological relevance: Titus 2:13 and 2 Pet 1:1:

Titus 2:13 τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

2 Pet 1:1 τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

³ The notorious nineteenth-century grammarian G. B. Winer discarded Sharp’s rule saying that “considerations derived from Paul’s system of doctrine lead me to believe that *soterios* is not a second predicate, coordinate with *theou*” (*A Treatise on the Grammar of New Testament Greek*, trans. and rev. W. F. Moulton, 3^d rev. ed. [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1882], 162).

⁴ Though having been first proposed by F. J. A. Hort (*The Epistle of St. James* [London: Macmillan, 1909], 103–104), this new interpretation has been taken up again in recent years by Fee, 443–444, and Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 777–779, as well as the NEB.

⁵ E.g., BDF, § 276; A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934), 786–787.

⁶ Wallace, 270–271, 273.

In both cases, the article precedes the word “God”⁷ and after the conjunction καί is the word “Savior.” The two nouns are personal, singular and non-proper,⁸ according to the stipulations set up by Sharp. The logical grammatical conclusion therefore is that both nouns refer to the same person, dismissing the view that Paul is talking about both “the great God” and “our Savior Jesus Christ.” Nonetheless, it does not solve the problem of who “the great God and our Savior” is referring to: God the Father or Jesus Christ?

It is assumed in Titus 2:13 by the traditional interpretation that “Jesus Christ” stands in simple apposition to the previous phrase, identifying the person in question. By using simple apposition, the referent is determined by finding two adjacent nouns in the same case, with the same syntactical relation to the rest of the clause and that refer to the same person or thing.⁹ “Jesus Christ,” which comes after the second noun, is a proper name, thus not included in Sharp’s construction. If this reading is correct, the passage would be explicitly referring to Jesus as God. In support of this understanding, Bowman writes that “when a reader is looking for a term to serve in apposition to a personal name, all other things being equal, the reader will tend to ‘land’ on a recognized personal designation.”¹⁰ Yet, he concedes that this reasoning does not work in the case of Col 2:2, where “Christ” stands in apposition to “mystery” instead of “God.”¹¹

In Titus 2:13, however, the chain of genitives in the first part of the verse causes

⁷ The critical apparatus to 2 Pet 1:1 notes that in the Sinaiticus and a few other manuscripts the word κυρίου replaces θεοῦ. This could be a scribal change with the purpose of making the text consistent with the same construction found elsewhere in the same book: 2 Pet 1:11; 2:20; 3:2, 18 (cf. BDF, § 276).

⁸ Θεός in Greek is not considered a proper name or noun, for it is almost always articular and the plural form exists. This is important, otherwise Sharp’s rule could not be applied to it. “Whenever a proper name occurs in Sharp’s construction two persons are in view” (Wallace, 274; cf. Mounce, 427).

⁹ Wallace, 48.

¹⁰ Robert M. Bowman, Jr., “Jesus Christ, God Manifest: Titus 2:13 Revisited,” *JETS* 51 (2008): 744.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 744 n. 36.

certain ambiguity. As Col 2:2 shows,¹² it is possible that the referent is farther than expected, especially since the tendency to read something in a certain way does not automatically make it the correct reading. Fee writes that “it is only the *distance* from what it stands in apposition to, made so by the second appellation of God as ‘our Savior,’ that has caused us historically to read ‘Jesus Christ’ as in apposition to either ‘our Savior’ or ‘our great God and Savior.’”¹³ The fact that the “vast majority of interpreters” have understood this text in the traditional way is not enough to make this a “solid piece of evidence,” as claimed by Bowman,¹⁴ against an alternative view. Even tradition must be able to hold up against scrutiny.

Alternatively, the new interpretation argues that “Jesus Christ” stands in apposition to “the glory of our great God and Savior.” Though this reading might not be as natural, the requirements of simple apposition are met, for the terms are in the same case, refer to the same person or thing and have the same syntactical relation to the rest of the clause.¹⁵ It is true that “Jesus” and “glory” are not adjacent, but the argument is that “Jesus” is in apposition to the whole phrase “the glory of our great God and Savior,” thus making this reading possible.

In simple apposition, both nouns are equivalent, but the different terms are used for further clarification. This means that one explains and can substitute the other without loss

¹² Bowman argues that there is a significant difference between Col 2:2 and Titus 2:13, making such a parallel invalid. He says that “to speak of ‘the knowledge of the mystery of God’ easily and naturally conveys the idea of knowing God’s mystery,” whereas “to understand ‘the manifestation of the glory of God’ to refer to anything other than God manifesting Himself in His own glory” is quite unnatural (ibid., 743). However, just as God’s mystery is unknown and waiting to be disclosed in some manner, God’s glory has yet to be fully manifested. That Christ is the One who reveals to us God’s glory in its fullness is a concept that will be further developed in the discussion on the theology of the new interpretation. Bowman’s emphasis on an apparent difference between Col 2:2 and Titus 2:13 is hyperbolic and meant to discredit an obvious precedent.

¹³ Fee, 444.

¹⁴ Bowman, 743–744.

¹⁵ Wallace, 48.

of meaning.¹⁶ In the case of reading Titus 2:13 in light of the new interpretation, this would mean that “the glory of our great God and Savior” *is* “Jesus Christ.” One equals the other. Both interpretations, therefore, are grammatically possible. While proximity and apparently natural reading speak in favor of “Jesus Christ” being in simple apposition to “the great God and our Savior,”¹⁷ this still does not invalidate an alternative, not unprecedented view.

“Manifestation of the Glory” or “Glorious Manifestation”?

An analysis of ἐπιφάνεια in Paul further supports the possibility of the new interpretation. There are two possible ways of reading ἐπιφάνειαν τῆς δόξης. The first option considers that τῆς δόξης is the subjective genitive accompanying the verbal noun ἐπιφάνειαν: the glory is being manifest. The second reading takes τῆς δόξης as an attributive genitive describing the manifestation.¹⁸ The implications are as follows:

If the attributive view is correct, Fee’s reading of the text cannot be, since ἐπιφάνειαν τῆς δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν would mean “glorious manifestation of our great God and Savior,” shutting the door on the idea that the text is referring to Jesus Christ as the glory. On the other hand, if the attributive view is incorrect, Fee’s view is possible but not necessarily correct. If the subjective view of τῆς δόξης is correct, the text may mean either “the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, [which glory is] Jesus Christ,” or “the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, [which great God and Savior is] Jesus Christ.”¹⁹

In favor of the attributive view, Bowman notes the similarity between how the two halves of vs. 13 are constructed:

art.	+	adj.	+	noun	+	καὶ	+	noun	+	genitive
τὴν		μακαρίαν		ἐλπίδα		καὶ		ἐπιφάνειαν		τῆς δόξης
τοῦ		μεγάλου		θεοῦ		καὶ		σωτῆρος		ἡμῶν

By paralleling the two halves of the phrase, Bowman concludes that just as the genitive ἡμῶν modifies σωτῆρος attributively, so τῆς δόξης should be read as an adjectival

¹⁶ Ibid., 96–97.

¹⁷ Cf. Mounce, 427–428; Knight, 325.

¹⁸ Bowman, 735.

¹⁹ Ibid.

modification of ἐπιφάνειαν. In other words, Paul would be “speaking of the ‘glorious manifestation,’ rather than ‘the manifestation of the glory.’”²⁰ However, Bowman ignores the underlying differences between the two phrases: ἡμῶν is a personal pronoun, which in the genitive becomes a possessive with the capability of modifying the whole phrase. In other words, it is attributive by nature. τῆς δόξης, on the other hand, is a noun by nature, and it being in the genitive does not necessarily imply that it should be understood attributively. Even if it were attributive it would only modify ἐπιφάνειαν, and not the whole phrase, as is the case of ἡμῶν. Also, the fact that the second phrase is syntactically dependent on the first indicates that the parallel grammatical elements become nothing more than an interesting coincidence.²¹

Though both the attributive and the subjective use of τῆς δόξης are attested in Paul’s writings, the latter fits both Paul’s usage and that of the NT in general in reference to Jesus’ second coming and to God. Bowman asserts that the attributive use of the genitive “is at least possible” in two-thirds of the eighteen times it is used in Paul’s writings.²² According to him, these statistics are important evidence “in favor of the attributive use and the translation ‘glorious manifestation.’”²³ Yet, he fails to mention that in five of the six cases where the attributive use is clearly ruled out, τῆς δόξης refers specifically to the glory of God. Knight elaborates:

²⁰ Ibid., 741.

²¹ Murray J. Harris also observes this similarity, arguing that just as the hope is the manifestation, so God is Savior (*Jesus as God: The New Testament Use of Theos in Reference to Jesus* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992], 183). However, the καὶ in the first phrase is exegetical (the blessed hope, which is the manifestation), unlike the καὶ in Sharp’s rule. In addition, Sharp’s rule does not apply to it, for it does not involve personal nouns. In other words, because of the syntactical differences, one phrase cannot be used to explain the other: the first construction has an exegetical καὶ, the other does not; one fits Sharp’s determinations, the other does not. Such a parallel is unnecessary for Harris’ argument, for Sharp’s rule in and of itself leads us to the conclusion that “God” and “Savior” are referring to the same person. This observation is correctly dismissed by I. Howard Marshall as “hardly compelling” (*The Pastoral Epistles*, ICC [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999], 280).

²² Bowman, 736. Cf. Rom 8:21; 9:23; 1 Cor 2:8; 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 1:17; 1:18; 3:16; Phil 3:21; Col 1:11; 1:27; 1 Tim 1:11; Titus 2:13. The other six occurrences cannot be attributive: Rom 3:23; 5:2; 6:4; 2 Cor 3:10; Eph 1:14; 2 Thess 1:9.

²³ Ibid., 738.

It is more plausible, however, that the passage speaks of the appearance of God's glory rather than of the glorious appearing of God (ἐπιφάνειαν τῆς δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ). This is supported by the use of δόξα elsewhere with reference to Jesus' second coming, where it is not used adjectivally but as a noun indicating the splendor that will accompany and be manifested in that appearing (cf. Matt 16:27; 24:30; 25:31; Mark 8:38; 13:26; Luke 9:26; 21:27; 24:26). Furthermore, Paul often uses δόξα followed by a genitive construction referring to God, as here (cf. Rom 1:23; 3:23; 15:7; 1 Cor 10:31; 11:7; 2 Cor 4:6, 15; Phil 1:11; 2:11; 1 Tim 1:11).²⁴

Knight also emphasizes the verbal parallelism between vs. 13 and vs. 11, which speaks of the appearance of the grace of God, as evidence in favor of the subjective reading.²⁵ Similarly, Fee writes that the attributive use of τῆς δόξης would "obliterate the parallel with 'the manifestation of grace' in vs. 11 ... and thus destroy the rhetoric of the sentence as a whole."²⁶

Vs. 11: Ἐπεφάνη γὰρ ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ

Vs. 13: ἐπιφάνειαν τῆς δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ

The argument is that, just as the grace of God has appeared, so we look forward to the appearance of the glory of God. Bowman concedes that Paul is referring to both advents of Christ, one that has already occurred and the other still in the future, but to say that "it is not clear that Paul is rhetorically setting up a contrast between 'grace' and 'glory,' since these terms are not naturally paired semantically as contrasting terms"²⁷ is overestimating the semantic difference. Both the verb ἐπιφαίνω and the noun ἐπιφάνεια belong to the same word group and both are being used in this context in connection to a specific attribute belonging to God.

Jesus as the glory of God is consistent with the NT use of the verb ἐπιφαίνω and the noun ἐπιφάνεια. The verb appears a total of four times in the NT, three of which speak of divine attributes or blessings being manifested (cf. Luke 1:79; Titus 2:11; 3:4). When the

²⁴ Knight, 322.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Fee, 443. Cf. Marshall, 275; Mounce, 421.

²⁷ Bowman, 739.

context of each of these verses is considered, it becomes clear that these divine blessings reach us because of and through Jesus Christ.

The noun ἐπιφάνεια is used six times, five being in the Pastorals (1 Tim 6:14; 2 Tim 1:10; 4:1; 4:8; Titus 2:13), all of which refer to the appearing of Jesus, either at the Incarnation or at the Parousia. Nevertheless, in Titus 2:13 there is a subtle difference that needs to be emphasized. In all the other passages, “Jesus” (either the noun itself or a pronoun referring to Him) is the One “appearing” or “being manifest.” In Titus, we find the same syntactical relation between the head noun ἐπιφάνεια and its complement in the genitive, though in this case the complement is “glory.” It is argued that if “manifestation” is always in reference to Christ and not to God, it cannot be the glory of God the Father which is being manifested.²⁸ Now, to say that the “glory of ... Jesus” is the subject of the manifestation seems strange and incoherent with the other texts, where Jesus Himself is the subject appearing, not an attribute of His. Fee states that “it seems inexplicable for Paul ... to here refer to the personal coming of Christ as a manifestation of *Christ’s* ‘glory.’ Of course His ‘glory’ will be seen when he comes; but why say such a thing at all in this context?”²⁹ On the other hand, to equate the “glory of ... God” with “Jesus” and to affirm that *He* is being manifested is more coherent and in synchrony with the general idea of the personal appearance of Jesus as subject of ἐπιφάνεια found in the aforementioned texts.³⁰

²⁸ Cf. Mounce, 429. Marshall adds that the idea of a manifestation of God’s glory and grace apart from Jesus is strange to the NT, saying that “God brings about the epiphany of His Son rather than Himself appearing along with Him” (281). This argument misunderstands the new interpretation. As Knight rightly observes, “all three interpretations agree that but one person ‘appears,’ namely, Christ” (325). In other words, the glory of God the Father is manifested in the personal appearance of Jesus.

²⁹ Fee, 445.

³⁰ In his response to Fee, Bowman claims that in many statements it could be understood that Fee actually implies that “Jesus Christ” is in apposition to “manifestation” instead of “glory” (Bowman, 745). This would mean that Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is a genitive of apposition to ἐπιφάνεια. By definition, the noun in the genitive case further defines or clarifies what is meant with the head noun, which is usually an ambiguous or metaphorical noun, one that “begs to be defined” (Wallace, 95–96). As Bowman correctly points out, this usage is not applicable in this case; the head noun ἐπιφάνεια is neither a broad category of which the genitive noun

Thus, contrary to what the traditional interpretation declares, the new interpretation does not diverge from Paul's consistent use of ἐπιφάνεια in reference to the personal appearance of Christ. The parallel between the manifestation of the grace of God in vs. 11 and the manifestation of the glory of God in vs. 13 in the context of the phrase is comprehensible and harmonizes with Paul's use elsewhere of both ἐπιφαίνω and ἐπιφάνεια in reference to Jesus Christ. Jesus is at the same time the means through which the divine blessing of grace reaches us and the One who manifests God's glory to us. This analysis of the individual terms in ἐπιφάνειαν τῆς δόξης speaks in favor of translating the phrase as "the manifestation of the glory of ... God."

In conclusion, the new interpretation is in full agreement with Greek grammar and syntax, as well as with Paul's usage of ἐπιφάνεια. In fact, though the reading is admittedly slightly more complex than the traditional one, the new interpretation is in more harmony with the NT references to the second coming of Jesus and the manifestation of glory than previously granted by traditional scholars.

Theological Considerations

The validity of the new interpretation, which identifies "the glory of ... God" with "Jesus Christ," regarding grammar and syntax has been demonstrated in the previous sections. This section intends to verify the theological implications behind such identification, analyzing whether or not it is coherent with biblical teachings and ideas in general. Also, the immediate context of the passage as well as the broader context of the Pastorals will be looked into more closely.

¹Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is a part of, nor is it being used metaphorically (Bowman, 745). However, if it is clear that in the Pastorals it is always Jesus Christ who is the subject of ἐπιφάνεια, there is no need to discuss a genitive of apposition. "Jesus Christ" is not in apposition to "manifestation," but the subject of the epiphany.

Christ as the Revelation of God's Glory and Essence

The word δόξα is used in basically two senses: as a visible manifestation and as uttered praise, the former being directly relevant to the study of Titus 2:13. It is connected to the concept of the revelation of the mysteries of God, which are “sufficient for our understanding of His redemptive purposes.”³¹ In this context, δόξα “becomes the medium for expressing the uniqueness and sublimity of God.”³² The OT understanding of “glory” is used to describe God's presence in creation (Ps 19:1–6; Isa 6:3) and among the nations (Ps 97:6), specifically among Israel, His covenant people.³³

Particularly important is the manifestation of God's glory through His redemptive acts in history: at Sinai (Exod 24:16–17), through Jesus Christ (cf. Luke 9:32; John 1:14; Luke 24:26; Rom 8:17; Matt 16:27; 1 Pet 4:13), in its transforming power in the life of believers (2 Cor 3:18; Rom 8:30),³⁴ and in the consummation (Hab 2:14; Rom 5:2; Rev 21:23).³⁵ In Paul, many of His references to δόξα are related to the gospel, for it carries out God's plan of sharing His glory and therefore restoring what was lost in the fall (cf. Gal 3:15–18; 1 Cor 2:6–8; 2 Cor 3: 10–11; 2 Cor 4:4–6; etc.). Glory terminology has its highest concentration in 2 Cor 3:7–11, where a contrast between the old and new covenant is laid out, with glory as the common element. In the words of Griffin, “the new covenant δόξα in Christ is the climatic revelation of God's glory.”³⁶

³¹ D. Guthrie and R. P. Martin, “God,” *DPHL* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993), 361.

³² God's glory is also linked with certain attributes of His. His glorious presence in the tabernacle (Exod 40:34–35) and in the temple (1 Kgs 8:10–11) emphasizes His holiness (Isa 6:1–3). When in the context of the Exodus, either as deliverance or as judgment (cf. Exod 16:10; Num 14:10–19), and in connection with resurrection (cf. John 11:40; Rom 6:4), it is God's power that is being highlighted (E. F. Harrison, “Glory,” *ISBE* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982], 2:479).

³³ R. B. Gaffin, Jr., “Glory, Glorification,” *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993), 348; S. Aalen, “Glory,” *NIDNTT* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 2:45. Man and woman were also originally created in the image of God, partakers of His glory (1 Cor 11:7), but since the entrance of sin in the world, God's glory has been marred in humanity (cf. Rom 1:21–23; 3:23; Gaffin, 348).

³⁴ Aalen, 46.

³⁵ Harrison, 480.

³⁶ Griffin, 348–349.

It is the concept of the supreme revelation of God's glory in Christ that is decisive for the comprehension of Titus 2:13, a concept which is corroborated by a number of NT passages. In 2 Cor 4:4–6, Paul is clearly identifying Jesus as the true representation of God, “for he alone brings to visible expression the nature of an invisible God (Col 1:15). So, to see Christ is to see God.”³⁷ The idea of Christ being God's image should be understood in terms of a shared nature with God, a nature that is revealed through Christ.³⁸ There is no doubt that Christ has glory in and of Himself (vs. 4). However, the glory of God can only be fully seen and known through the Person of Christ. Thus, when we look at Jesus, we behold the glory of God (cf. John 14:9).

In the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel (John 1:1–18), the Word who became flesh is presented as none other than the God of the OT, and it is said that His glory was seen (vs. 14). This revelation of glory is explained as being in agreement with God's own nature (“glory as of the Father's only begotten”).³⁹ John is talking about more than mere imitation; the use of “glory” indicates that Christ reveals God's character “in terms of His sovereign goodness and mercy.”⁴⁰ Likewise, in Heb 1:3, it is clear that by using the term δόξα the author is using “the image of light to indicate the nature of God.” Not only does Jesus radiate the glory of God, it is said that He is the “exact representation” (χαρακτήρ) of God's nature, an even stronger set of words reinforcing the “essential unity and exact resemblance between God and His Son.”⁴¹ Though these two statements emphasize the ontology of Christ and His relationship with God, the broader context aims to demonstrate the

³⁷ L. L. Belleville, *2 Corinthians*, IVPNTC (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 1996), 116.

³⁸ M. J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 331, 337.

³⁹ Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: a Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 52–53. For further discussion, see Wilson Paroschi, *Incarnation and Covenant in the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel (John 1:1–18)*, EUS (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2006), 142–145.

⁴⁰ Rodney A. Whitacre, *John*, IVPNTC (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 1999), 58–59.

⁴¹ P. Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 99.

qualification of Christ to be the final manifestation of God in a salvation-historical role.⁴²

Not only does Christ reveal God's glory, He reveals to us all of who God really is: His Person, His nature, His attributes, His essence (e.g. Col 1:15; 2:9). Among the number of Christological passages in the NT, there are some key texts in which Christ is referred to as a specific attribute of God. It is important to note that in none of these verses, Titus 2:13 included, are the expressions meant as a title referring to Jesus, but rather as the manifestation of God's traits in the Person of Jesus Christ.⁴³ In 1 Cor 1:24, Jesus is called the power and the wisdom of God. In other words, God's power and wisdom are revealed and actualized in Christ and on the cross.⁴⁴ In a similar sense, Titus 3:4 refers to Jesus as the most concrete manifestation of God's kindness and love, specifically in the redemptive work of Christ.⁴⁵ This identification of Jesus as the epitome of God's attributes fits the context of Titus 2:11–14, where both God's grace and God's glory are seen in Christ and His work of salvation. Christ, being the image and the exact representation of God, is the One who reveals to us God in His very essence. His glory, His grace, His power and His love are made known to us in the Person of Christ.

This understanding is relevant for the study of Titus 2:13, for it teaches us two important things about Christ as the glory of God: first, the idea of the glory of God being manifested in Jesus contributes to the ontology of Christ, for only a divine Being one with God could so accurately represent Him in nature and essence. Secondly, Jesus as the glory of God should be considered in the specific context of salvation history. Though God's glory can be found in creation or in His holy presence in the temple, it is in the saving acts of Jesus that

⁴² P. T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 55–56.

⁴³ See Fee, 444.

⁴⁴ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 172.

⁴⁵ Towner, 778; Mounce, 447.

it finds its fullest manifestation, and the Titus passage at hand is referring specifically to the end of the salvation process at Jesus' second coming.

God our Savior

It is unusual for Paul to speak of God as "our Savior." This designation is found only in the Pastorals (1 Tim 1:1; 2:3; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 2:13; 3:4; cf. 1 Tim 4:10). In the other letters, "Savior" is used only twice, both of them in relation to Jesus (Eph 5:23; Phil 3:20); this also occurs in the Pastorals, once in 2 Timothy (1:10) and twice in Titus (1:4; 3:6). In Titus, therefore, the term alternates between God and Jesus.⁴⁶

Though the purpose of each of the Pastorals is different, there is no need to argue on the basis of a theological development, such as Aageson's suggestion that this subtle difference in the usage of the term σωτήρ could be the result of a slight shift in the theological emphasis of the particular Epistles. While in 1 Timothy the focus is on divine being and intention, in Titus Paul concentrates on redemptive purpose and activity.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, Aageson is reluctant to stress such a possibility precisely because of the ambiguity of Titus 2:13, saying that "it may also be the case that in Titus God and Christ have come to be so identified that the appellation used of God naturally applies also to Christ."⁴⁸

Conversely, Marshall states that "In the P[astoral]E[pistles] it is primarily God who is Saviour, but this leads directly to the naming of Jesus Christ as Saviour inasmuch as God's plan is effected through Him."⁴⁹ God is the One who plans and designates, whose "plan of

58. ⁴⁶ See J. W. Aageson, *Paul, the Pastoral Epistles, and the Early Church* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2008),

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 58–59.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁴⁹ Marshall, 131.

salvation”⁵⁰ is carried out in the Person of Jesus Christ. This is clear in Titus 3:4–6, where the function of each member of the Godhead in salvation is brought to light: “God the Father as the planner and initiator (vs. 4), Jesus Christ as the agent of redemption (vs. 6), and the Holy Spirit as the instrument of regeneration and renewal (vs. 5).”⁵¹

The passage of 2 Tim 1:9–10 corroborates the idea that God’s plan of salvation is carried out by Jesus. God is the One who saved us according to His purpose and grace, granted to us through Jesus Christ. This concept is found not only in the Pastoral Epistles, but in Paul’s writings in general: God’s gift of grace is given to us through Jesus (cf. Rom 3:23–24; 5:15–21; 1 Cor 1:4; 15:57; 2 Cor 9:14–15, etc.).

In Titus 2:13, the parallel to vs. 11 clarifies the understanding of God as Savior:

Titus 2:11 Ἐπεφάνη γὰρ ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ σωτήριος πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις

Titus 2:13 ἐπιφάνειαν τῆς δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν

It is because of God’s saving grace, accomplished in Christ’s first coming (vs. 11), that God can be referred to as “our Savior” at the Parousia (vs. 13). In both verses, it is an attribute of God’s that is being manifested through Jesus Christ. In vs. 11, the grace of God brings salvation to all men through Jesus, in reference to the Incarnation and the cross. In vs. 13, God’s glory is made manifest through the second coming of Christ. In light of the Pastoral’s theology of God as the One whose plan is carried out through Christ, all those who accepted the gift of God’s grace (vs. 11; cf. 2 Cor 9:14–15) and are now under the instruction thereof (vs. 12) can claim the honor of calling God their Savior.

Hence, though in Titus the term σωτήρ is applied to both God and Jesus, considering

⁵⁰ Frances Young suggests that the word οἰκονομία in Eph 3:9 be translated as “plan of salvation,” for it refers to the administration or outworking of God’s plan of salvation through the gospel. Key texts in 1 Timothy and Titus where reference is made to God as Savior should be understood in this light (*The Theology of the Pastoral Epistles* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994], 54–55).

⁵¹ Mounce, 447. See also Fee, 449.

both Paul's theology in the Pastorals and the immediate context of the passage, it is very likely that the appellation σωτήρ ἡμῶν is referring to God the Father.

Parallels between Titus 2:13 and 1 Tim 2:5

J. C. Edwards suggests analyzing Titus 2:13 alongside 1 Tim 2:5 to find out the accurate meaning of the passage.⁵² The similarities between the two texts rest on common authorship and historical context, implying that similar theological concepts would be used in the same way.⁵³ In other words, what is true of θεός in one passage most likely is true of θεός in the other. For this, Edwards takes the whole context, Titus 2:11–14 and 1 Tim 2:1–7, into consideration.

In both passages, the author emphasizes the universal extent of salvation (Titus 3:11; 1 Tim 2:4) along with an exhortation for godly living (Titus 3:12; 1 Tim 2:2). Besides that, Edwards also argues that both texts have suffered influence of Isa 42:6–7 and 49:6–8.⁵⁴ “It was common for early Christian writers,” he notes, “to appeal to Isa 42:6–7 and/or 49:6–8 in order to justify the universal extension of salvation.” Besides that, the two ἵνα clauses in Titus 2:14 are “almost completely parallel to Barnabas 14:6.” The Barnabas text is relevant, for it is “nothing more than the author's summary of Isa 42:6–7; 49:6–8, which is quoted in Barnabas 14:7–8.”⁵⁵ A third point of influence is covenant language: when Isaiah talks about

⁵² J. Christopher Edwards, “The Christology of Titus 2:13 and 1 Timothy 2:5,” *TynBul* 62 (2001): 141–147.

⁵³ Concerning the Pastorals, Werner G. Kümmel states, “They presuppose the same false teachers, the same organization, and entirely similar conditions in the community. They move within the same relative theological concepts and have the same peculiarities of language and style” (*Introduction to the New Testament*, rev. ed., trans. Howard C. Kee [Nashville: Abingdon, 1975], 367).

⁵⁴ In Titus, God's grace brings salvation to all men (vs. 11), and that same grace teaches us how to live sensibly, righteously, and godly (vs. 12). In 1 Timothy, it is God's will that all men be saved (vs. 4), and that we should pursue a quiet life in godliness and dignity (vs. 2) (Edwards, 144–145).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 145.

berit 'am (42:6; 49:8), he is probably referring to a covenant mediator, just as in 1 Tim 2:5,⁵⁶ which stands in parallel to Titus 2:14.

A further similarity is the use of a tradition that is similar to Mark 10:45 in both 1 Tim 2:6 and Titus 2:14, which is practically undisputed among scholars:⁵⁷

Mark 10:45	καὶ δοῦναι	τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ	λύτρον	ἀντὶ πολλῶν
1 Tim 2:6	ὁ δοὺς	ἑαυτὸν	ἀντίλυτρον	ὑπὲρ πάντων
Titus 2:14	ἔδωκεν	ἑαυτὸν	ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν,	ἵνα λυτρώσῃται

This parallel alongside the reference to θεός plus Ἰησοῦς Χριστός gives force to Edwards' argument. Paul is careful to uphold the Jewish belief of one God as stated in the *Shema*, while at the same time introducing Jesus (cf. Rom 3:30; Gal 3:20; 1 Cor 8:6). If this is clear in 1 Tim 2:5, where “God” and “Christ Jesus” refer to two separate persons, in light of all the other contextual similarities, “it is very likely that the same author would similarly wish θεός and Ἰησοῦς Χριστός to be distinguished as two persons” in Titus 2:13.⁵⁸

Conclusion

Though the traditional interpretation that Jesus is being referred to as “God” in Titus 2:13 is longstanding and has the majority of scholars as supporters, the new interpretation, according to which Jesus is identified as “the glory of God,” has brought new arguments to light that deserve attention. This paper has weighed the main grammatical, syntactical, contextual, and theological arguments on both sides in order to reach more definite conclusions as to which interpretation is more developed.

Sharp's rule was crucial to a better understanding of Titus 2:13. Because of it, it is

⁵⁶ Edwards points out that “in the New Testament, μεσίτης is almost always linked with the idea of covenant (Gal 3:19–20; Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24)” (146 n. 12).

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 147.

clear that “God” and “Savior” refer to the same person. Though both interpretations base their arguments on this rule, the person being referred to could be either Jesus Christ or God the Father. Similarly, it is rather futile to make a case based on simple apposition, for “Jesus Christ” could be in apposition to either “Savior” (and so, to “God,” since both refer to the same person) or to the whole phrase: “the glory of our great God and Savior.” Though the traditional interpretation is grammatically more simple and natural, the new reading is just as possible, as the parallel case of Col 2:2 demonstrates.

The new interpretation has, however, some positive arguments that, along with supporting evidence, make a viable case against the traditional view of the passage. The idea of Jesus being the subject of the manifestation of the glory of God is more in synchrony with the general idea of the personal appearance of Jesus as subject of ἐπιφάνεια found in all five texts the term is used in the Pastorals. Though some may say that τῆς δόξης should be used attributively (“glorious manifestation”) as opposed to subjectively (“manifestation of the glory”), the subjective view fits well both Paul’s usage and that of the NT in general in reference to Jesus’ second coming and to God. Just as in vs. 11 God’s grace is implicitly manifested through Christ, Jesus is the One who will manifest God’s glory at the Parousia. This argument is supported by the many references found in the NT to Jesus being the One who reveals God and His attributes to us, including His glory.

In the Pastorals, God is repeatedly referred to as “Savior.” This is theologically sound, because it is His plan of salvation that is carried out by Jesus Christ, also called “Savior” in other Titus passages. In Titus 2:11–14, the long sentence begins with a clear reference to God, whose grace made salvation possible (vs. 11). In this context, God is the One who saves through Jesus. Thus, it makes more sense for vs. 13 to refer to God as Savior: because of His saving grace, He can now be called “our Savior.”

Finally, the many contextual similarities between Titus 2:11–14 and 1 Tim 2:1–7 should call our attention: most likely, they will share a similar Christology. If it is clear that in 1 Tim 2:5 “God” and “Christ Jesus” refer to two separate persons, the probability of Paul doing the same in Titus 2:13 is very high. In other words, when Paul writes “great God and our Savior,” he is most likely referring to God the Father, not to “Jesus Christ,” which would then be in apposition to “the glory of God.”

In conclusion, grammar in itself is not enough to determine which interpretation, the traditional or the new one, is more likely to be correct, though the use of correct grammatical arguments is unquestionably important in both cases. But when put together with contextual evidence and theological concepts, the new interpretation gains considerable force in relation to the traditional reading. To say that Jesus manifests the glory of God as opposed to being directly referred to as “God” does not, however, cause any harm to Christology. As Fee concludes, to say that we expect the full and final manifestation of God’s glory in the coming of Jesus Christ Himself is “high Christology indeed.”⁵⁹ Only One as divine as God could fully and accurately represent Him.

⁵⁹ Fee, 446.