

JESUS CHRIST, GOD MANIFEST: TITUS 2:13 REVISITED

ROBERT M. BOWMAN, JR.*

Gordon Fee's new work, *Pauline Christology*,¹ is likely to be the standard reference on the subject for years to come. Fee devotes about 450 pages to a study of every statement about Christ in Paul's writings (including the Pastorals) arranged in the likely order in which they were written, followed by about 160 pages developing a synthesis of Paul's Christology. Part I includes a short but significant discussion of the question of whether Titus 2:13 calls Jesus Christ "God." Fee concludes that this is not the case; rather, Jesus Christ is called "the glory of our great God and Savior."² In this paper, I will respond to Fee's arguments.

I. SETTING THE ISSUE IN CONTEXT

The Greek text of Titus 2:13 forms a single subordinate clause with the verb προσδεχόμενοι ("awaiting"). It reads as follows (with a slavishly literal translation following):

προσδεχόμενοι τὴν μακαρίαν ἐλπίδα καὶ ἐπιφάνειαν τῆς δόξης
τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

("Awaiting the blessed hope and manifestation of the glory
of the great God and Savior our Jesus Christ").

Even the decision to break the text into two lines after τῆς δόξης ("of the glory") instead of before it might be subject to some criticism, since a key issue is how to construe the relation of these words to the rest of the clause. Readers may choose to ignore the line break.

The dispute here is not over the deity of Jesus Christ. Gordon Fee affirms the deity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity. Indeed, his two books

* Robert M. Bowman, Jr. is the executive director of the Institute for Religious Research, 1340 Monroe Ave., Grand Rapids, MI 49505.

¹ Gordon D. Fee, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007).

² *Ibid.*, 440–48. Fee took the same position, and presented some of the same arguments, in his much earlier commentary, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* Good News Commentaries; San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984). It was first proposed by F. J. A. Hort, *The Epistle of St. James* (London: Macmillan, 1909) 103–4, and has been echoed by only a few exegetes since then. For a list of six such exegetes, see Murray J. Harris, *Jesus as God: The New Testament Use of Theos in Reference to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992) 178 n. 14.

God's Empowering Presence (on the Holy Spirit)³ and *Pauline Christology* form a massive argument for a Trinitarian understanding of Paul's theology.⁴ Thus, the dispute is over whether Paul expresses the deity of Christ by calling him "God." According to Fee, the answer is no. Fee also concludes that Rom 9:5 does not call Jesus "God."⁵

Fee also agrees that the words "our great God and Savior" have one referent, not two. That is, he dismisses the view that "the great God" refers to the Father, while "our Savior" refers to Jesus Christ. Thus in this paper I will assume as a given that the titles "God" and "Savior" in Titus 2:13 have the same referent.⁶ The issue, then, will be whether that referent is the Father or Jesus Christ. Furthermore, Fee treats Titus as Pauline, meaning (in practical terms) that the rest of the Pauline corpus has more immediate relevance for understanding the language and thought of the letter to Titus. I agree with this assumption as well, while noting—as do all NT scholars, Fee included—that the language of the Pastorals differs in some significant ways from that of the other Pauline writings.⁷

The exegetical issue here is whether Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ("Jesus Christ") is in apposition to τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν ("our great God and Savior") or to τῆς δόξης. On the former view, Jesus Christ is called "our great God and Savior"; on the latter view, he is called "the glory of our great God and Savior." Another way of stating the matter is that, on the usual view, Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is in apposition to τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν, whereas on Fee's view, Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is in apposition to τῆς δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν.

Fee acknowledges that the view that Titus 2:13 calls Jesus Christ "our great God and Savior" is "the currently 'reigning' point of view, adopted by almost everyone in the NT academy and found in most of the major English translations."⁸ This near-consensus of current NT scholarship puts the burden of proof on Fee's position.

³ Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994).

⁴ See also Gordon D. Fee, "Paul and the Trinity: The Experience of Christ and the Spirit for Paul's Understanding of God," in *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity* (ed. Stephen T. Davis et al.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 49–72; "Christology and Pneumatology in Romans 8:9–11—and Elsewhere: Some Reflections on Paul as a Trinitarian," in *To What End Exegesis? Essays Textual, Exegetical, and Theological* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001) 218–39.

⁵ Fee, *Pauline Christology* 272–77. See the brief treatment of Rom 9:5 (which concludes that it does call Jesus "God") and the references cited in Robert M. Bowman Jr. and J. Ed Komoszewski, *Putting Jesus in His Place: The Case for the Deity of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007) 146–48, 331–32.

⁶ The grammatical/syntactical pattern at work here (article + personal noun + καὶ + personal noun) is often discussed under the rubric of "Sharp's rule," according to which two singular personal nouns in this construction refer to a single person. See Daniel B. Wallace, *Granville Sharp's Canon and Its Kin: Semantics and Significance* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008); for a brief treatment, see Bowman and Komoszewski, *Putting Jesus in His Place* 150–53.

⁷ Fee, *Pauline Christology* 418–19.

⁸ *Ibid.* 441.

II. "MANIFESTATION OF THE GLORY" OR "GLORIOUS MANIFESTATION"?

Like many exegetes (including some who think Titus 2:13 calls Jesus "God"), Fee construes τῆς δόξης as the subject of the verbal idea expressed by the verbal noun ἐπιφάνειαν ("manifestation" or "appearing"). In this view, the glory *is* what appears or becomes manifest. We may call this the *subjective* interpretation (since "the glory" is the subject of the "manifestation"). However, several English translations construe τῆς δόξης as an "adjectival" description of the manifestation: "glorious appearing" (notably KJV, NKJV, NIV, CEV, New English Translation [NET], Goodspeed, and Phillips).⁹ The grammatical basis for this view is the widely acknowledged fact that a descriptive noun in the genitive following another noun may exhibit an *attributive* use of the genitive, in which the noun functions as a description of the preceding (or "head") noun.¹⁰ In this view, glory is what *characterizes* the appearance or manifestation.

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."

Fee dismisses the attributive view of τῆς δόξης "as most unlikely. . . . There is hardly a thing in favor of this view, and nearly everything against it." He offers three arguments against it: (1) It is "out of sync with Paul's usage elsewhere." (2) Doing so would "obliterate the parallel with 'the manifestation of grace' in v. 11 . . . and thus destroy the rhetoric of the sentence as a whole." (3) It wrongly understands the words in question to describe "the *nature* of Christ's coming" rather than "the fact that God's own glory is what is going to be revealed."¹¹ I will consider each of these arguments in turn.

1. *Paul's usage of τῆς δόξης.* Regarding Fee's first argument, he offers no citations or examples from "Paul's usage elsewhere" in support. Evidently, Fee does not dispute that this usage occurs outside of Paul's writings, as

⁹ Fee mistakenly attributes this rendering to the NASB; neither the original nor the updated NASB translates τῆς δόξης as "glorious." Ironically, one can add the New World Translation [NWT] (published by the Jehovah's Witnesses) to the list of English versions that adopt this rendering.

¹⁰ On the attributive use of the genitive, see Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 86–88.

¹¹ Fee, *Pauline Christology* 443 and n. 83.

indeed it does with τῆς δόξης (e.g. Acts 7:2; Jas 2:1; cf. Matt 19:28; 25:31).¹² Far from being inconsistent with Paul's style, this usage of the genitive, and specifically τῆς δόξης, is especially prominent in Paul's writings. In two-thirds of the occurrences of τῆς δόξης in Paul's writings (12 out of 18, counting Titus 2:13),¹³ this same usage of τῆς δόξης is at least possible:¹⁴

- “the glorious freedom of the children of God”: Rom 8:21 KJV, RSV (but not NRSV), NAB, NIV, NKJV, REB, NLT, NET, CEV, HCSB¹⁵
- “glorious riches”: Rom 9:23 New Jerusalem Bible [NJB]; cf. CEV, “how glorious he is”
- “the Lord of glory”: 1 Cor 2:8, that is, the “glorious Lord,” NLT, CEV; “glorified Lord,” Twentieth Century NT [TCNT]¹⁶
- “the light of the glorious gospel of Christ”: 2 Cor 4:4 KJV (but not NKJV), Phillips, NET¹⁷
- “the Father of glory”: Eph 1:17, that is, “the glorious Father,” NIV, TCNT, HCSB, CEV, Weymouth, cf. NET note¹⁸

¹² George Knight overlooks Matt 19:28 and 25:31 when he asserts that “elsewhere” the term δόξα when used in reference to Jesus' return “is not used adjectivally but as a noun indicating the splendor” of his return; George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992) 322.

¹³ I am not counting the anarthrous δόξης, since it is more unusual for an anarthrous noun to be used attributively (though see Matt 19:28; 25:31). The anarthrous δόξης occurs eight times in Paul (2 Cor 3:11, 18; 4:17; 6:8; Eph 1:6, 12; 2 Thess 2:14; 2 Tim 2:10). There are six articular occurrences of δόξης in Paul that cannot be attributive (Rom 3:23; 5:2; 6:4; 2 Cor 3:10; Eph 1:14; 2 Thess 1:9).

¹⁴ See the similar list in Harris, *Jesus as God* 175. Harris lists seven of the same ten examples; he omits 1 Cor 2:8; Eph 1:18; Col 1:27.

¹⁵ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1993) 504, 509, translates “glorious freedom.” Commentators are split on the question. According to Osborne, “But here glorious freedom should probably be translated ‘the freedom of the glory of the children of God,’ for the emphasis in this section is on the future glory that awaits God's children (8:18), namely, that final vindication when we share in his glory.” Grant R. Osborne, *Romans* (IVPNTC 6; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004) 213. “Glory” is indeed a significant theme in this passage (see also 8:30), though the controlling theme seems to be that of God's sons or children (clearly sounded in 8:14–17, 19, 21–23, 29). In any case, translating “the glorious freedom of the children of God” places due emphasis on glory—arguably more than the translation Osborne prefers. Cf. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* 87–88, where he uses τῆς δόξης in Rom 8:21 as an example of the attributive genitive.

¹⁶ Most translations render “the Lord of glory” in 1 Cor 2:8, but this clearly means that the Lord is characterized by glory. Cf. Ps 24:7–10; 29:3; Acts 7:2; and Eph 1:17 (on which see below).

¹⁷ Fee, *Pauline Christology* 443 n. 83, complains that “the translators did the same thing” in 2 Cor 4:4 (“the glorious gospel”) that they did in Titus 2:13. By “the translators” he evidently means the translators of the KJV. The only version cited by Fee that translates 2 Cor 4:4 in a similar way is the NET. Cf. “the light, which is the good news about our glorious Christ,” CEV; similarly Goodspeed.

¹⁸ Although most versions render this expression “the Father of glory” (Eph 1:17), there can be little doubt that “of glory” characterizes or describes the Father. Hence, whichever translation we may prefer here (and both are fine), the expression means “the glorious Father.” See note 17 on 1 Cor 2:8. Cf. the translation “the all-glorious Father” in Markus Barth, *Ephesians* (AB 34A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974) 145, 148.

- “the riches of his glorious inheritance”: Eph 1:18 NRSV, NIV, ESV, NET, CEV; “the glorious riches of his inheritance,” HCSB¹⁹
- “his glorious riches”: Eph 3:16 Phillips, NIV, NLT
- “his glorious body”: Phil 3:21 KJV, RSV (but not NRSV), REB, ESV, NIV, NKJV, NET, HCSB, CEV, Weymouth
- “his glorious power”: Col 1:11, most versions
- “the glorious riches of this mystery”: Col 1:27 NIV, NET, HCSB; cf. CEV
- “the glorious gospel of the blessed God”: 1 Tim 1:11, most versions, though not the American Standard Version [ASV], Basic Bible in English [BBE], NAB, Today’s New International Version [TNIV]; “glorious” as modifying “God,” CEV, Good News Translation [GNT], REB
- “glorious manifestation [or “appearing]”: Titus 2:13 KJV, NKJV, NIV, NET, CEV, Goodspeed, Phillips; cf. “the Appearing in glory,” Weymouth, TCNT

Consistent with his view of Titus 2:13, Fee departs from the usual translation of 1 Tim 1:11, rendering the words in question “the gospel of the blessed God’s glory.”²⁰ Only a few versions construe 1 Tim 1:11 in this way, the TNIV (of which, perhaps not coincidentally, Fee was one of the lead translators) being one of only two notable recent versions to do so (“the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God”; cf. NAB).

Although both ways of rendering 1 Tim 1:11 are possible, the conventional rendering is somewhat more likely.²¹ When Paul follows the noun εὐαγγέλιον (“gospel”) with a genitive noun, that genitive typically (at least 15 out of 20 times) denotes God (Rom 1:1; 15:16; 1 Thess 2:2, 8, 9) or Christ (Rom 1:9; 15:19; 1 Cor 9:12; 2 Cor 2:12; 9:13; 10:14; Gal 1:7; Phil 1:27; 1 Thess 3:2; 2 Thess 1:8). There are three unambiguous exceptions (Gal 2:7; Eph 1:13; 6:15), none of which uses δόξης. The two disputable texts both involve τῆς δόξης, and in both cases one could construe τῆς δόξης attributively as modifying adjectivally the preceding noun (2 Cor 4:4; 1 Tim 1:11). If we take them in this way, then both texts fit the usual pattern of Paul’s usage, with the former referring to “the glorious gospel of Christ” and the latter referring to “the glorious gospel of the blessed God.”²²

¹⁹ The text of Eph 1:18 is ὁ πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης τῆς κληρονομίας αὐτοῦ, “the wealth of the glory of his inheritance.” Several ways of construing the genitives here are possible: “the wealth of the glory that characterizes his inheritance” (this exegesis is reflected in the NRSV, NIV, ESV, NET); “the wealth that consists of the glory that is his inheritance” (which the more “literal” rendering would probably imply); and “the glorious wealth that is his inheritance” (cf. the HCSB). For the last-mentioned view, see also Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* 90.

²⁰ Fee, *Pauline Christology* 423.

²¹ Among commentators favoring this view, see Raymond F. Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A Commentary* (NLT; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002) 34. A notable recent commentator disagreeing is Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006) 132.

²² The force of this argument might seem blunted somewhat by Knight’s observation that “Paul often uses δόξα followed by a genitive construction referring to God,” as in both 1 Tim 1:11 and

One possible objection to this argument is that in 1 Tim 1:11 (as well as 2 Cor 4:4), unlike the other 18 texts cited above, we have one genitive expression following another. In such a chain of genitives, it may seem that each genitive is linked to the following genitive, so that, for example, τῆς δόξης (“of the glory”) should be directly modified by τοῦ μακαρίου θεοῦ (“of the blessed God”) in 1 Tim 1:11. However, we have already noted some texts where this expectation may not hold. For example, Rom 8:21 should probably be translated “the glorious freedom of the children of God.”²³

A better argument applying specifically to 2 Cor 4:4 is that τῆς δόξης appears again in verse 6 in a parallel construction, and there it seems less likely to be attributive:

τὸν φωτισμὸν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ
 φωτισμὸν τῆς γνώσεως τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν προσώπῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

“the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ” (v. 4)

“the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (v. 6)

Although it is possible to translate verse 6 “the light of the glorious knowledge of God,” such a rendering seems as unlikely as it is unprecedented. In the context, Paul’s emphasis is on the humility of the apostles (3:4–6; 4:7–12) and on the divine glory (“the glory of the Lord,” 3:18; “the glory of God,” 4:15), making a reference here to “glorious knowledge” inappropriate. Thus, 2 Cor 4:4 may well be an exception to the typical pattern of τῆς δόξης being used attributively. If so, of course, it is also possible that 1 Tim 1:11 is another exception,²⁴ though most translators disagree.

It would be nice if we could prove one way or the other the correct translation of 1 Tim 1:11, since it is the only other place besides Titus 2:13 that τῆς δόξης occurs in the Pastorals. Certainty or even high confidence seems elusive, though, at least on this point. However, what ought to be clear is that Fee’s assertion that such a usage in Titus 2:13 is “out of sync with Paul’s usage elsewhere” is mistaken. Two thirds (12 out of 18, if we count Titus 2:13) of the occurrences of τῆς δόξης in Paul’s writings may fit this usage, and of these, several are commonly so understood. All other things being equal, the evidence tips the scale in favor of the attributive use and the translation “glorious manifestation.”

Titus 2:13; Knight, *Pastoral Epistles* 322, citing Rom 1:23; 3:23; 15:7; 1 Cor 10:31; 11:7; 2 Cor 4:6, 15; Phil 1:11; 2:11 (see also Rom 5:2; 6:4; 2 Cor 3:18; of Christ, 2 Cor 4:4; 8:23; 2 Thess 2:14). However, two fifths of the genitives following δόξα in Paul denote something other than God or Christ (Rom 8:21; 1 Cor 11:7b; 15:41 [three times]; 2 Cor 3:7; Eph 1:6, 18; Col 1:27; 2 Thess 1:9), so that no regular pattern exists here, unlike with εὐαγγέλιον followed by the genitive.

²³ Again, Wallace argues that an attributive genitive complicates the usual way that such a chain of genitives is to be interpreted and translated, citing Rom 8:21 as an example (*Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* 87–88).

²⁴ Knight, for example, while noting that “there is much to commend” the attributive reading in 1 Tim 1:11, ends up rejecting it in light of 2 Cor 4:4; Knight, *Pastoral Epistles* 90–91. It is a judgment call whether the wording of 2 Cor 4:4 should have more influence in our decision than the typical Pauline locution “gospel of God/Christ.”

2. “*Manifestation of grace*”? Fee’s second objection to construing τῆς δόξης attributively in Titus 2:13 is that doing so would “obliterate the parallel with ‘the manifestation of grace’ in v. 11 . . . and thus destroy the rhetoric of the sentence as a whole.” Murray Harris has raised the same objection: “The first advent of Christ was an appearance of God’s grace; the second advent of Christ will be an appearance of God’s glory.”²⁵ Of the three objections Fee raises against the attributive view, this is the one that has persuaded a fair number of exegetes.²⁶

This parallel, however, is not necessary to “the rhetoric of the sentence as a whole,” since in fact Paul does not actually write “the manifestation of grace,” as Fee puts it. What Paul writes in verse 11 is that “the grace of God has been made manifest” (or “has been manifested”), using the verb ἐπιφάνω (in the aorist passive form, ἐπεφάνη). In verse 13 he uses the noun ἐπιφάνειαν (the accusative form of ἐπιφάνεια) to write, “awaiting the blessed hope and manifestation.” It is fair to say that Paul is speaking of two contrasting advents of Christ, one that had recently occurred in the present age (v. 12) and the other expected to occur in the future that would usher in the age to come. But 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.

In any case, the shift from the verb ἐπιφάνω to the noun ἐπιφάνεια rather weakens the argument that Paul’s rhetorical strategy proves that Paul uses grammatically parallel expressions “the grace of God” and “the glory of God.” The reason this is so is that elsewhere in the Pastorals,²⁷ the grammatical subject of the noun ἐπιφάνεια is always a personal designation for Jesus Christ:

- “the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Tim 6:14)
- “the manifestation of our Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Tim 1:10)
- “Christ Jesus . . . and his manifestation” (2 Tim 4:1)
- “the Lord . . . all who have loved his manifestation” (2 Tim 4:8)

On the other hand, Paul uses the verb ἐπιφάνω twice in Titus to denote the manifesting of God’s grace (2:11) or his goodness and love of humanity (3:4). It would seem that throughout the Pastorals, Paul reserves the noun ἐπιφάνεια

²⁵ Harris, *Jesus as God* 175–76; likewise, Knight, *Pastoral Epistles* 322.

²⁶ Knight, *Pastoral Epistles* 322 (who gives additional reasons); D. Edmond Hiebert, “Titus,” *EBC* 11:441; Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin Jr., *1, 2 Timothy, Titus* (NAC 31; Nashville: Broadman, 1992) 312; cf. Jouette M. Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996) 200–201; I. Howard Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, in collaboration with Philip H. Towner (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999) 275.

²⁷ The noun ἐπιφάνεια occurs once in Paul outside the Pastorals (2 Thess 2:8), where the subject of the manifestation is “his coming.” Since everyone, including those who affirm Pauline authorship of the Pastorals, agrees that the use of vocabulary in the Pastorals is somewhat distinct from the use in other Pauline epistles, we should not press 2 Thess 2:8 as an “exception” to the consistent usage in the Pastorals.

for references to the manifestation of Christ himself, and uses related verbal forms when speaking of divine attributes or blessings being “manifested.” This distinction seems especially evident in 2 Tim 1:9–10, a text that in many ways is parallel to Titus 2:11–14:

who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace [χάρις] which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, but now [νῦν] has been revealed [φανερωθεῖσαν] by the appearing [ἐπιφανείας] of our Savior Christ Jesus [τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ], who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (NASB).

Compare the above text with Titus 2:11–14:

For the grace [χάρις] of God has appeared [ἐπιφάνη], bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present [νῦν] age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing [ἐπιφάνειαν] of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus [σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ], who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds (NASB).

It seems, then, that any apparent parallel between ἐπιφάνη in Titus 2:11 and ἐπιφάνειαν in 2:13 is not evidence against construing τῆς δόξης attributively in verse 13. To the contrary, the evidence from Paul’s use of ἐπιφάνεια in the Pastorals for the manifestation of the person of Christ (as distinct from his usage of related verbal forms) is evidence in support of that attributive exegesis.

3. *Glory: what’s coming?* Fee’s third objection to understanding τῆς δόξης attributively in Titus 2:13 is that doing so wrongly understands the words in question to describe “the nature of Christ’s coming” rather than “the fact that God’s own glory is what is going to be revealed.” Frankly, this objection begs the question of whether τῆς δόξης expresses the nature of the epiphany (the attributive exegesis) or the subject of the epiphany (Fee’s exegesis). His exegetical objections to the attributive view do not seem to hold up.

Harris expresses a similar objection, arguing that the attributive interpretation “weakens the import of the term δόξα.”²⁸ Again, this objection really assumes what is in need of evidence, namely, that Paul is stating emphatically that it is the glory of God that will become manifest.

There is at least one other line of evidence that supports interpreting τῆς δόξης attributively. Titus 2:13, following the opening verb of the clause, divides into two halves, each consisting of a phrase using the article + adjective + noun + καί + noun + genitive construction, then ending with the name “Jesus Christ”:

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

²⁸ Harris, *Jesus as God* 176.

The parallel between the two halves of the verse provides some evidence for the view that Paul uses τῆς δόξης attributively as an adjectival expression modifying ἐπιφάνεια, similar to the way that the genitive pronoun ἡμῶν modifies σωτήρος.²⁹ Thus, the view that we should construe Paul to be speaking of “the glorious manifestation,” rather than “the manifestation of the glory,” looks more likely in view of this bit of evidence.³⁰

It may be impossible to prove beyond reasonable doubt that we should construe τῆς δόξης attributively in Titus 2:13. However, contrary to Fee’s statement that “there is hardly a thing in favor of this view, and nearly everything against it,” it would appear that there is nothing decisive against it and at least some significant evidence in favor of it. We have specified three lines of evidence in favor of the attributive exegesis: (1) Paul frequently uses τῆς δόξης attributively in his writings (as much as two thirds of all occurrences). (2) Elsewhere in the Pastorals, the grammatical subject of ἐπιφάνεια is always Christ, while related verbal forms denote the manifesting of God’s blessings. (3) The parallel constructions in the two halves of Titus 2:13 suggest that τῆς δόξης, like ἡμῶν, modifies the preceding noun.

If the attributive reading of τῆς δόξης is correct, then Fee’s interpretation cannot be. On the other hand, even if the attributive reading is incorrect, Fee’s interpretation does not necessarily follow. It is quite possible to understand Titus 2:13 (as Harris, for example, does) to mean that Christians await the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, and that this great God and Savior is Jesus Christ.

III. JESUS CHRIST: GOD, OR GOD’S GLORY?

As we have just explained, it is likely that we should translate Titus 2:13, “awaiting the blessed hope and glorious manifestation of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” Still, it is also possible to translate it, “awaiting the blessed hope and manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” Whichever of these options is preferred, the conventional understanding of most NT scholars today is that the text identifies “our great God and Savior” as “Jesus Christ.” However, Fee enumerates six points against this view and in favor of understanding “Jesus Christ” to identify, not “our great God and Savior,” but “*the glory of our great God and Savior.*” If the attributive interpretation of “glory” is correct, Fee’s position is not. On the other hand, if Fee’s six reasons for his position are strong, they might be sufficient to displace the weight of the arguments presented in favor of

²⁹ The point here is not that “Sharp’s rule” applies to both halves. The first half of Titus 2:13 does not involve personal nouns, which is the kind of noun to which Sharp’s rule applies. Rather, the point is simply that the very close syntactical parallel between the two halves supports the view that the last element of both halves serves the same grammatical function (that of an adjectival modifier of the previous noun).

³⁰ Harris (*Jesus as God* 183) notes the parallel in support of construing “our great God and Savior” as referring to one person, but does not consider the possibility that the parallel implies that τῆς δόξης is being used attributively. Marshall dismisses Harris’s argument as “hardly compelling” (*Pastoral Epistles* 280).

the attributive interpretation. Thus, either way, we need to consider Fee's six points in order to do full justice to the question.

1. *Reduced to "its barest essentials."* Fee begins his case by arguing that we can better see what Paul meant by eliminating the "multiplication of modifiers" in Titus 2:13 in order to reduce it to "its barest essentials." When we do that, he says, we get "the manifestation of the glory of God, Jesus Christ." If Paul had written that, Fee asserts, "no one would have imagined that 'Jesus Christ' stood in apposition to God."³¹

As we shall see, there is reason to think that Fee's claim here is overstated; some readers, at least, would think that "Jesus Christ" stands in apposition to "God" in Fee's simpler statement. We will come back to that question when we consider Fee's third point.

In any case, Fee's argument depends on a selective choice of what counts as "essentials" in Paul's statement and what counts as the nonessential "modifiers." One might hypothesize, with equal or greater warrant, that the essence of Paul's point is that we are awaiting "the manifestation of the glory of our Savior, Jesus Christ" (cf. 2 Tim 1:10). (That this abridged version is closer to the text's actual emphasis is suggested by the fact that the title *Savior* receives striking emphasis in Titus.³²) It is doubtful that anyone would ever suggest that in such a sentence "Jesus Christ" was in apposition to "glory."

What we should ask is *why* few who read Fee's simplified version of Paul's statement are likely to understand it to identify Jesus Christ as God. The answer would seem to be that most of us do not think of the unqualified title "God" as an expected, customary designation for Jesus Christ. Thus, when we see a text that appears to call him "God," many of us naturally and almost instinctively look for an alternate way of understanding the text. Suppose, for example, that Paul had written, "the manifestation of the glory of the Lord, Jesus Christ." It is safe to say that no one would have any trouble recognizing "Jesus Christ" as "the Lord" (either in apposition or as part of a compound name).

It turns out, then, that Fee's first point really presupposes his fifth point, namely, that it would be anomalous for Paul to have referred to Jesus Christ as God. I shall address this argument in turn; for now, we should simply notice that Fee's first point loses its potency unless his fifth point is presupposed.

As a final response to this first argument, the fact is that Paul did not write the simpler statement that Fee hypothesizes. Supposing for the sake of argument that his simpler statement would more easily be understood to mean that Jesus Christ is the glory of God, it does not follow that we should understand what Paul actually wrote in the same way. As we examine his

³¹ Fee, *Pauline Christology* 444. The second and third arguments also come from this same page of Fee's book.

³² Six of Paul's twelve uses of σωτήρ are in Titus (1:3, 4; 2:10, 13; 3:4, 6). I owe this point to Daniel B. Wallace.

other arguments, I shall argue to the contrary that we should not understand Paul in that way.

2. *The comparison with Col 2:2.* Second, Fee compares Titus 2:13 to Col 2:2, where Paul writes about “the knowledge of the mystery of God, Christ” (translating literally).³³ He points out that interpreters properly understand Paul to mean that Christ is “the mystery of God,” not that Christ is “God.” He suggests that had Paul written “the mystery of our great God and Savior, Christ,” we should still interpret him to mean that Christ is the mystery, even though some interpreters would presumably understand this statement to identify Christ as God.

This second point is really just an illustration of the first point. We could agree with Fee’s observations without agreeing with his conclusion that interpreters’ “instinct” has led them astray in Titus 2:13.

However, there is a significant difference between Col 2:2 and Titus 2:13 that is highly relevant. We would not normally understand “the knowledge of the mystery of God” as another way of referring to knowing God himself, because “mystery” rarely (if ever) refers to any aspect of God’s own being. On the other hand, we would normally understand “the manifestation of the glory of God” as a way of referring to God manifesting himself, since “glory” often refers to an aspect of God’s own being. It is in fact quite *unnatural* to understand “the manifestation of the glory of God” to refer to anything other than God manifesting himself in his own glory. By contrast, to speak of “the knowledge of the mystery of God” easily and naturally conveys the idea of knowing God’s mystery, whatever that mystery might be, as something distinct from God.

Hence, there are relevant semantic differences between Col 2:2 and Titus 2:13 that negate the argument of Fee’s first two points.

3. *The “distance” between apposite terms.* According to Fee, his first two points show 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.’” In a footnote, he acknowledges that the verbal distance is an “obvious difficulty” while claiming that it “is the *only* difficulty” with his position.³⁴

First, under the right linguistic circumstances a significant verbal distance between nouns in apposition would create no confusion at all. In this case, however, the verbal distance between “glory” and “Jesus Christ,” if Fee is correct, has apparently misled the vast majority of interpreters. Nearly all scholars throughout the centuries have thought that “Jesus Christ” was in apposition either to “our great God and Savior” or “our Savior.” It has only

³³ Fee assumes, rightly enough, the consensus on the text-critical question of the original wording of Col 2:2. He also assumes, again rightly, that the best exegesis of that text construes Χριστοῦ in apposition to μυστηρίου and not τοῦ θεοῦ. On these questions, see Harris, *Jesus as God* 263–65.

³⁴ Fee, *Pauline Christology* 444 n. 86.

been in the last hundred years that a few scholars have thought to identify “glory” as the term apposite to “Jesus Christ.”³⁵ This “difficulty” is therefore a solid piece of evidence against Fee’s view.

Second, this is not the only evidence against Fee’s interpretation. As we have already pointed out, it would be semantically odd or unexpected to speak of the manifestation of the glory of God and not mean that the one manifest is God himself.

Third, 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.³⁶ Looking for a preceding term to which “Jesus Christ” stands in apposition, the reader is thus more likely to consider “our great God and Savior” as the apposite term than the term “glory.”

The convergence of the three factors just mentioned creates a strong presumption in favor of understanding “Jesus Christ” to stand in apposition to “our great God and Savior.” It is not the verbal distance alone, but the verbal distance *and* the preference for a personal designation to serve in apposition to a name, *in conjunction with* the semantic equivalence of the manifestation of the glory of God with the manifesting of God himself, that lead most interpreters to this conclusion.

Fee’s first three points, then, amount to one argument, namely, that the only reason for rejecting the view that “Jesus Christ” is in apposition to “glory” is the verbal distance between the two substantives. As we have seen, this is not the case. On the other hand, it would seem perfectly fair to say that the only reason to think that “Jesus Christ” is in apposition to “glory” is the apparent difficulty of Paul calling Jesus God. Our examination of the rest of Fee’s six points will confirm this to be the case.

4. *Jesus Christ, God’s glory?* Fee’s fourth point is that it is “a Pauline idea” to speak of Jesus Christ as the glory of God. He uses the term “idea” because, as he acknowledges, Paul nowhere else ever refers to Jesus as the glory of God—not even in 2 Corinthians 3–4, where Jesus is closely associated with God’s glory. Nevertheless, Fee states, Paul “makes it clear that Christ is indeed *the manifestation of God’s glory*, since he is God’s true ‘image.’”³⁷

³⁵ See n. 2.

³⁶ This is probably why Harris felt it necessary to consider whether Col 2:2 calls Christ God (*Jesus as God* 263–65), even though hardly any NT scholars argue for that conclusion. Since θεοῦ is the immediately preceding noun and is a personal designation, it would normally make a more suitable term in apposition for Χριστοῦ than does μυστηρίου. Harris’s only objection to this conclusion is that it would be unprecedented (pp. 264–65), which is hardly decisive. There are two exegetical reasons for concluding that Col 2:2 does not call Christ “God.” The first is the semantic significance of μυστηρίου: Paul is concerned that believers gain the knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, the mystery or secret that God has now disclosed or revealed. The expression of concern that we know God’s now-disclosed secret invites the expectation that Paul is about to tell us what that secret or mystery is. The following words, “Christ, in whom are all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge kept secret” (2:2b–3, literal translation), naturally meet that expectation. Second, Paul has just identified the “mystery” explicitly as “Christ in you” (1:27). These contextual indications override the customary expectations that the apposite term will immediately precede and be a personal designation. No such contextual indications appear in Titus 2:13.

³⁷ Fee, *Pauline Christology* 445, emphasis Fee’s.

Fee here alludes to 2 Cor 4:4, where, however, Paul says that unbelievers fail to see “the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (NRSV). Assuming we do not understand τῆς δόξης attributively here as a description of the gospel (as Fee’s handling of τῆς δόξης would require), in this statement Paul’s idea is not that Christ is (or manifests) the glory of God, since he speaks of “the glory of *Christ*.” The idea will have to be derived from verse 6, where Paul says that God “has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (NRSV).

From 2 Corinthians 4, then, one might draw the idea that Jesus Christ is “the manifestation of God’s glory,” as Fee says. In putting it this way, though, Fee has strayed from his exegetical position. His claim with regard to Titus 2:13 is that “Jesus Christ” is in apposition to “glory,” not to “manifestation.” Thus, he translates it as “awaiting the appearance of our great God and Savior’s glory, Jesus Christ,” and states explicitly that he thinks the evidence favors “‘glory’ as the apposing word for ‘Jesus Christ.’”³⁸ Yet Fee more than once paraphrases Titus 2:13 in a way that treats “manifestation” as the apposite noun. In addition to the statement already quoted, Fee says that in Titus 2:13 “Christ is the coming manifestation of God’s glory.”³⁹ In a footnote Fee also acknowledges that “Christ is no more ‘the Glory of God’ than he is ‘the Grace of God,’ as though titles were in view in either case.” He then adds, “The passage has to do with the *manifestation* of God’s glory.”⁴⁰ All these statements imply that “Jesus Christ” is in apposition to “manifestation.”

One may wonder, then, whether there is any plausible basis for construing Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ in apposition to ἐπιφάνειαν. Simple apposition (the use of the genitive assumed by Fee) requires that the two substantives be of the same case, ruling out simple apposition of the genitive Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ to the accusative ἐπιφάνειαν. There is a “genitive of apposition” or “genitive of definition” in which the head noun can be of another case, but this usage does not apply here. The genitive of definition basically covers two types of occurrences. (1) The head noun represents a broad or general category and the genitive noun specifies one of many possible members of that category (e.g. “city of Thyatira,” Acts 16:14; “sign of circumcision,” Rom 4:11). Since no NT writer views Jesus Christ as merely one of many manifestations of God, Titus 2:13 is not this type of occurrence. (2) The head noun is used metaphorically and the genitive noun gives the meaning of the metaphor (e.g. “temple of his body,” John 2:21; “cup of his wrath,” Rev 14:10). Since “manifestation” is not a metaphorical term in Titus 2:13, this type of occurrence is also inapplicable.⁴¹ The extreme distance between ἐπιφάνειαν and Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (seven words, including three genitive nouns) adds to the high improbability of the two terms being in apposition.⁴²

³⁸ Ibid. 443–45.

³⁹ Ibid. 445.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 444 n. 87, emphasis Fee’s.

⁴¹ On the genitive of apposition, see Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* 95–100.

⁴² Wallace lists about twenty examples of the genitive of definition; in none is there any intervening substantive of any kind.

In defense of his claim that Titus 2:13 identifies Christ as the glory of God, Fee asserts that “it seems inexplicable” that Paul would “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?” Assuming for the moment (as Fee insists) that the attributive use of “glory” to modify “manifestation” is not in play here, I do not see what would be so odd in Paul speaking of Christ’s glory in this context. For that matter, why bring up the manifestation of *God’s* glory? Why bring up the manifestation of glory at all? Paul might simply be saying that believers are to live in a godly way in view of their hope that when their great God and Savior is manifested in all his glory, they will be the beneficiaries of that event. This point would still make sense whether or not the text identifies that “great God and Savior” as Jesus Christ.

The bottom line here is this: Paul nowhere calls Jesus Christ “the glory” of God, and the idea has only the loosest basis in Pauline theology. On the other hand, Paul explicitly calls Jesus Christ “our Savior” in the very epistle in question (Titus 1:4; 3:6) and explicitly speaks of the “manifestation” of Christ in several other places in the Pastorals (1 Tim 6:14; 2 Tim 1:10; 4:1, 8). So why balk at the idea that Titus 2:13 speaks of the manifestation of Jesus Christ as “our great God and Savior”? There can really be only one reason, and that is the assumption that Paul could not have called Jesus “God.” This leads us to Fee’s fifth point.

5. *Christ as God: un-Pauline?* According to Fee, it would be an “anomaly” in Paul’s writings if Titus 2:13 were to refer to Jesus Christ as God. This is the usual reason for denying that he does so,⁴³ which in the end is a circular argument. The argument also depends on Fee being correct in concluding that Paul does not call Christ God in Rom 9:5 (although, even if Fee is right about Rom 9:5, that would not settle the matter of Titus 2:13, given the fact that the Pastorals have their own distinctive vocabulary).

Fee attempts to take the argument beyond the question-begging level by pointing out that in Paul’s early letter of 1 Corinthians (8:6) he distinguishes between the Father as “the *one* God” (θεός) and Jesus Christ the Son as “the *one* Lord” (κύριος). Fee contends, in effect, that Paul assigns the divine title God to the Father and the divine title Lord to Jesus Christ.⁴⁴ This understanding of Paul’s use of these titles generally works, but it is probably not an absolute. In at least one passage, Paul applies the divine title Lord twice explicitly to the Father:

⁴³ G. B. Winer denied that Titus 2:13 calls Jesus θεός “for reasons which lie in the doctrinal system of Paul”; *A Grammar of the Idiom of the New Testament* (trans. J. Henry Thayer; Andover, MA: Warren F. Draper, 1897) 130. Ezra Abbot insisted that the interpretation that makes “the great God” the Father rather than Jesus Christ “is imperatively demanded by a regard to Paul’s use of language, unless we arbitrarily assume here a single exception to a usage of which we have more than 500 examples”; “On the Construction of Titus ii.13,” *Journal of Biblical Literature and Exegesis* (1882) 11–12. Examples could be multiplied.

⁴⁴ Fee, *Pauline Christology* 445.

Therefore “come out from their midst, and be separate,” says the Lord, “and touch no unclean thing, and I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters,” says the All-Powerful Lord. (2 Cor 6:17–18 NET)

The words “says the Lord” and “says the All-Powerful Lord” are not parts of the quotations (taken from Isa 52:11 and 2 Sam 7:14) but are Paul’s own words framing the quotations as statements from God, as Fee recognizes.⁴⁵ Yet this divine speaker states that he will be our “father” and that we will be his “sons and daughters,” so that the speaker must be God the Father.⁴⁶ Since Paul could just as easily have used the title “God” instead of “Lord” here (as in fact he does in the preceding verse, “as God said”), this is a clear case of Paul choosing to use the title “Lord” to refer to God the Father.

If Paul (for whatever reason) can refer on rare occasions to the Father as “Lord,” perhaps we should not be quick to assume that he could not also refer on rare occasions to the Son as “God.” None of the NT writers *routinely* or even *frequently* refers to Jesus as God. Even John refers to Jesus as θεός no more than four times in his writings: 3 out of 81 occurrences of θεός in the Gospel of John (1:1; 1:18, textually disputed;⁴⁷ 20:28); at most 1 out of 67 occurrences in the Johannine epistles (1 John 5:20, widely disputed); and not once out of 95 or 96 occurrences in Revelation. If we set aside the book of Revelation, John uses θεός for Jesus between 2 and 4 times out of 148 occurrences of θεός in his Gospel and epistles. Yet it would be fallacious in the extreme to dispute that John 20:28 calls Jesus “God” on the basis of such a statement being an “anomaly.” Murray Harris rightly warns against “an ever-present danger in literary research in making a writer’s ‘habitual usage’ so normative that he is disallowed the privilege of creating the exception that proves the rule.”⁴⁸

Another perspective on the same issue is suggested by Fee’s own observation earlier in his analysis of the epistle to Titus. Fee points out that Titus “is the only letter in the Pauline corpus where the title κύριος [‘Lord’] does not appear at all.”⁴⁹ Evidently, then, the apostle departs from his usual practice in Titus when referring to Jesus; and we should then be less surprised if in doing so he refers to Jesus Christ as God. Indeed, what Paul does in Titus is to use *two* divine titles that he elsewhere uses rarely for Jesus: God (θεός, elsewhere if at all only in Rom 9:5) and Savior (σωτήρ, elsewhere only in Phil 3:20; 2 Tim 1:10).⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Ibid. 266.

⁴⁶ Fee agrees that in 2 Cor 3:16–17 Paul calls God the Father κύριος; *ibid.* 636–37.

⁴⁷ On John 1:18, see Bowman and Komoszewski, *Putting Jesus in His Place* 141–42, 328–39; J. Ed Komoszewski, M. James Sawyer, and Daniel B. Wallace, *Reinventing Jesus: How Contemporary Skeptics Miss the Real Jesus and Mislead Popular Culture* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006) 290–93.

⁴⁸ Harris, *Jesus as God* 177.

⁴⁹ Fee, *Pauline Christology* 437. Paul calls Jesus κύριος six times in 1 Timothy, six times in Galatians (the lowest frequency, by far, of any Pauline epistle except Titus), and even five times in Philemon—making its absence from Titus all the more striking.

⁵⁰ Paul uses σωτήρ outside of the Pastorals only in these two references to Christ (Phil 3:20; 2 Tim 4:10), and never in reference to the Father. On the other hand, in the Pastorals he refers

Fee attempts to strengthen his fifth point by asserting that it creates a “double difficulty” if Paul not only calls Jesus God but even calls him “the great God.” Fee states that we can well understand why Paul would use this description for the Father but not for Christ. His only rationale for this judgment seems to be his statement in a footnote that “the use of this word group [μέγα-, “great”] in the NT” refers “exclusively to God.”⁵¹ This claim is incorrect, since the vast majority of occurrences of the μέγα- word group do not refer to God or Christ.⁵² Its use with reference to divine persons is not limited to God the Father, even if we exclude Titus 2:13 from consideration (see Luke 1:32; Phil 1:20; Heb 4:14; 10:21; 13:20; and especially 2 Pet 1:16, cf. v. 17). In any case, the lack of any other references to God as “great” in the NT calls this argument into question.⁵³

Other scholars, ironically, have argued with some cogency precisely the reverse. Harris, for example, asserts, “The exceptional use of μέγας [‘great’] with θεός may be more easily explained if θεός refers to Christ than if it signifies the Father.”⁵⁴ He points out that the NT nowhere else uses the adjective μέγας in reference to the Father. Harris suggests that Titus 2:13 accents the greatness of Jesus as God and Savior because Paul is emphasizing the greatness of Christ’s accomplishments in saving us (vv. 11–14).⁵⁵ Thus, what Fee

to the Father as σωτήρ six times (1 Tim 1:1; 2:3; 4:10; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4). As George M. Wieland has pointed out, “the considerable restraint in the use of σωτήρ in early Christianity is notable”; *The Significance of Salvation: A Study of Salvation Language in the Pastoral Epistles* (Paternoster Biblical Monographs; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006) 26. Ben Witherington, who takes the view that Luke wrote the Pastorals on behalf of Paul, argues that “Luke is deliberately using the more Hellenistic language here about gods and epiphanies, perhaps because of the way he views the audience and social situation in both Crete and Ephesus.” Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians, Volume I: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Titus, 1–2 Timothy and 1–3 John* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity; Nottingham, UK: Apollos, 2006) 104. Later, Witherington states that “it is likely” that in Titus 2:13 Jesus is “called both God and Savior” (p. 144). He suggests that Paul uses this language to contrast Jesus with the Roman emperor. “What we must stress is that, as N. T. Wright likes to say, Paul sees Jesus as the reality of which Caesar is only the parody. Jesus really is a god incarnate upon the earth, he really is the Savior of the world” (p. 146). Whatever one thinks of the specifics of Witherington’s proposals, his general point seems sound: the author of Titus uses different titles for Jesus, presumably in consideration of the specific situation prompting the writing of the letter. Such would be the case even if Luke were the writer, since he frequently calls Jesus κύριος and rarely calls him σωτήρ (Acts 3:15) or θεός (Acts 20:28, a disputed instance).

⁵¹ Fee, *Pauline Christology* 445–46 (see 445 n. 90).

⁵² It is not even true to say that the μέγα- word group when applied to persons refers only to divine persons, although this is (not surprisingly) its most common application (with approving use for humans, see Matt 5:19; 20:26; Mark 10:43; Luke 1:15; 9:48).

⁵³ Rev 19:17 κ̅ν̅ has “the supper of the great God,” but this is incorrect; modern translations rightly render this “the great supper of God” (τὸ δεῖπνον τὸ μέγα τοῦ θεοῦ; note that τὸ μέγα is accusative, the same case as τὸ δεῖπνον). The broader word group is used to refer to the Father in just four NT texts (Luke 9:43; Heb 1:3; 8:1; Jude 25), and in all four Jesus is closely associated with God in his greatness or majesty. Oddly, Mounce asserts that the NT never applies μέγας “to God or Jesus,” despite its application to Jesus in Luke 1:32; Heb 4:14; 10:21; 13:20; see William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles* (WBC 46; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000) 426.

⁵⁴ Harris, *Jesus as God* 182; similarly Hiebert, “Titus,” *EBC* 11:441; Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles* 280.

⁵⁵ Harris, *Jesus as God* 183.

sees as a liability for the view that Titus 2:13 calls Jesus God is more likely an asset to that interpretation.

6. *“Our Savior Jesus Christ.”* Fee’s sixth point attempts to turn the tables on what is a rather strong argument for the conventional interpretation of Titus 2:13. The fact that it is grammatically possible to construe “Jesus Christ” as identifying “our Savior” is an obvious problem for Fee’s position. Furthermore, as Witherington points out with regard to verses 11–14, “the focus is clearly on Christ and his salvific work, as Titus 2:14 makes especially apparent.”⁵⁶ Fee admits that “it is arguable” in light of verse 14 that it is Christ who is called Savior in verse 13. To blunt the force of this evidence, he argues that “this passage is bookended by references to ‘God our Savior’ (2:10; 3:4).”⁵⁷ The implication is that the “bookends” suggest that what comes between them is along the same lines and not a reference to Jesus Christ as Savior. That is, Fee suggests that we read 2:13 in light of the following pattern:

“God our Savior” (2:10) “our great God and Savior” (2:13) “God our Savior” (3:4)

This apparent pattern in which 2:13 is “bookended” by 2:10 and 3:4 is illusory, because it is based on an incomplete picture. The true pattern emerges when we look at all of the occurrences of the title “Savior” in Titus:

τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν θεοῦ “our Savior God” (1:3)	τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν θεοῦ “our Savior God” (2:10)	τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν θεοῦ “our Savior God” (3:4)
Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν “Christ Jesus our Savior” (1:4)	τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ “our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ” (2:13)	Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν “Jesus Christ our Savior” (3:6)

The pattern evident here is that in all three passages Paul first refers to “our Savior God” (using the exact same wording each time) followed by a reference to Jesus Christ as “our Savior” (with the wording varying each time).⁵⁸ The pattern is reinforced by the fact that in all three passages, and only in these passages, Paul uses the word “hope” (ἐλπὶς, 1:2; 2:13; 3:7) and the verb “appeared” (ἐφάνη, 1:3; ἐπεφάνη, 2:11; 3:4).⁵⁹ Titus 2:13 is

⁵⁶ Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians* 145; so also Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles* 431; Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles* 279.

⁵⁷ Fee, *Pauline Christology* 446.

⁵⁸ The pattern has long been observed by commentators, e.g., William Hendriksen, *I & II Timothy and Titus* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1959) 374; E. K. Simpson, *The Pastoral Epistles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954) 109; Knight, *Pastoral Epistles* 326.

⁵⁹ Cf. Ray Van Neste, *Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles* (JSNTSup 280; London: T & T Clark, 2004) 269–70. Van Neste points out that “all first person plural verbs occur in these

indeed “bookended” by two other statements, but those bookends are not the references in 2:10 and 3:4 but are rather two statements referring to Jesus Christ as “our Savior” (1:4; 3:6). The clear implication of this pattern is that Titus 2:13 also refers to Jesus Christ as “our Savior.”

If we take a more detailed look at these texts, we find additional confirmation of this conclusion. In the three references to God as “our Savior,” the word θεοῦ follows immediately after τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν (“our Savior”) and stands in simple apposition to that expression. (To express this fact in English, I have translated “our Savior God” instead of the more conventional “God our Savior.”) In Titus 2:13, Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ follows immediately after τοῦ . . . σωτῆρος ἡμῶν (“our Savior”). These similarities in syntax add another reason to think that “Jesus Christ” stands in apposition to “our great God and Savior.”

According to Fee, Paul says in Titus 2:11 and 2:13a that “the grace of God” was made manifest and “the glory of God” will be made manifest, confirming that “our Savior” in 2:13 is God.⁶⁰ Well, of course he is! Titus 2:13 speaks of “our great God and Savior.” But is this use of the term “God” referring specifically to the Father, or to Jesus Christ? In Titus 3, Paul says, “But when the goodness and love for man appeared [ἐπεφάνη] from God our Savior, He saved us” (Titus 3:4–5a HCSB). Compare this statement to Titus 2, where after referring to “God our Savior” (2:10), Paul says, “For the grace of God has appeared [ἐπεφάνη], with salvation for all people” (2:11 HCSB). In both passages, Paul says that certain saving “attributes” of God (grace, 2:11; goodness and love for humanity, 3:4) “appeared” or “became manifest” (ἐπεφάνη). Paul follows the statement in Titus 3:4 with a reference to Jesus Christ as “our Savior” (3:6). Likewise, the evidence we have adduced shows that Paul follows his statements in Titus 2:10–11 with a reference to Jesus Christ as “our Savior,” in the expanded and exalted form, “our great God and Savior” (2:13).

IV. CONCLUSION

Fee has done the church a tremendous service in his scholarship demonstrating that the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity is deeply rooted in the teaching of the earliest NT writings, those of the apostle Paul. The point deserves emphasis lest anyone misunderstand the critique offered here as impugning Fee’s theology. He concludes that understanding Paul to be saying that “the final manifestation of God’s glory” will be “the coming of Jesus Christ himself” implies for the letter to Titus a “high Christology indeed.”⁶¹ Quite true.

three units” (1:1–4; 2:11–14; 3:3–7) and that “these are the only sections of the letter in which God or Jesus are the actors.” He concludes that these three units “are closely bound to each other by lexical repetition and continuity in verbal tense, person/number, and participants” (ibid.).

⁶⁰ Fee, *Pauline Christology* 446.

⁶¹ Ibid.

However, in this study we have seen that Paul's high Christology was even able to include an affirmation of Jesus Christ as God. Fee's main objection to this understanding of Titus 2:13 is that Paul would never have called Jesus θεός. This assumption simply overwhelms the exegetical evidence, as can be easily illustrated by the following hypothetical question. Suppose Titus 2:13 had said that we were waiting for the "manifestation of the glory of our great Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (ἐπιφάνειαν τῆς δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου κυρίου καὶ σωτήρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). Would anyone suppose that in such a sentence the name "Jesus Christ" was in apposition to "glory" (or to "manifestation") rather than in apposition to "our great Lord and Savior"? We may confidently say that no one would ever have seriously proposed such an exegesis. (Nor, of course, would anyone suggest that in such a sentence "the great Lord" was one person while "our Savior Jesus Christ" was another.) Since the only difference between this hypothetical sentence and Titus 2:13 is the use of κυρίου instead of θεοῦ, it follows that the actual reason for these creative—and overly clever—exegetical proposals is the assumption that the author could not have called Jesus "God."⁶² It is a mistake to make this assumption a test of exegesis instead of testing the assumption by exegesis.

As we have seen, several exegetical lines of evidence in Titus 2:13 converge to show that the alternate interpretations of the text are inferior to the view that it refers to Jesus Christ as both God and Savior:

- (1) "Our great God and Savior" (τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτήρος ἡμῶν) is best understood as having one referent, not two (a point that Fee concedes).
- (2) We should probably construe τῆς δόξης attributively in Titus 2:13, that is, understanding this "glory" to be descriptive of the "appearing" (ἐπιφάνεια) rather than (as Fee's interpretation requires) a designation for Jesus Christ.
- (3) Elsewhere in the Pastorals, the grammatical subject of ἐπιφάνεια is always Christ (1 Tim 6:14; 2 Tim 1:10; 4:1, 8), while related verbal forms denote the manifesting of God's blessings.
- (4) It is practically impossible to construe ἐπιφάνεια as in apposition to Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (which, though technically not Fee's view, is implied by some of his statements about the text).
- (5) The verbal distance between δόξης and Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, along with the preference for a personal designation (like θεοῦ καὶ σωτήρος) to serve in apposition to a name, makes Fee's view that Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is in apposition to δόξης syntactically awkward.
- (6) God's manifesting "glory" is naturally understood as an aspect of God himself (unlike God's "mystery" in Col 2:2), so that construing "the glory" as a designation for Jesus Christ as someone distinguished from God in this context is conceptually as well as syntactically awkward.

⁶² The same controlling assumption is at work when exegetes claim that τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτήρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ("our God and Savior Jesus Christ") in 2 Pet 1:1 refers to two persons while accepting the fact that τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ σωτήρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ("our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ") in other Petrine texts (1:11; 2:20; 3:18; cf. 3:2) refers to one person.

- (7) Paul nowhere calls Jesus Christ “the glory” of God (in any of the Pauline epistles), and nor does any other NT writer, but Paul does call Jesus Christ “our Savior,” including at least two occurrences in this very epistle (Titus 1:4, 3:6).
- (8) The description of Christ’s saving work in the very next clause (Titus 2:14) shows that in this immediate context it is Jesus Christ who is “our Savior.”
- (9) There is an evident rhetorical pattern of three passages in which first God is called “our Savior” and then Jesus Christ is immediately called “our Savior” (Titus 1:3, 4; 2:10, 13; 3:4, 6). Confirming this rhetorical pattern is the fact that in all three passages, and in them only in this epistle, Paul uses the word “hope” (Titus 1:2; 2:13; 3:7) and the verb “appeared” (Titus 1:3; 2:11; 3:4).

The cumulative or converging effect of these observations is to show that we should indeed understand Titus 2:13 to refer to Jesus Christ as “our great God and Savior.” This convergence of evidence is sufficient to warrant overriding or overturning the presumption that Pauline usage applies the designation *θεός* to the Father alone. We may be all the more confident, then, in asserting that the earliest Christology exemplified in the NT confessed that Jesus Christ is himself no less than God.⁶³

⁶³ I am indebted to Daniel B. Wallace for his careful critique and many suggestions, most of which I have followed and some of which I have (perhaps stubbornly) ignored.