

REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

**2 CORINTHIANS 13:13:
A TRIP DOWN GENITIVE LANE**

SUBMITTED TO DR. ROBERT CARA
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NT506: GREEK EXEGESIS

BY
ARTHUR RANKIN
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Introduction¹

Paul's most remarkable benediction is in 2 Cor 13:13. Not only is it his longest, but it also deals with one of the weightiest of all theological matters: the Trinity.² This is the only time where Paul associates each member of the Trinity with the important concepts of χάρις, ἀγάπη, and κοινωνία in the same context.³ Some have even gone so far as to say that it is “the most profound theological moment in the Pauline corpus” because it so uniquely and compactly displays his soteriology.⁴ The passage is regularly heard by congregants the world over at the close of services, since it is one of the most famous benedictions in all of the Bible. It is, thus, surprising that there is a great deal of confusion as to the precise meaning of this great moment in Paul's thought, particularly whether the third genitive phrase in the benediction should be interpreted subjectively or objectively. This paper will exegete 2 Cor 13:13 in order to show how Paul is explaining each member of the Trinity's action on behalf of Christians and that the third

¹ This paper must deal with an uncomfortable lack of agreement in the verse numbers. Most English translations such as *KJV*, *ASV*, *RSV*, *NEB*, *NIV*, and *ESV* have the final greeting and benediction section go from 2 Cor 13:11-14 with the benediction being confined to verse 14. Others such as the *TEV* and Roman Catholic translations have this section as 2 Cor 13:11-13 with the benediction being confined to verse 13. This second method is done in order to follow Robert Estienne's versification of the Greek and Latin manuscripts in 1551 and 1555 and is also used by the *UBS* and *NA* editions of the NT. The first method is only used in English translations and can be traced to the 1572 edition of the Bishops' Bible. This paper will use the numbering system which goes from vv. 11-13, because it is supposed to be primarily dealing with the Greek. The English quoted will be from the *ESV* unless otherwise noted. It should be noted though that commentaries do not agree on which method to use for the versification either. Therefore, when relevant, comments will be made when a quoted commentary does not seem to agree with the versification of this paper. For more info on the background of this profoundly irritating problem, see Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians: Translated with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, AYB 32A (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 583. Alas, the evidence of the Fall (objective genitive) abounds.

² This paper will assume that the Trinity can be exegetically proven from the New Testament, because this paper's author is an orthodox Trinitarian and so was Paul. The paper will make note of how the passage should be interpreted given the doctrine of the Trinity, but the doctrine itself will be taken for granted.

³ Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 2nd ed, WBC 40 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 707.

⁴ Gordon Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 363.

genitive phrase, ἡ κοινωνία τοῦ ἀγίου πνεύματος, should actually be interpreted objectively in light of this.

Context

The church of Corinth was founded by Paul during his second missionary journey as part of his eighteen-month stay (Acts 18:1-17). The Corinthian church appears to have suffered from some relatively unusual moral problems which may have stemmed from the unusual sensual nature of the city. These problems included a member marrying his step-mother, legal disputes before the civil authorities, doctrinal divisions, and abuses of the Lord's Supper.⁵ Paul had already sent a letter, 1 Corinthians, in order to deal with many of these problems which threatened the integrity of the church. Paul wrote his second letter to the Corinthians from roughly AD 55-56 while in Macedonia on his third missionary journey. He wanted to inform them about his travel plans and the collection for the church in Jerusalem, but he was also seeking to express his joy at their response to his last letter and defend his ministry.⁶

Paul's second letter to the Corinthians has a relatively unique flow. It opens with a standard opening followed by a blessing passage, which is not without precedent in Paul's writing.⁷ From 1:8-7:16 Paul is talking about his upcoming travel plans, but there is a giant parenthesis from 2:14-7:4 which covers the entire meaning of Paul's ministry. Paul is discussing

⁵ See 1 Cor 5, 6, and 11 for details.

⁶ Guy Prentiss Waters, “1-2 Corinthians” in *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the New Testament*, ed. Michael J. Kruger (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 200-1. See also D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 415-55.

⁷ Ephesians 1:3-14 provides an example of a similar blessing passage. It would have been more standard for Paul to proceed with a thanksgiving passage.

different aspects of his ministry in order to show how “God had enabled him to carry on an effective ministry despite many difficulties and criticisms.”⁸ There follows a plea for the Corinthians to help with the collection for Jerusalem (2 Cor 8-9) and then comes a multi-chapter apostolic defense against the “super-apostles” (2 Cor 10:1-13:10). Paul saved the most urgent section for last, as was customary for ancient letters, in order to have the greatest impact.⁹

The unit of 2 Cor 3:13 is part of the larger passage of 2 Cor 3:11-13 which is Paul’s final greeting section with verse 13 serving as the final benediction. The passage is heartfelt and focused on the unity of the church. In verse 12 Paul greets them on behalf of “all the saints” which gives this passage the largest scope of all of Paul’s other greeting passages.¹⁰ Verse 12 seem to have two ideas which play off each other. While Paul calls the Corinthians to display an inward, churchwide unity through a holy kiss, they are not to forget that they make up the larger church which spans the entire globe.¹¹

Structure and Meaning of 2 Corinthians 3:13

It is fitting that the large scope of Paul’s greeting in verses 11-12 be matched by an equally important benediction in verse 13. No other Pauline benediction “concludes with a benediction so theologically imposing as this one.”¹² The interpretation of this passage can be primarily expressed through Greek grammar, particularly focusing on whether the genitives are

⁸ Colin G. Kruse, *2 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC 8 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 37.

⁹ Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 452.

¹⁰ Mark A. Seifrid, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 496.

¹¹ Paul uses this contrast language elsewhere to the Corinthians: 1 Cor 1:2; 11:16; and 14:33, 36.

¹² Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 587.

subjective or objective, though the missing linking verb and final prepositional phrase must also be exegeted.¹³

Verse 13a - Η χάρις τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

This first section begins with the three parallel phrases: Η χάρις τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, “[t]he grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.” The Greek word χάρις is commonly used at the end of Paul’s letters in the benediction and is fitting because of its use in 2 Cor 1:2.¹⁴ This exact phrase is found in most of Paul’s benedictions.¹⁵ It has the general sense of divine favor in these benedictions,¹⁶ and in it Paul shows the “essence of God’s decisive saving act in Jesus Christ.”¹⁷ Yet here it is improper to confine the meaning too far, since it is most likely a metonymy for “the whole blessing of redemption.”¹⁸

This starts to comment upon the nature of the genitive phrase τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ: is it objective or subjective? If it had an objective meaning then it would mean that the Corinthians were “gracing” or favoring Christ, the genitive would be the object of the grace. A subjective translation would make the genitive the subject of the verb form of grace, thus Christ

¹³ For objective vs. subjective genitives, see Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 113-19; Herbert Weir Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920), 318-19, §1328-35; and J. H. Moulton and Nigel Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek: Syntax*, vol. 3 (New York: T&T Clark, 1963), 210-11.

¹⁴ Rom 16:20; 1 Cor 16:23; Gal 6:18; Eph 6:24; Phil 4:23; Col 4:18; 1 Thess 5:28; 2 Thess 3:18; 1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 4:22; Titus 3:15; Philm 25.

¹⁵ Rom 16:20; 1 Cor 16:23; Gal 6:18; Phil 4:23; 1 Thess 5:28; 2 Thess 3:18.

¹⁶ BDAG, 1079.

¹⁷ Moisés Silva, “χάρις,” NIDNTTE 4:658.

¹⁸ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 2:403.

would “grace” or favor the Corinthians. Christ would be described as “the origin of grace.”¹⁹ This subjective meaning is certain. It seems virtually impossible for Paul, who is focused upon the redemptive value of Christ’s work, not to have this subjective meaning in mind. It is difficult to find Paul’s use of χάρις associated with anything other than the redemptive activity of God. If Paul opened his second letter to the Corinthians by wishing them grace from God, directly followed by a summary of the blessings of this favor which God gave the Corinthians, then it should not be disputed that Paul would end this letter with the same subjective genitive. Paul is emphasizing that redemptive work is accomplished by Christ for Christians.

Here Christ’s deity is proved in at least three ways. First, it is confirmed by use of the κυρίου, which has clear implications for Christ’s divinity.²⁰ The deity of Christ is also inherent because it is a subjective genitive. The letter has already established that grace can only come from God himself.²¹ Third, the passage is clearly constructed with three parallel genitives which must be given equal weight. The Son, Father, and Holy Spirit are each identified as divine, and it is foolish to argue that Paul was a tritheist.

Verse 13b - καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ

The second genitive phrase is slightly more debated among scholars. A minority have seen it as entirely possible that Paul is referring to the Corinthians’ love for God (objective genitive).²² Most, however, think that Paul is speaking of the love which God has for the

¹⁹ Margaret E. Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of the Corinthians*, ICC (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 916.

²⁰ Werner Foerster, “Κύριος, Κυρία, Κυριακός, Κυριότης, Κυριεώ, Κατακυριεύω,” ed. Gerhard Kittle, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, TDNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 3:1088-94.

²¹ 2 Cor 9:14-15.

Corinthians.²³ This second view is almost certainly true, since even scholars who think the objective genitive is possible do not actually argue for it.

This second phrase is parallel to the first and seems to have equal significance. It certainly builds upon verse 11 which describes God as “ο θεὸς τῆς ἀγάπης καὶ εἰρήνης.” When Paul speaks of the love of God he means “the orientation of the sovereign will of God to the world of men and the deliverance of this world.”²⁴ God’s love is supremely shown in the work of Christ, which is why it is mentioned second and not first as would be typical of later trinitarian formulas. This, however, does not mean that Paul’s statements lack a theological order. Paul is speaking from the perspective of man, not finished trinitarian doctrine: “with respect to us, the beginning of love is from the grace of Christ.”²⁵ While the grace of Christ is “an observable event in history,” God’s love is “an eternal fact” which should never be doubted by modern Christians even if that love’s clearest display is 2000 years removed.²⁶

While the first genitive phrase shows the origin of grace and all of redemptive action, the second genitive phrase is explaining the motivation behind that action. The Father was ultimately displaying his attribute of love through the actions of Christ. Paul is focusing the minds of the

²² Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, ICC (New York: T&T Clark, 1915), 384.

²³ See Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 916 and Simon J. Kistemaker and William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, NTC 19 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953-2001), 460 as two examples.

²⁴ Ethelbert Stauffer, “Ἀγαπάω, Ἀγάπη, Ἀγαπητός,” TDNT 1:49. See also BDAG 6.

²⁵ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, 2:404. See also R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963), 1340-1. Therefore, the reader should not be worried that Paul has somehow compromised on trinitarian order.

²⁶ C. K. Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, Black’s New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1973), 344.

Corinthian congregation upward upon the actions and character of these two members of the Trinity.

Verse 13c - καὶ ἡ κοινωνία τοῦ ἀγίου πνεύματος

This genitive phrase is hotly debated among scholars to this day. Scholars who favor a subjective genitive understand Paul as referring to the *κοινωνία* which is brought about by the Holy Spirit.²⁷ Put more clearly, it would mean “the fellowship with one another that is engendered by the Spirit.”²⁸ This is primarily because of the parallelism of grammatical meaning with the first two phrases. There is also the argument that it would directly fit the context of Paul’s desire for a “reconciliation and renewal” among the Corinthians²⁹ and his emphasis on the activity of the Spirit.³⁰

But large numbers of scholars have also understood the passage as referring to the Holy Spirit as the object which Christians share.³¹ This position argues that if *κοινωνία* in the NT takes

²⁷ Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 384; Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 618; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 707; George H. Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 654; Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 490; George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, revised ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) 588.

²⁸ Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 939.

²⁹ Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 707.

³⁰ See Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 618, who points to Paul’s emphasis on the Spirit’s activity in 1:20–22; 3:3, 8, 18; 5:5; 6:16; 11:4.

³¹ Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 919; Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 344; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 584; Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 941; Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 363; Friedrich Hauck, “Κοινός, Κοινωνός, Κοινωνέω, Κοινωνία, Συγκοινωνός, Συγκοινωνέω, Κοινωνικός, Κοινώ,” TDNT, 3:807; Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, ed. William P. Dickson, trans. D. Douglas Bannerman and David Hunter, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1879), 514; Silva, “Κοινός” NIDNTTE, 2:711. Meyers seems to be the earliest advocate for this view, though this precise grammatical question was not very often asked earlier by even linguistically-minded theologians like John Calvin.

a genitive then it has usually an objective sense.³² It also argues for the far greater importance of parallel sense rather than parallel grammar.

The word κοινωνία and its word group are very important to Paul as well as unique. The word is always used in a religious context and never a secular one.³³ When it is followed by a genitive is usually “specifies the object in which one partakes.”³⁴ The one possible exception to this is Phil 2:1 which also takes πνεύματος, but this passage is hotly debated and many take it as an objective genitive as well.³⁵ Nonetheless, a general objective trend still holds and should be considered.³⁶ The desire for parallelism is a strong one which should be given much weight, but we must be careful to consider what type of parallelism. Those in favor of the subjective genitive do not have a monopoly on this motivation. Grammatical parallelism may seem to be a powerful argument, but, first, it should be pointed out that it is not fully necessary. For example, in 2 Thess 2:13 the two genitives in the phrase “ἐν ἀγιασμῷ πνεύματος καὶ πίστει ἀληθείᾳ” must be translated as subjective and objective respectively.³⁷

A desire for parallel sense should also be considered. The first two genitives are primarily pointing to a “personal relationship” between the Corinthians and God.³⁸ The “grace of the Lord

³² Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 917. The one possible exception to this is Phil 2:1, which is so hotly debated that it would take another paper to fully address. However, the general trend still holds.

³³ Silva, “κοινός” NIDNTTE 2:711-2. See also BDAG 552.

³⁴ Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 940. See 1 Cor 1:9 and 1 Cor 10:16.

³⁵ It would take another paper to fully address this issue. See Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 172-4, if arguments in favor of an objective interpretation of Phil 2:1 are desired.

³⁶ This trend can be seen in particular with 1 Cor 1:9, 10:16, and Phil. 3:10.

³⁷ Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 918. However, it must be granted that 2 Cor 13:13 has three genitives in a row which does seem to provide extra weight to the desire for parallelism.

Jesus Christ” is emphasizing that all redemptive action is done by Christ on behalf of his people. The “love of God” is showcased through Jesus Christ and reveals the character of God in relation to his people. The “communion of the Holy Spirit” would be expected to comment upon the same. The Holy Spirit is in direct relationship with Christians. It would make logical sense for the third phrase to also have a focus upon the Corinthians’ relationship with the Spirit and not their relationship with each other.³⁹ The “communion of the Holy Spirit” should, thus, be taken as showcasing the Holy Spirit’s direct relationship with Christians,, as showing “the ongoing appropriation of that love and grace in the life of the believing community.”⁴⁰

Why should grammar not be considered of primary importance here? First, the phrases are part of a benediction which has phonetic constraints and, therefore, there is no reason Paul should be expected to use a less ambiguous construction. The sound of the genitives is clearly something Paul is doing his best to maintain, in addition to the trinitarian structure. The third genitive phrase could not be replaced with a clearer construction because it would clash stylistically and also be unnecessary.⁴¹ Second, the precise grammatical subcategories here which are so carefully defined and examined by Greek scholars would not have carried the same degree of enthusiastic importance. They are, in that sense, somewhat secondary to the original

³⁸ Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 918.

³⁹ See Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 363, who says “since the two prior clauses reflect something both of God’s character and of his activity on behalf of his people in light of that character, it seems most likely that something similar is in view here.”

⁴⁰ Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 363.

⁴¹ Is this somewhat speculative? Yes, but not all speculations are bad; bad speculations are bad. The unique constraints of a benediction are an obvious point that it should not be dismissed as beyond the pale. If the passage were in the center of the letter with no stylistic constraints, then this argument would be weaker, though a certain phonetic satisfaction of using a genitive with each member of the Trinity would still be slightly desirable. Also, let the reader call to mind that the NT has passages which are ambiguous at first glance. It would be unfair to insist that Paul use a dative construction to remove ambiguity in a passage which has stylistic priorities.

readers' instantaneous thought.⁴² This is especially true when both possible meanings are also theologically possible.⁴³ If the passage does have phonetic constraints and if a general ambiguity of language here does not cause confusion, then there is no reason not to prefer a level of theological sense. A parallel theological sense provides for a clearer understanding of the Trinity in Paul himself and fits the passage better.

The objective sense also works well with the supposed context of reconciliation.⁴⁴ If Paul can appeal to the Corinthians "by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" to be united then surely his blessing the Corinthians to have fellowship with the Spirit would do the same thing.⁴⁵ This meaning also fits better with the "be with you all" at the close of the verse than the subjective or understanding of "communion which is from the Holy Spirit".⁴⁶ The Corinthians' communion with the Spirit will inevitable result in a much deeper and far more profound relationship with each other as well.⁴⁷ Therefore, an objective understanding of this phrase fits the context well

⁴² This is not to say that decisions about whether a genitive is subjective or objective would not have been made by both author and audience. However, the audience listening to the epistle or reading it would not have stopped once they came upon an ambiguous passage, as some grammarians obsessively do. There is a certain vagary in language which must be allowed for in certain situations. The flow of the passage would not have been interrupted, lessening the demand for parallelism. The ambiguity of the genitive is captured well in the usual English translations which constantly use "of." It will doubtless be the reader's experience that congregations do not immediately try to clarify whether the English "of" is subjective or objective or even have a well-thought-out opinion on this matter, even though it is often used at the end of services.

⁴³ See Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 120 and Max Zerwick, *Biblical Greek Illustrated by Examples* (Rome: Pontificii Instituti Biblici, 1963), 12. Let the reader understand; if we allow the theoretical use of purposefully ambiguous language and, *gasp,* the dreaded Plenary Genitive, then we must not allow the thought of a lack of precise grammatical parallelism to fill the Greek scholar's heart with terror and discontent. Ambiguous passages, even if they can be resolved, are less susceptible to the need of parallelism. Finally, this does not mean that the paper is arguing that this passage is a plenary genitive. This will be discussed later.

⁴⁴ Some have quibbled over this by asking how much chapters 10-13 actually deal with unity and reconciliation, see Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of the Corinthians*, 917. This would be unnecessary though. It is easier to merely grant the position and then show how the objective

⁴⁵ 1 Cor 1:10.

⁴⁶ Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 344.

⁴⁷ Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 940. See also Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1981), 562 which makes this point.

and is necessary for this deeper understanding of parallel sense to become primary in the benediction.

The careful reader will note that this paper is only arguing that the third genitive phrase has an objective sense. This does leave open the possibility for a plenary genitive⁴⁸ which has been argued by some as best for the passage.⁴⁹ Scholars who do not advocate for this position usually dismiss it as “not very probable,”⁵⁰ and “not wholly convincing,”⁵¹ which is highly unfortunate, though not unexpected. Plenary genitives are almost impossible to prove, but, conversely, can be almost impossible to disprove in certain situations. Paul’s genitives have been noted in scholarship as being quite troublesome and causing fierce arguments.⁵² It seems that the most which a Greek scholar can say is that a plenary genitive is either probably in a given situation or not. This is the reason why Wallace does not seem to take a firm stand on any particular example of the possible plenary genitives he gives. He only gives possible plenary genitives and leaves it at that.

This paper would like to suggest four criteria which are either necessary or preferable for a plenary genitive to be present. First, both the objective and subjective meanings must be theologically correct. Second, there must be strong exegetical arguments for both meanings. Third, the potential objective and subjective meanings should not render each other superfluous

⁴⁸ Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 119-21.

⁴⁹ David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, NAC 29 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 556 and George V. Jourdan, “KOINΩNIA in I Corinthians 10:16,” *JBL* 67 (1948) 111-24.

⁵⁰ Jan Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, SP 8 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1999), 228.

⁵¹ Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of the Corinthians*, 919.

⁵² See Adolf Deissmann, *St. Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History* (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1912), 140, who idiosyncratically attempts to argue for a “mystic genitive” in order to solve the issue.

but rather be complementary in a way which seems to necessarily imply the other. Fourth, a plenary genitive is more likely if it is in a passage which has peculiar constraints of form or length. Using these criteria, ἡ κοινωνία τοῦ ἀγίου πνεύματος would appear to be a good candidate for being a plenary genitive, but since the objective sense seems to fulfill all the necessary functions in the passage, the subjective sense may ultimately be superfluous.

This issue is difficult especially given the subject matter. The objective and subjective meanings are so theologically connected that they are difficult to disentangle. Given the complexity of this issue and the constraints of this paper, let it be sufficient that the paper is technically agnostic on the question of whether ἡ κοινωνία τοῦ ἀγίου πνεύματος is a plenary genitive.⁵³

Verse 13d - Linking verb and μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν

Though the verb is absent from the original Greek, it must be dealt with and examined. It is there even though it is invisible. The scholar must decide whether it should be interpreted as an indicative (ἐστίν or ἔσται), imperative (ἔστω), or optative (εἴη). The first option would mean that Paul is declaring that grace, love, and fellowship either are theirs or will be. The second and third options would mean that the phrase would take on the tone of a blessing or prayer. Paul is asking, with the imperative emphatically so, for the Corinthians to receive grace, love, and fellowship. The third option is to be preferred above all others. Even though there is precedence for the use of the imperative ἔρρωσο at the ending of Greco-Roman letters, Paul's own regular

⁵³ Also, let the author of this paper be taken as a careful scholar instead of a grammatical coward who is afraid to take a stand against the foes of the plenary genitive. But, if the writer is considered a coward, then he will take solace in that he will only be considered one by Greek grammarians.

use of the optative in his blessing passages should be considered decisive.⁵⁴ The passage should, thus, be read as a blessing upon the Corinthian church.⁵⁵

This prepositional phrase is relatively significant among those in Pauline benedictions. Most of them do not have such a large scope with the *πάντων*.⁵⁶ It matches well with the greeting passage in 2 Cor 13:11-12 which mentions the universal church. The group meant by *πάντων νύμων* is every single Christian in the church at Corinth. The phrase should also be taken as applying to each of the three genitive phrases in the benediction above because of how Paul's other benedictions operate.⁵⁷ This is notable because, even though Paul has previously used harsh words for some of the Corinthians, they are all included under the benediction. All of them receive a trinitarian blessing which beautifully exhibits how God relates to the believer.

Conclusion

Paul's benediction is a fitting and encouraging end to the recorded correspondence with an infamously disunited and dysfunctional church. The Trinity is shown by Paul to be entirely practical and important for the Christian Church. The grace of Christ cannot be considered superior to the fellowship of the Holy Spirit or the love of God. Each is tremendously important and interconnected. There is a flow here which must be preserved in order to show how the

⁵⁴ Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 916. Paul uses the optative in Rom 15:5; 15:13; 1 Thess 3:11; 3:12–13; 5:23.

⁵⁵ The passage should not be read as being part of a baptismal formula, and there are no signs that it was based upon anything commonly used in the church; Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 362 and Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 345. Some scholars just need to chill out about baptismal formulas.

⁵⁶ The one exception is 2 Thess 3:17 which has this precise phrase. Rom 16:20, 1 Cor 16:23, and 1 Thess 5:28 end “with you” and Gal 6:18, Phil 4:23, and Phlm 25 end “with your spirit.”

⁵⁷ Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 460.

Trinity has acted in history. Paul's concern for the Corinthian church in this benediction shows that the Christian life must be oriented upwards at all times.

Appendix: Logical Progression, Translation, and Textual-Critical Notes

Ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ⁵⁸
 καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ
 καὶ ἡ κοινωνία τοῦ ἀγίου⁵⁹ πνεύματος
 μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν.⁶⁰

Mechanical Translation⁶¹

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ
 and the love of God
 and the communion of the Holy Spirit
 be with you all.

Objective/Subjective Genitive Translation⁶²

May the grace from the Lord Jesus Christ
 and the love from God
 and the communion with the Holy Spirit
 be with you all.

Theological Interpretation⁶³

May the Lord Jesus Christ be gracious to you
 and God love you
 and the Holy Spirit commune with you.

⁵⁸ The following manuscripts lack Χριστοῦ: B Ψ 323. 1881. These are outweighed by all other manuscripts.

⁵⁹ The following manuscript lack ἀγίου: Ψ⁴⁶. There is no reason to be troubled by this single scribal error.

⁶⁰ The Greek word ἀμήν is added in Ι² D K L P Ψ 104. 365. 1505. 2464 μ lat sy bo. There is no sign of ἀμήν in Ψ⁴⁶ Ι² A B F G 0243. 6. 33. 81. 630. 1175. 1241. 1739. 1881 sa bo^{ms}; Ambst. The latter manuscripts are considered “decisive” and ἀμήν should not be considered original, Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart, Germany: United Bible Society, 1994), 519. The addition of ἀμήν is part of a general formalizing liturgical trend which can be clearly seen in other passages. Concerning the subscription, there are seven different variations which are drastically different. These are obviously not original. Consult Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 519 for more information.

⁶¹ This is a rigid and literal translation which captures the ambiguity of the original Greek. This translation should honestly be preferred by Bible translators in this case.

⁶² This translation seeks to emphatically render the genitives with their appropriate subjective and objective meanings in order to remove the ambiguity of a mechanical translation and emphasize the difference an objective genitive makes.

⁶³ This is not a translation and more of a theological paraphrase that seeks to get across the parallel sense discussed above. It puts the emphasis on the action of each member of the Trinity which is done for the ordinary Christian.