



"Meditate
upon these things;
give thyself
wholly to them;
that thy profiting
may appear unto all"

I Timothy 4:15

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THE GREEK ARTICLE
AND THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST'S DEITY

(Part VI)

We come at length to the conclusion of the first major section of our topic, that which concerns the Rule of Granville Sharp. By now the reader has surely become familiar with this canon of grammar:

When two personal nouns of the same case are connected by the copulative καί (and), if the former has the definite article, and the latter has not, they both relate to the same person.

As we have seen, proper names and nouns in the plural number are excluded from the application of the rule.

There are four passages which have been of particular interest to us, for according to Sharp's Rule they would serve as testimonies to the deity of Christ:

Ephesians 5:5 ... οὐκ ἔχει κληρονομίαν ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ θεοῦ (does not have an inheritance in the kingdom of Him who is Christ and God).

2 Thessalonians 1:12 ... κατὰ τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (according to the grace of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ).

Titus 2:13 ... προσδεχόμενοι τὴν μακαρίαν ἐλπίδα καὶ ἐπιφάνειαν τῆς δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (waiting for the blessed hope and appearance of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus).

2 Peter 1:1 ... ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ).

It remains for us to present and discuss the views of several more grammarians and commentators with respect to the rule and exegetical conclusions of Granville Sharp.

The Grammarians (continued)

The influence of George Benedict Winer was long lasting, and much of the exegetical confusion surrounding the aforementioned passages can be traced to this grammarian.

In treating Titus 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:1, as we saw in the last issue of this *Journal*,¹ he departed from his customary grammatical rectitude. Although he clearly recognized that the syntax of the article in these passages favored Sharp's exegesis, he rejected it because he doubted that the apostles would have ascribed the name "God" to Jesus Christ. His weak attempt to justify his dogmatic exegesis on the basis of Greek usage has, unfortunately, been perpetuated by several succeeding grammarians and commentators.

BUTTMAN. Compare, for example, Alexander Buttman, who published *A Grammar of the New Testament Greek* in the 1850's. In his first reference to Titus 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:1, he states: "It will probably never be possible, either in reference to profane literature or to the N.T., to bring down to rigid rules which have no exception, the inquiry when with several substantives connected by conjunctions the article is repeated, and when it is not. ... From this fact alone it follows, that in view of the subjective and arbitrary [?] treatment of the art. on the part of individual writers ..., it is very hazardous in particular cases to draw important inferences, affecting the sense or even of a doctrinal nature, from the single circumstance of the use or the omission of the article; see e.g. Tit. 11.13; ... 2 Pet. i.1."² In the discussion which follows (pp. 97-100), Buttman, like Winer, suggests that the presence and location of modifiers in these passages (ἡμῶν, etc.) make it possible for the writer to omit the second article, which he normally would have employed when referring to two separate persons. Thus, if one applies Buttman's principle, the τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ of Titus 2:13 could as well refer to both the Father ("the great God") and the Son ("and our Savior, Christ Jesus") -- rather than to only the Son ("our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus"). A similar result would occur in 2 Peter 1:1.

There is no need to enter into a lengthy refutation of this suggestion by Buttman, for this has already been done in connection with Winer.³ Suffice it to state once more that the presence and location of genitives and other modifiers with either of the two nouns nowhere in the New Testament excludes a passage from the application of Sharp's Rule, so long as the basic pattern re-

mains: definite article + personal noun + καί + personal noun. Whenever the writers of the New Testament desired to speak of two persons, they either omitted the article before both nouns or inserted it before both.

GILDERSLEEVE. This great grammarian of classical Greek is remembered especially for his work on the doctrine of the article. In the second part of his *Syntax*, published in 1911, he states: "Repetition and Non-repetition of the Article. The article may be common to a number of copulated substantives, even when they are of different genders or numbers, or it may be repeated with each member. Theoretically the repetition compels a separate consideration while the omission suggests unity. Practically the Greeks were almost as loose as we are prone to be, and a sharp difference cannot be made."⁴ Gildersleeve offers no illustration of Sharp's Rule, but of the many citations which he does present only one goes contrary to it, namely, the following passage from Sophocles' *Electra*: ἐν τοῖς τοιούτοις ἐστὶν ἡ προμηθία / καὶ τῷ λέγοντι καὶ κλύοντι σύμμαχος (In such affairs, forethought is helpful, both for him that speaks and for him that listens). It is not surprising that the author of this passage has not employed a second article, even though the two participles refer to two distinct persons. Metrical considerations could have prompted such omission, especially in a passage such as this where misunderstanding would not have been possible -- the one speaking and the one listening are obviously two different individuals. Bishop Middleton showed in some detail that classical usage, except in cases such as the foregoing, conforms to Sharp's Rule.⁵ And we have seen that in the New Testament there are no exceptions at all to the rule!⁶

MOULTON. James Hope Moulton's *Prolegomena*, which first appeared in 1906, has had a rather profound influence upon all Greek grammars which have been published since. He declines to legislate on the "problem" of Titus 2:13, for as a grammarian he feels that he must leave the matter open. He does, however, offer significant evidence in support of Sharp's exegesis of both this passage and of 2 Peter 1:1: "But we might cite, for what they are worth, the papyri ..., which attest the translation 'our great God and Saviour' as current among Greek-speaking Christians. ... A curious echo is

found in the Ptolemaic formula applied to the deified kings ... One is not surprised to find that P. Wendland ... treats the rival rendering in Titus 2:13 [the finding of two persons rather than one] as 'an exegetical mistake,' like the severance of τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν and σωτήρος 'I. X. in 2 Peter 1:1. Familiarity with the everlasting apotheosis that flaunts itself in the papyri and inscriptions of Ptolemaic and Imperial times, lends strong support to Wendland's contention that Christians, from the latter part of i/A.D. [the first century A.D.] onward, deliberately annexed for their Divine Master the phraseology that was impiously arrogated to themselves by some of the worst of men" (namely, the Roman emperors).⁷ Moulton would not have hesitated to understand the passages in Titus and 2 Peter as testimonies to the deity of Christ.

ROBERTSON. A. T. Robertson's *Short Grammar of the Greek New Testament* was published in 1908. In this volume he fully supports Sharp's exegesis of 2 Peter 1:1: "... in 2 Pet. 1:11 (and also 2:20; 3:18) we have τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ σωτήρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Here the one article definitely shows Jesus Christ to be both our Lord and Savior. Hence in 2 Pet. 1:1 τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτήρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ the article likewise means that Christ is our God and Savior."⁸ He finds a similar force for the single article in Titus 2:13.

In 1921 Robertson produced an article for the *Expositor* magazine, in which he strongly defends the validity of Sharp's Rule and of his exegesis of Titus 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:1. "He [Sharp] laid down a 'rule' which has become famous and the occasion of sharp contention, but which is still a sound and scientific principle ... Sharp stands vindicated after all the dust has settled. We must let these passages mean what they want to mean, regardless of our theories about the theology of the writers" (Robertson refers here to the theological bias of Winer and others like him).⁹

That Robertson continued to hold to this strong opinion appears from his monumental *Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, for in the fourth edition of this work, published in 1923, he still defended the use of 2 Peter 1:1 and Titus 2:13 as witnesses to the deity of Christ. He comments here also

on the other two passages we are considering, 2 Thessalonians 1:12 and Ephesians 5:5: "One person may be described in these ... examples, but they are not so clear as the type τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος (2 Pet. 1:1, 11)."¹⁰ The reason given by Robertson for this hesitancy is that both θεός and κύριος are often without the article in the New Testament. The omission of a second article in the passages from 2 Thessalonians and Ephesians may therefore not be significant. This concern of Robertson has already been considered in previous articles of this series, where this present writer has indicated his feeling that the weight of evidence is nevertheless in favor of Sharp's exegesis of Ephesians 5:5 and 2 Thessalonians 1:12: "in the kingdom of Him who is the Christ and God" and "according to the grace of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ."¹¹

DANA and MANTEY. In their *Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, first published in 1927, these joint authors state that Sharp's Rule "still proves to be true," and they continue with the following defense of his exegesis: "So in 2 Pt. 1:1 τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ means that Jesus is our God and Savior. After the same manner Tit. 2:13, τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, asserts that Jesus is the great God and Savior."¹²

METZGER. In 1953 Bruce Metzger, a well-known scholar of the Greek New Testament, wrote an article entitled "The Jehovah's Witnesses and Jesus Christ," in which he cites Titus 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:1 against the antitrinitarian view of this sect. He regards Sharp's Rule as fully valid, and as applicable to these passages.¹³

MOULE. C. F. D. Moule, a theological professor at the University of Cambridge in England, discusses the exegesis of Titus 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:1 in his *Idiom Book*, first published in 1953. After citing several alternate interpretations which he regards as possible, he concludes: "It is probable that in both these instances the article has been correctly omitted and that τοῦ (μεγάλου) θεοῦ is intended to apply to Jesus."¹⁴

BLASS-DEBRUNNER-FUNK. Few grammars have gone through so long a series of editions as this one. The first edition appeared in 1896, and an English translation of the ninth and tenth German editions was published in 1961. In

the paragraph "The Article with Two or More Substantives connected by καί," the authors first state, quite correctly: "The article is (naturally) omitted with the second of two phrases in apposition connected by καί," and they cite Titus 2:13 as an example. Apparently they would refer both nouns, God and Savior, to Jesus Christ. But then they cite 2 Peter 1:1, and state: "however ὡς ἦν ἡμῶν. Ἰ. Χρ. may be taken by itself and separated from the preceding."¹⁵ In support of this assertion they point to a preceding paragraph in their grammar for examples. An examination of that paragraph, however, reveals not a single exception to Sharp's Rule!

TURNER. Nigel Turner in 1962 completed his work on the third volume of the Moulton series, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*. He there states: "One must look critically at the common view that in Titus 2:13 we have two clauses in apposition ... The same is true of 2 Peter 1:1 ... In Hell., and indeed for practical purposes in class. Greek the repetition of the art. was not strictly necessary to ensure that the items be considered separately. The relevant consideration on the other side is that the phrase *God and Savior* in contemporary language referred to only one person, c. A.D. 100. Moreover, the art. could have been repeated to avoid misunderstanding if separate individuals had been intended."¹⁶ In general it might indeed be said that the repetition of the article was not strictly necessary to ensure that the items be considered separately. But this general principle, as has been shown earlier in the present series of articles, does not hold when the "items" in question are nouns of personal description in the singular number. In such cases the omission of the second article is for us a definite indication that both nouns are to be referred to the same person. To this there is no demonstrable exception in the entire New Testament. This usage was very common also among the classical writers.

In his useful little volume entitled *Grammatical Insights Into the New Testament* (1965), Turner supports, although guardedly, Sharp's exegesis of all four passages: "Another controversial passage is Tit. 2:13, where in its text the N.E.B. happily adopts the entirely natural translation, 'our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. This way of reading the Greek has the support of most of the early Greek fathers as well as great names in more

recent times: Ellicott, Bernard Weiss, Christopher Wordsworth, and R.V. (text). ... The same grammatical principle affects the phrase in II Peter 1:1 where there is but one definite article linking the two parts of a single phrase, 'Our God even Jesus Christ.' ... And what then of II Thess. 1:12? 'Our Lord and God Jesus Christ' would be the correct rendering. We must also seriously consider the possibility of departing from all our English versions by translating Eph. 5:5, 'in the kingdom of Christ who is God.'¹⁷ While Turner seems inclined to support the principle of grammar defended by Sharp, he does hedge somewhat: "Unfortunately, at this period of Greek we cannot be sure that such a rule is really decisive."¹⁸ This statement seems overly cautious, in view of the fact that Sharp's Rule, limited as it is to nouns of personal description in the singular number, is vindicated by both classical and New Testament Greek. And it should be remembered that in its usage of the article, the Greek of the New Testament is closer to the classical than to the general Koine.¹⁹ It would be of little significance, therefore, if in fact some of the extant papyri did present genuine exceptions to Sharp's Rule.

The Commentaries

Space limitations will hardly permit a complete overview of the commentaries on the four passages which we are considering. The citations will, therefore, be restricted to only a few of them. Nor have the page numbers been indicated in the footnotes, for in the case of commentaries the references can be readily located.

INTERNATIONAL CRITICAL COMMENTARY. On Ephesians 5:5, T. K. Abbott argues against Sharp's exegesis for the following reasons: 1) θεός is one of the words that do not require an article; 2) there is in the context no dogmatic assertion about Christ, and to introduce such a prediction [*sic*] in this incidental way would be out of place; and 3) the apostle's language elsewhere would not lead us to suppose that he would call Christ "God." In citing passages in support of his first argument, Abbott offers none that would demonstrate that Sharp's Rule can not be applied to this verse. The non-use of the article before θεός in those which he cites can in each case be explained in terms of other grammatical principles. The second argument bears little weight,

for it can be argued also that it would be appropriate for Paul to add here that the kingdom of which he is speaking is that of Him who is both Christ and God -- this is the kingdom from which every idolatrous sinner shuts himself out! The third argument proves nothing about the apostle's language in this verse. May Abbott (like Winer) actually be revealing a dogmatic bias at this point? Abbott would have done well, it seems, to have admitted that the unanimous testimony of the ancient Greek church was in favor of the interpretation which he rejects.²⁰

James Everett Frame is the author of the ICC on the two epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians. He states that some scholars have interpreted the passage "Jesus Christ, our God and Lord," but he himself prefers to distinguish between "our God" and "the Lord Jesus Christ." His reasons are 1) that ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν (not θεὸς ἡμῶν) is characteristic of our letters, and 2) that κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, without the article, is a fixed formula. Frame's first point is admittedly true, but it is difficult to see how it would indicate that we ought not apply Sharp's Rule to this passage. The second point indeed bears more weight, but in the opinion of this present writer it is not conclusive.²¹

In the ICC on Titus 2:13, Walter Lock presents an extended discussion on the phrase in question, and concludes that the holy writer is probably referring to only one person, and that one Jesus Christ. Among other things, he cites 1 Thess. 1:10 and 1 Cor. 1:7 in which Paul speaks of the coming of Jesus Christ on the last day. This would suggest that the words "the appearance of the glory of our great God" in our verse should likewise be referred to the Son, rather than to the Father.

Lock discusses also, and rightly rejects, the rather desperate suggestion of Hort and a few others that this verse be interpreted: "the appearing of him who is the glory of the great God and our Savior" -- that is, the appearing of Christ Jesus, who is the glory of the Father, the Father here being referred to as the great God and our Savior. This interpretation sets aside the easy and direct understanding: "the appearing of our God and Savior, Christ Jesus." Moreover, it overlooks the fact that Christ has Himself been called "our Savior" in verse

1:4 of this epistle. Beyond this, it goes contrary to the virtually unanimous testimony of the ancient church, which uniformly ascribes both titles, "the great God" and "Savior," to Jesus Christ.²²

The ICC supports Sharp's exegesis also in the passage 2 Peter 1:1. Charles Bigg urges the following in regard to the grammatical argument: "1. That the combination of the two substantives under one article is a very strong reason for regarding the two substantives as names of the same person. ... This point is rather strengthened than weakened by the addition of ἡμῶν to θεός. It must be admitted that if the author intended to distinguish two persons, he has expressed himself with singular inaccuracy. 2. If the author had intended to distinguish two persons, it is exceedingly doubtful whether he could have omitted the article before σωτήρ. ... 3. But what we have specially to regard is the usage not of other writers, but of 2 Peter. Five times the author uses σωτήρ, and always in very similar phrases. ... Though σωτήρ is one of his favourite words he never uses it alone, but always couples it under the same article with another name. There is strong reason for thinking that the two names always belong to the same person; undoubtedly they do so in four cases out of the five." (The five passages in 2 Peter to which Bigg refers are 1:1, 1:11, 2:20, 3:2, and 3:18. If in the last four the two nouns clearly refer to the same person, why not also in verse 1:1?) Bigg's entire discussion is worth a careful reading. This writer especially likes his insistence that theological considerations must not be permitted to overthrow the strict grammatical rendering: "... the first and sovereign duty of the commentator is to ascertain, and to guide himself by the grammatical sense."

LENSKI. R. C. H. Lenski clearly agrees with the principle enunciated by Sharp, even though he does not refer to Sharp's Rule by name. And he applies the principle consistently to all four of our passages. He too pleads for the grammatical sense, and rightly affirms that dogmatic interests must not be permitted to control one's exegesis. (We wish that Lenski would have followed this excellent rule in the passages of the New Testament which treat such doctrines as universal justification, conversion, and predestination.) Regarding 2 Thessalonians 1:12, Lenski states: "The only thread on which

objection could be hung is the fact that *κύριος* without the article is often used as a proper name, and this thread is rather weak." He has no such reservations in regard to the other three passages. On 2 Peter 1:1, for example, he says: "The effort to find here a reference to two persons, God and Christ, is nullified linguistically by the use of but one article in the Greek. There is nothing more to say. Here the deity of Christ stands forth as a mountain that no false faith can plunge into the sea." Concerning the exegete who would deny the clear grammatical sense of this passage Lenski says: "... he suffers from a blind dogmatism, that, like the old Jewish Sanhedrin, is determined to deny the deity of Christ at every price."

Conclusions

After so long a discussion of Sharp's Rule and exegesis, extending over six issues of this *Journal*, the conclusions can surely be concise. This writer, first, regards Sharp's Rule as a valid principle of Greek grammar, inasmuch as it agrees with general classical usage and is found to be without demonstrable exception in the entire New Testament. Secondly, he would accept all four passages as testimonies to Christ's deity. In his opinion, it is a grammatically necessary and therefore thoroughly sound exegetical conclusion that only one person, Jesus Christ, is referred to in the passages from Titus and 2 Peter. The grammatical case for a similar interpretation of Ephesians 5:5 is only slightly less strong, and the uniform testimony of the Greek fathers in support of Sharp's exegesis should be conclusive. And while this writer must admit that a valid grammatical question can be raised in regard to the *κύριος* of 2 Thessalonians 1:12, yet he feels that a good case can nevertheless be made for the translation "our God and Lord, Jesus Christ." Titus 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:1 could well be added to our list of proof texts for the deity of Christ, and probably also Ephesians 5:5. Because of the question concerning the passage from 2 Thessalonians, however, we would do well not to use it as a *sedes doctrinae*.

It is interesting to note how several of the modern translations have rendered the four verses. The following have adopted Sharp's exegesis in the indicated passages: Beck (*The New Testament in the Language of Today*)

apparently in all four passages; the *Berkeley Version* and the *NASB* in Titus 2:13, 2 Peter 1:1, and apparently also Ephesians 5:5; the *RSV*, *NEB*, *The Living Bible*, *Today's English Version*, the *King James II Version*, and the *New International Version* in Titus 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:1; and Phillips in none of the passages.

God willing, the next issue will present the second major section of this series on the Greek article and the doctrine of Christ's deity. It will discuss in particular Colwell's Rule and the exegesis of John 1:1. The reader will be relieved to learn that this second section will not be as lengthy as the first!

C. Kuehne

FOOTNOTES

1. *Journal of Theology*, September, 1974, pp. 28-31.
2. Alexander Buttmann, *A Grammar of the New Testament Greek* (Andover: Warren F. Draper, 1895), p. 97. Buttmann's description of the treatment of the article by the holy writers as being "subjective and arbitrary" must be questioned. Cf. *Journal of Theology*, December, 1973, p. 23; June, 1974, p. 24f.
3. *Journal of Theology*, September, 1974, p. 28f.; cf. also pp. 26-28.
4. Basil Lanneau Gildersleeve, *Syntax of Classical Greek from Homer to Demosthenes*, Second Part (New York: American Book Company, c. 1911), p. 277. The looseness of which Gildersleeve speaks has to do with the use or non-use of the article with personal nouns in the plural number, nouns relating to things or qualities, and proper names. He nowhere demonstrates a looseness in the usage covered by Sharp's Rule. On the whole situation with respect to the New Testament, cf. *Journal of Theology*, December, 1973, pp. 17-26; also September, 1973, pp. 18-25.
5. Cf. *Journal of Theology*, September, 1974, p. 22f.
6. *Ibid.*, December, 1973, pp. 23-26.
7. James Hope Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, Vol. I Prolegomena, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908), p. 84.
8. A. T. Robertson, *A Short Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 3rd ed. (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, c. 1908), p. 75.
9. A. T. Robertson, "The Greek Article and the Deity of Christ," *Expositor* (London), series VIII, No. 21 (1921),

- pp. 183, 187.
10. A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, c. 1934), p. 786.
 11. *Journal of Theology*, December, 1973, pp. 26-28; September, 1974, pp. 24-26.
 12. H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Macmillan, c. 1955), p. 147.
 13. *Theology Today*, vol. X, no. 1 (April, 1953), p. 79.
 14. C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge: University Press, 1971), p. 110.
 15. F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, trans. and rev. by Robert W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, c. 1961), p. 144f.
 16. James Hope Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, Vol. III Syntax, by Nigel Turner (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), p. 181.
 17. Nigel Turner, *Grammatical Insights Into the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1965), p. 15f.
 18. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
 19. Cf. Robertson, *Grammar*, p. 754; Moulton, *Grammar*, vol. I, p. 80f., and vol. III, p. 165. (Editions cited previously in these footnotes.)
 20. Cf. *Journal of Theology*, March, 1974, p. 14f.
 21. *Ibid.*, September, 1974, p. 25f.
 22. *Ibid.*, March, 1974, p. 17f. On Hort's suggestion, cf. also Moule, *op. cit.*, p. 109. He regards the suggestions as "ingenuous but highly improbable."

