CHAPTER EIGHT

THE ARTICLE WITH GROUPS

In addition to individual lexical items, the article is often employed to modify larger structures such as word groups. As with individual lexical items, the information provided by the word group is used as the identifying feature of a class that is identified by the article. The word group is characterized as concrete. In these instances, the structure functions similar to a relative clause as subject or object, even though it does not incorporate a verb form such as a participle.

1. The Article with a Genitive Group

Occasionally, a speaker or writer will employ the article to characterize a word group in the genitive case as concrete. We noted above that restriction is “the essential semantic feature of the genitive case.”\(^1\) When a word group in the genitive case is modified by the article, the restricting activity of the word group is held out as the identifying feature of the class. As always, this information is presented by the speaker or writer to the recipients to be used for the purpose of identification.

In Mark 8:33, Jesus distinguishes between two classes by means of a general association with God and humanity:\(^2\)

\[\text{οὐ φρονεῖς τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων.}\]

You do not have in mind the things of God but the things of humanity.

The neuter plural article indicates that the referent is a class of things whose sole identifying characteristic is defined by its association with an individual or group: the first class of things is the associated with God; the second class of things is associated with mankind or humanity.\(^3\)

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\(^1\) Porter, *Idioms*, 93.

\(^2\) The genitive case restricts the head term in terms of a quality, definition, or description, Porter, *Idioms*, 92.

\(^3\) As a distinct category of usage, Robertson addresses the article *With Genitive Alone*. With regard to the neuter plural article, “[It] is common for the notion of ‘affairs’ or ‘things,'” *Grammar*, 767.
this, neither of these classes may be further identified; they are characterized in the most generic manner. In this way, the speaker makes a very sweeping criticism of the recipient. Peter's rebuke of Jesus is a single error. However, it is indicative of, and thus the result of, a general pattern of thinking that is based on human priorities, which stand in contrast to those of God. Jesus makes a similar distinction in Luke 20:25. Once again, two classes are distinguished from each other by a single identifying characteristic. In this instance, the things that compromise each class belong to a different owner:

\[\text{τοίνυν ἀπόδοτε τὰ καίσαρος καίσαρι καὶ τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ τῷ θεῷ.}\]

Therefore, give the things of Caesar to Caesar and the things of God to God.

The neuter plural article is employed to indicate that the two classes of things are to be identified solely on the basis of the fact that they belong to Caesar and to God respectively. Though presented as something concrete, such things, no further specification is made. Each is characterized as belonging to experience of actual things: Caesar and God do indeed have possessions that should rightfully be rendered back to them. However, there is nothing to indicate definiteness, such as these possessions specifically.

In Rom 8:5, Paul employs the article to characterize both genitive word groups and prepositional groups, as well as a participial clause:

\[\text{oī γὰρ κατὰ σάρκα ὄντες τὰ τῆς σαρκὸς φρονοῦσιν, }\text{oī δὲ κατὰ πνεῦμα τὰ τοῦ πνεύματος.}\]

For the ones who are according to the flesh think about the things of the flesh, but the ones according to the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

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4 “The characterization of Peter’s ideas as τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων as opposed to τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ sums up the problem which we have seen in considering the call to secrecy in v. 30. The divine purpose revealed in v. 31 makes no sense in human terms... The problem lies not at the level of competing loyalties... but at that of incompatible ideologies, of a human perspective which cannot grasp the divine purpose,” France, Mark, 339.

5 Marshall interprets this construction somewhat differently: “τὰ τοῦ Καίσαρος goes beyond the payment of taxes and refers to rendering to the ruler whatever he may lawfully prescribe. The saying affirms the general principle of submission to political authority,” Luke, 736. Though I would affirm the general principle, I disagree that this is the point of this saying. Jesus’ point is that the coin bears Caesar’s image and name, “In all probability, the denarius in question in this scene bore the image of Tiberius and the inscription, ‘Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus,’” Green, Luke, 715. Thus, it is Caesar’s possession. As such this and anything else that belongs to him, τὰ τοῦ Καίσαρος, should be given back to him if he so demands.