THE ORDER OF SOME NOUN AND ADJECTIVE PHRASES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

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In Hebrew attributive adjectives normally follow their nouns and if the noun has the article the attributive adjective has it also: חַדַע שֶׁיַּךְ. This order was frequently reproduced in the LXX and the New Testament with or without the article: Is. i 4 ἐθνὸς ἀμαρτωλόν, λαὸς πλήρης ἀμαρτίων, σπέρμα πονηρόν, υἱὸι ἄνομοι; vii 20 τῷ ἦφω τῷ μεγάλῳ. As a rule if the noun has the article the adjective has it but if the noun lacks the article the adjective is without it. Where the noun is in the construct with a dependant genitive as well as an attributive adjective the construct does not have the article and is followed immediately by the genitive, and the adjective with or without the article according to the sense comes last: וַיֵּקַח נַעֲרֵיהֶנָּה.

This order is taken over into Greek in the Septuagint, e.g. Is. ii 20 τὰ βρελόγματα αὐτῶ to ἁργυρᾶ καὶ τὰ χρυσά, iii 25 ὁ υἱὸς σου ὁ κάλλιστος, viii 7 τὸ ὄνομα του ποταμοῦ τὸ ἱσχυρὸν καὶ τὸ πολύ. In I Maccabees, though the Hebrew original has perished, the Hebrew arrangement survives in the Greek: i 6 τοὺς παίδας αὐτῶν τοὺς ἐνδεξαμένους, iii 15 παρεμβολὴ ἁσβέων ἱσχυρὰς, iv 7 παρεμβολῆν έθνῶν ἱσχυρὰν cf. iii 3 v. 1.; iv 53; vii 48; viii 31; ix 2. Frequently in the Greek rendering, as in the three instances just given from Isaiah, the noun has the article though it renders the Hebrew construct. As a rule both noun and adjective have the article or both lack it. Otherwise the structure and order of the Hebrew phrase has been reproduced in Greek.

They appear also in the New Testament: Mt. vii 11 τὸν ἐρτὸν ἡμῶν τὸν ἐκποιοῦντος, vi. 26 ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος (cf. v. 48, xviii 35), Lk. ii 7 τὸν υἱὸν αὐτῆς τὸν πρωτότοκον, vii. 47 αἱ ἀμαρτίαι αὐτῆς αἱ πολλαί, xxii 50 τὸ οὖς αὐτοῦ τὸ δεξιόν, Heb. xiii 20 τὸν ποιμένα τῶν προβάτων τὸν μέγαν, Rev. ii 4 τὴν ἀγάπην σου τὴν πρωτίνην, x. 5 τὴν χειρὰ αὐτοῦ τὴν δεξιὰν. Other instances occur at Mt. v. 29, xxv 40, Lk. xv 30, 32, Rev. x 2, xiii 16, xiv 19. Similar expressions are to be found at
Mk. v. 11 ἀγέλη γυαίρων μεγάλη, Jn. iv 53 ἡ οἰκία αὐτοῦ δόξη, 2 Cor. iii 3 ἐν πλάξιν χαρίσιας σαρκίναις (LXX). The absence of the article causes no difficulty. A participle instead of an adjective is a little less unnatural in Greek, e.g. Lk. iv 22; xxii 1. There is no difficulty about the meaning of these phrases. Rev. x 5 means "his right hand" and no one would think of rendering "his hand, the right one", any more than they would render the Hebrew expression above, "the king's horses, the good ones", rather than "the king's good horses".

We must recognise that this arrangement of phrase is unusual in Greek and would probably sound exotic. τὴν δεξιὰν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ or αὐτοῦ τὴν δεξιὰν χείρα or the like would be normal. The abnormality of the order of such phrases has had two results.

First the text has been tampered with to remove this order. In the following examples the text of the printed editions is given first followed by the abnormal order which is to be found in manuscripts: Mt. v. 30 ἡ δεξιά σου χείρι ἡ χείρ σου ἡ δεξιά, xxiii 9 ὁ μεγάλος ὁ πατὴρ ὁ οὐράνιος ὁ πατὴρ ὁ μεγάλος ὁ οὐράνιος, Mk. iv 37 λαοῦ ὁ μεγάλος ἀνέμου λαοῦ ἀνέμου μεγάλος, Lk. v. 29 ὡς τοῦ παλαιοῦ τελευτάων δύο τελευτάων τριῶν, xv 24 ὁ δύο μοῦ μοῦ μοῦ μοῦ μοῦ μοῦ, Tit. ii 11 ὁ χάρις τοῦ Θεοῦ σωτήριος ὁ χάρις τοῦ Θεοῦ σωτήριος, Rev. xiv 18 σοῦ τὸ δέσποταν τὸ δέσποταν σοῦ τὸ δέσποταν. These examples will give some idea of the way in which scribes have tried to introduce a more normal order.

The second result of this abnormality is the work not of scribes but of translators. For our examples we will go to the Revised Standard Version not because it is better or worse than other translations but because it represents good average practice. Despite the odd order Rev. x 2 τὸν πόδα αὐτοῦ τὸν δεξιόν was rendered "his right foot", x 5 τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ τὴν δεξιάν "his right hand". Likewise we have the right translation at Mt. v. 29, 48, vi 11, 26; xviii 35; Mk. i 11, v. 11; Lk. ii 7; iii 22; xxii 50; Jn. iv 53; Heb. xiii 20; Rev. xiii 16. Unsatisfactory are Lk. vii 17 "her sins which are many", xxiii 35 "the Christ of God, his Chosen One", Rev. ii 4 "the love you held at first", for which we should have "her many sins", "God's Chosen Messiah", "your first love". The R.S.V. is to be congratulated on its treatment of Mk. i ii; ix 7 and their parallels. Renderings like "My Son, the Beloved 1) One" do not

1) One must not forget C. H. Turner's convincing argument that in these