THE CHRISTOLOGY OF TITUS 2:13
AND 1 TIMOTHY 2:5
J. Christopher Edwards

Summary

This article makes an acute observation about the strong similarities between Titus 2:11-14 and 1 Timothy 2:1-7. These similarities are significant because they suggest that it is not valid to translate Titus 2:13 as: ‘The glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.’ This traditional translation affirms Jesus’ deity by ascribing to him the title of θεός.

1. Introduction

Τῆς δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτήρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Titus 2:13)
Εἰς γὰρ θεός, ἐἰς καὶ μεσίτης θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπων, ἀνθρώπος Χριστός Ἰησοῦς (1 Timothy 2:5)

Titus 2:13 is one of the few passages in the New Testament that could explicitly affirm Jesus’ deity by ascribing to him the title of θεός. The connection between Ἰησοῦς Χριστοῦ and θεός in Titus 2:13 is founded on the grammatical principle known as Granville Sharp’s rule. In this short study, I will briefly review this rule and the translational options it affords Titus 2:13. I will then examine the greater context of Titus 2:11-14 and the parallel context of 1 Timothy 2:1-7. These two passages have strong similarities, which is not surprising since the same author likely wrote Titus and 1 Timothy.

1 Also see, for example, Rom. 9:5; 2 Pet. 1:1.
2 The argument of this short study rests on the widely held assumption that the same author wrote 1 Tim. and Titus. According to P. H. Towner, when the single authorship of the Pastoral is challenged, it is normally only to exclude 2 Tim. (The Letters to Timothy and Titus [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006]: 27). There are, however, some scholars who are attempting to revive an older argument that 1 Tim. and Titus
Among these similarities are an emphasis on God’s universal salvation, an exhortation for godly living, and the influence of Isaiah 42:6-7; 49:6-8. Perhaps the most important similarity is the dependence on a tradition that is similar to Mark 10:45. The dependence on this tradition is widely recognised. What is not widely recognised, however, is that directly preceding this tradition in both Titus and 1 Timothy is a statement including θεός plus Ἰησοῦς Χριστός or Χριστός Ἰησοῦς. In 1 Timothy 2:5 it is obvious that the noun θεός does not apply to Χριστός Ἰησοῦς. Given all the similarities between Titus 2:11-14 and 1 Timothy 2:1-7, we should come to the same conclusions regarding θεός and Ἰησοῦς Χριστός in Titus 2:13.

The purpose of this article is not to give an exhaustive account of the research surrounding the Christology of the Pastorals. Rather the purpose is to make an acute observation about the strong similarities between Titus 2:11-14 and 1 Timothy 2:1-7 and then to note the significance of those similarities for the Christology of Titus 2:13.

2. The Grammatical Argument

According to D. B. Wallace, Granville Sharp’s rule asserts that in an article-noun-καί-noun construction ‘the second noun refers to the same person mentioned with the first noun when: (1) neither is impersonal; (2) neither is plural; (3) neither is a proper name’. In other words, both nouns in Sharp’s construction have the same referent when they are personal, singular, and not proper. Wallace has made the strongest case for the validity of Sharp’s rule in Titus 2:13. If Wallace is correct, then the entire construction, τὸ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτήρος Ἰμῶν, must refer to the same person. There are two possible translations of

---

4 D. B. Wallace, Granville Sharp’s Canon and Its Kin: Semantics and Significance (SBG 14; New York: Peter Lang, 2009): 241-64. I chose to interact with Wallace simply because his work represents the most recent and extensive treatment of Granville Sharp’s rule.
5 This depends on θεός not being a proper name.
Titus 2:13 in which the entire construction does refer to the same person. The first, which is preferred by Wallace, translates Titus 2:13 as: ‘The glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.’ In this translation the construction, τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἠμῶν, refers to Jesus Christ and explicitly affirms his deity.\(^6\) The second translation maintains Sharp’s rule, but does not identify Jesus with θεός. It translates Titus 2:13 as: ‘The appearance of the glory of our great God and saviour, Jesus Christ.’ In this translation the construction, τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἠμῶν, refers to God (θεός). Ίησοῦς Χριστός is seen to be in apposition to glory (δόξα), though glory is part of the entire phrase ‘the glory of our great God and saviour’.\(^7\) A final position believes that Granville Sharp’s rule does not apply to the construction in Titus 2:13, and the verse should be translated as: ‘The glorious appearing of the great God, and of our saviour Jesus Christ.’\(^8\)

The purpose of the next section is to highlight an unnoticed line of contextual evidence that supports those who argue against identifying

---


\(^7\) Those supporting this translation include G. Fee, Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007): 440-46; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 750-58. It is significant for this translation that Jesus is associated with the appearance of the grace of God in Titus 2:11. Jesus is also associated with the appearance of ‘the kindness and the love of mankind of God our saviour’ (ἡ χρηστότης καὶ η ἕφιλανθροπία ἐπεφάνη τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν θεοῦ) in Titus 3:4. Therefore, it should not be problematic for him to be associated with the appearance of the glory of our great God and saviour in Titus 2:13 (Jesus is closely associated with God’s glory elsewhere in Pauline literature [e.g. 2 Cor. 4:6]). However, Wallace argues that in Titus 2:13 the six words between δόξα and Ίησοῦς Χριστός create too great a distance for apposition (Granville Sharp’s Canon, 257-58). This criticism can be dampened by asserting that the apposition in Titus 2:13 is between Ίησοῦς Χριστός and the whole phrase: ‘the glory of our great God and saviour’ (cf. Col. 2:2).

Jesus with θεός in Titus 2:13. This includes those who uphold Sharp’s rule, but see the construction, τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτήρος ἰμῶν, as referring to God, not Jesus. It also includes those who do not apply Sharp’s rule in Titus 2:13.

3. The Contextual Argument

The force of the argument in this section is grounded on the strong similarities between the same author’s statements in Titus 2:11-14 and 1 Timothy 2:1-7. These similarities include: (1) the universal extension of salvation; (2) the exhortation for godly living; (3) the influence of Isaiah 42:6-7; 49:6-8; (4) the use of a tradition that is similar to Mark 10:45; (5) the introduction of the Mark 10:45 tradition with a reference to θεός plus Ιησοῦς Χριστὸς or Χριστὸς Ιησοῦς. Similarities one through three concern the greater contexts of Titus 2:11-14 and 1 Timothy 2:1-7. Similarities four and five address the tradition of which Titus 2:13 and 1 Timothy 2:5 are directly a part. It is important to note that similarities four and five are the most crucial ones for the argument, whereas similarities one through three are more supportive, so that if one does not agree with, for example, similarity number three (the common influence of Isaiah 42:6-7; 49:6-8) then that does not undercut the overall argument.

3.1 The Universal Extension of Salvation

One of the major motifs in Titus 2:11-14 and 1 Timothy 2:1-7 is the universal extension of salvation. In Titus 2:11, the author states that the appearance of the grace of God has brought salvation to all people (σωτήριος πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις). In 1 Timothy 2:1-7, the same author emphasises salvation for all people (πάντων ἀνθρώπων–2:1; πάντας ἀνθρώπους–2:4).

3.2 The Exhortation for Godly Living

In Titus 2:11-12, the author says that the same grace that appeared and brought salvation to all people trains us to live wisely, justly, and godly in the present age (σωφρόνως καὶ δικαίως καὶ εὐσεβῶς ζῆσομεν ἐν τῷ νῦν αἰῶνι). In 1 Timothy 2:1-2, the same author says that prayers should be made for all people, especially those in authority, so that we might lead a peaceful and quiet life in all
godliness and reverence (ἡρεμίον καὶ ἴσορκίον βίον διάγωμεν ἐν πάσῃ εὐσεβείᾳ καὶ σεμνότητι).

3.3 The Influence of Isaiah 42:6-7; 49:6-8

I have argued elsewhere that Isaiah 42:6-7; 49:6-8 is influencing some of the ideas in Titus 2:11-14 and 1 Timothy 2:1-7. It was common for early Christian writers to appeal to Isaiah 42:6-7 and/or 49:6-8 in order to justify the universal extension of salvation. If one thinks of Titus 2:11-14 and 1 Timothy 2:1-7 in the context of early Christian appeals to scripture supporting the extension of salvation to everyone, then it would hardly be a surprise if Isaiah 42:6-7; 49:6-8 were behind the universal emphasis of Titus 2:11-14 and 1 Timothy 2:1-7.

Further support for the influence of Isaiah 42:6-7; 49:6-8 on Titus is that the two ἵνα clauses following the self-giving statement in Titus 2:14 are almost completely parallel to Barnabas 14:6.

| Titus 2:14a | ἵνα λυτρώσηται ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἀνομίας |
| Barnabas 14:6a | λυτρωσάμενον ἡμᾶς ἐκ τοῦ σκότους, |
| Titus 2:14b | καὶ καθαρίσα /ἐσυτῶλαν περιούσιον |
| Barnabas 14:6b | ἐτοιμάσαι ἐσυτῶλαν ἅγιον |

Barnabas 14:6 is nothing more than the author’s summary of Isaiah 42:6-7; 49:6-7, which is quoted in Barnabas 14:7-8. Given the strong parallel between Barnabas 14:6 and the two ἵνα clauses in Titus 2:14, one is certainly justified to suggest that like Barnabas 14:6, the two ἵνα clauses in Titus 2:14 are also a summary of Isaiah 42:6-7; 49:6-7.

Further support for the influence of Isaiah 42:6-7; 49:6-8 on 1 Timothy 2:5-6—1 Timothy 2:5-6 are the verses parallel to Titus

---

2:14—is that the language of mediator (μεσίτης) in 1 Timothy 2:5 likely implies a covenant (διαθήκη). The vocabulary of בֵּרִית/דִּיתָחֵק occurs in Isaiah 42:6 and 49:8, and it is probable that the peculiar phrase, בֵּרִית בֵּרִית, in Isaiah 42:6 and 49:8 indicates a covenant mediator (μεσίτης).

In sum, the influence of Isaiah 42:6-7; 49:6-8 makes sense of the two ἐνα clauses and the universal perspective in Titus 2:11-14, as well as the idea of a covenant mediator combined with the universal perspective in 1 Timothy 2:1-7. The influence of Isaiah adds another layer of similarity between Titus 2:11-14 and 1 Timothy 2:1-7. Not only does the same author showcase the same universal emphasis, but that emphasis is guided by the same influence from Isaiah 42:6-7; 49:6-8.

3.4 The Use of a Tradition That Is Similar to Mark 10:45

The comparison below demonstrates why there is little doubt among scholars that 1 Timothy 2:6 and Titus 2:14 are influenced by a version of the tradition found in Mark 10:45. Clearly the same author is drawing on the same tradition in 1 Timothy 2:6 and Titus 2:14.

Mark 10:45
καὶ δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν

1 Timothy 2:6
ὁ δοῦς ἐσωτόν ἀντιλυτρον ὑπὲρ πάντων

Titus 2:14
ἐδώκεν ἐσωτόν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, ἵνα λυτρώσηται

12 In the New Testament, μεσίτης is almost always linked with the idea of covenant (Gal. 3:19-20; Heb. 8:6; 9:15; 12:24).
13 There is a LXX variant of διαθήκη in Isa. 49:6.
14 Isa. 42:6 and 49:8 are the only places where בֵּרִית בֵּרִית occurs in the Hebrew Bible. The rarity and difficulty of this phrase has generated much debate. For a brief discussion see M. S. Smith, ‘בֵּרִית ‘בֵּרִית ‘ollipop: A New Proposal for the Crux of Isa. 42:6’, JBL 100 (1981): 241-43. If taken as an objective genitive then a mediator is implied, i.e. a covenant [mediator] with the people.
3.5 The Introduction of the Mark 10:45 Tradition with a Reference to θεός plus Ἰησοῦς Χριστός or Χριστός Ἰησοῦς

In both Titus 2:13 and 1 Timothy 2:5, the same author introduces the same tradition, which is parallel to Mark 10:45, with the same reference to θεός plus Ἰησοῦς Χριστός or Χριστός Ἰησοῦς. In 1 Timothy 2:5 the author states: Εἰς γὰρ θεός, ἐὰς καὶ μεσίτης θεοῦ καὶ ἄνθρωπων, ἄνθρωπος Χριστός Ἰησοῦς. This statement is similar to the Shema. It is clear from this statement that θεός and Χριστός Ἰησοῦς refer to two separate persons. In Titus 2:13, the same author states: ἐπιφάνεια τῆς δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἦμων Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Given all the other similarities with 1 Timothy, it is very likely that the same author would similarly wish θεός and Ἰησοῦς Χριστός to be distinguished as two persons.

4. Conclusion

In short, the argument of this study is that the same author of Titus 2:11-14 and 1 Timothy 2:1-7 makes the same claims for universal salvation, gives the same exhortation for godly living, draws on the same influence from Isaiah 42:6-7; 49:6-8, uses the same tradition that is similar to Mark 10:45, precedes that tradition with the same vocabulary of θεός plus Ἰησοῦς Χριστός or Χριστός Ἰησοῦς, and has the same christology that identifies θεός and Ἰησοῦς Χριστός as two different persons. The alternative to this conclusion would be to admit all the similarities, but then assert that the same author has a fundamentally different christology in Titus 2:13 and 1 Timothy 2:5. Such an assertion is, in my opinion, very unlikely. Therefore, it is not valid to translate Titus 2:13 as: ‘The glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.’

One final note: The few differences between 1 Timothy 2:1-7 and Titus 2:11-14—the focus on mediatory prayer in 1 Timothy 2:2-4 and the expectation of Jesus’ ἐπιφάνεια in Titus 2:13—do not, in my opinion, affect the argument of this essay.

---

16 Cf. Rom. 3:30, Gal. 3:20, 1 Cor. 8:6.
17 ἐπιφάνεια and ἐπιφαίνω only refer to Jesus elsewhere in the Pastorals (1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 1:10; 4:1; 4:8; Titus 2:11; 3:4). Translating Titus 2:13 as: ‘The appearance of the glory of our great God and saviour, Jesus Christ’ closely associates Jesus with the glory of God, and also therefore the ἐπιφάνεια (See Titus 3:4).