

A Fresh Look at Adjective – Noun Ordering in Articular Noun Phrases¹

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This paper concerns the relative order of noun (N), adjective (Adj) and possessive pronoun (Poss) in noun phrases (NP) in the Greek New Testament that have the article (Art). It refines the claim that an adjective in Wallace’s “first attributive position”² (Art Adj N) “receives greater emphasis than the substantive”³ by identifying two exceptions that relate to the Principle of Natural Information Flow.

I first explain what I mean by the Principle of Natural Information Flow. I then briefly discuss adjectives in Wallace’s second attributive position (Art N Art Adj).⁴ The body of the paper concerns adjectives in Wallace’s first attributive position, including the significance of placing a possessive pronoun before versus after the noun. Anarthrous NPs are not discussed.⁵

1. The Principle of Natural Information Flow

The concept of the Principle of Natural Information Flow is found in work by linguist Bernard Comrie⁶ and has various applications. The part that is relevant to the present paper is that, when the order of constituents **conforms** to the Principle, information that has already been established in the immediate context precedes information that is new to the context and, more generally, more established information precedes less established information. The Principle is **violated** when information that is new to the context precedes information that has already been established in the context and, more generally, less established information precedes more established information. Typically, such a violation gives contrastive or emphatic prominence to the less established information.⁷

For example, the first NP in Matt 5:30 reads ἡ δεξιὰ σου χεῖρ (the right your hand). The order of adjective and noun **conforms** to the Principle of Natural Information Flow because ὁ δεξιὸς σου featured in v. 29 (ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς σου ὁ δεξιὸς—the eye your the right), whereas χεῖρ did not. The more established information (δεξιὰ σου) precedes the less established information (χεῖρ).

In contrast, the first NP in Matt 7:17b reads τὸ σαπρὸν δένδρον (the unhealthy tree). The order of adjective and noun **violates** the Principle of Natural Information Flow because δένδρον featured in v. 17a (πᾶν δένδρον ἀγαθὸν—every tree good), whereas σαπρὸν did not. The less established information (σαπρὸν) precedes the more established information (δένδρον). Such a violation gives σαπρὸν contrastive prominence; the contrast with ἀγαθὸν is emphasised.

¹ A shorter form of this paper was presented at the International Conference of the Society of Biblical Literature held in London, England in July 2011. I am very grateful to Anthony G. Pope for his invaluable comments and suggestions on an earlier draft of this paper.

² Wallace, Daniel B., *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1995), 306. Wallace does not discuss the position of the possessive pronoun.

³ Robertson, A. T., *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (New York, London: Harper, n.d. [copyrighted 1934]), 776.

⁴ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 306.

⁵ I treat Wallace’s third attributive position (N Art Adj) (*Greek Grammar*, 307) as anarthrous. “Here the substantive is [often] indefinite and general, while the attributive makes a particular application” (Robertson, *Grammar*, 777).

⁶ Comrie, Bernard, *Language Universals and Linguistic Typology*, 2nd edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 127-28.

⁷ For discussion of contrastive and emphatic prominence in Philemon, see Levinsohn, Stephen H., *Self-Instruction Materials on Non-Narrative Discourse Analysis* (Online at <http://www.sil.org/~levinsohns>, 2011), §5.2.1.

2. Adjectives in Wallace’s Second Attributive Position

When an adjective is in Wallace’s second attributive position, the order of constituents is

Art N (Poss) Art Adj.

This formula indicates that, if a possessive pronoun is present in the NP, its default position is immediately after the noun, whether it is a monosyllabic enclitic such as σου or an accented pronominal such as αὐτοῦ.⁸

By quoting Robertson, Wallace appears to agree that “both substantive and adjective receive emphasis and the adjective is added as a sort of climax in apposition with a separate article”.⁹ However, Bakker makes a weaker claim for Herodotus that appears to fit the New Testament data more accurately. She asserts that the adjective “is either less or equally salient compared to the noun (postposition of the modifier being the default situation)”.¹⁰

For example, ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς σου ὁ δεξιὸς (Matt 5:29) would appear to identify ‘your right eye’ in a default way as the topic of the clause ‘if your right eye causes you to sin’. The omission of ὁ δεξιὸς in the parallel passage in Mark 9:47 suggests that ‘right’ is not particularly salient.

Similarly, τὸν πόδα αὐτοῦ τὸν δεξιὸν (Rev 10:2) appears to identify ‘his right foot’ in a default way as the one that was placed on the sea, without emphasising that it was the **right** foot that the angel placed on the sea (and the **left** one on the land).

In Luke 1:59 (UBS text), ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ὀγδόῃ identifies ‘the eighth day’ in a default way as the temporal setting for the baby’s circumcision. There is no particular emphasis on the phrase as a whole, since this was the expected day for a boy to be circumcised. However, identifying the day as the eighth one is salient for the passage.¹¹

Finally, in 1 Cor 7:14a, ὁ ἀνὴρ ὁ ἄπιστος identifies ‘the unbelieving husband’ in a default way as the topic of the clause ‘the unbelieving husband is made holy through his wife’. In this instance, both ‘husband’ and ‘unbelieving’ are salient; the former, because the topic of 14b is the unbelieving wife (see also 12c), and the latter, because the wife of 14a is a believer (as in 13).

I therefore follow Bakker in treating Art N (Poss) Art Adj as a default order in which the adjective may be either less or equally salient compared to the noun that it modifies.¹²

⁸ The order “Art N Art Adj Poss apparently does not occur” (Pope, p.c.). In Rev 14:18, John 18:10 (UBS text) and Matt 23:9 (variant Art N Poss Art Adj), an “unemphatic” possessive pronoun (Turner, N., *Syntax. Vol. 3, A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, ed. by J. H. Moulton [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963] 189), occurs immediately after the verb (V) and before the rest of the NP (V Poss Art N Art Adj). This order is followed “when the rest of the phrase is in focus” or “when the referent of the pronoun is *thematically salient* (i.e., the center of attention)” (Levinsohn, Stephen H., *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek: A Coursebook on the Information Structure of New Testament Greek*, 2nd edition [Dallas: SIL International, 2000, revised 2011], 64).

⁹ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 306; Robertson, *Grammar*, 777.

¹⁰ Bakker, Stéphanie J., *The Noun Phrase in Ancient Greek: A Functional Analysis of the Order and Articulation of Noun Phrase Constituents in Herodotus* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009), 288. G.B. Winer (*A Treatise on the Grammar of New Testament Greek*, translated by W.F. Moulton, 3rd edition, revised [Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1882], 657) also views Adj N Art Adj as a default order: “Adjectives (and participles) which are joined attributively as complements to substantives are, as a rule, placed *after* their nouns ... since the object itself is presented to the mind before its predicate”.

¹¹ Some MSS read ἐν τῇ ὀγδόῃ ἡμέρᾳ.

¹² John 5:30 and 6:38 (τὸ θέλημα τὸ ἐμὸν) appear to be exceptions, as τὸ ἐμὸν is contrasted with τοῦ πέμψαντός με, which would suggest that τὸ ἐμὸν is more salient than τὸ θέλημα. However, it could be argued that placing τὸ ἐμὸν in second attributive position results in both parts of the contrast being equally salient. In other words, Jesus wishes in 5:30 to bring out that his judgement is just both because he does not seek his own will and because he seeks the will of the one who sent him (“When ἀλλά links a negative characteristic or proposition with a following positive one, the negative proposition usually retains its relevance”—Levinsohn, *Discourse Features*, 114).

3. Adjectives in Wallace’s First Attributive Position

With adjectives in Wallace’s first attributive position, the order of constituents is Art Adj N.

The default position of possessive pronouns in such NPs cannot be determined on statistical grounds, as they precede the noun (Art Adj Poss N) on 19 or 20 occasions and follow it (Art Adj N Poss) on 17 to 22 occasions (depending on which reading is favoured).¹³ I therefore discuss the significance of the two positions in sec. 3.2, which leads me to treat Art Adj N Poss as the default order.

By quoting Robertson, Wallace again appears to agree that, in first attributive position, “the adjective receives greater emphasis than the substantive”,¹⁴ and the examples of sec. 3.1 are representative of the many NPs in the NT corpus for which this assertion is valid. However, Robertson’s claim turns out not to be true for a minority of examples in which the order of adjective and noun conforms to the Principle of Natural Information Flow.¹⁵

Section 3.3 discusses instances in which the adjective is not emphasised because its referent is established, whereas the referent of the noun is less established. Section 3.4 concerns instances in which the referent of the whole articular NP is established.

3.1 First Attributive Position with Adj emphasised

For the majority of NPs in which the adjective is placed in Wallace’s first attributive position, it is indeed preposed for contrastive or emphatic prominence. When such is the case, the referent of the adjective is never more established than that of the noun.¹⁶

In 1 John 4:18b (ἡ τελεία ἀγάπη—the perfect love), for example, ἀγάπη featured in the immediately preceding clause, whereas the last reference to perfection was early in v. 17 (τετελείωται—has been perfected). So the referent of ‘perfect’ is less established than that of ‘love’, and τελεία precedes ἀγάπη for emphatic prominence.

In Rom 7:2a (ἡ ὕπανδρος γυνή τῷ ζῶντι ἀνδρὶ—the married woman to the living husband), neither ‘married’ nor ‘woman’ has featured in the context, so their referents are equally non-established. In contrast, ‘married woman’ presupposes the existence of a husband who is, presumably, alive, so the referents of ‘living’ and ‘husband’ in 2a are equally established, with ζῶντι preceding ἀνδρὶ in anticipation of the contrast with him dying (2b).¹⁷

¹³ In Matt 5:16, the possessive pronoun occurs immediately after the verb and before the rest of the NP (V Poss Art Adj N); see footnote 8.

¹⁴ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 306; Robertson, *Grammar*, 776. Robertson considers “*The Normal Position of the Adjective*” to be “between the article and the substantive” (*ibid.*).

¹⁵ Following Winer’s assertion, “When, however, the attributive is to be brought into prominence in direct or indirect antithesis, it is placed before the substantive” (*Treatise*, 657), Moulton adds the following note: “These observations appear to require modification before they are applied to the case of an adjective joined to a noun *which has the article*”. He then suggests that the adjective “*may have emphasis when inserted between the article and the noun*” (*Treatise*, 657-658, note 2).

¹⁶ See sec. 3.3 for discussion of Luke 6:45, which Wallace (*Greek Grammar*, 306) cites as an illustration of Robertson’s claim that “the adjective receives greater emphasis than the substantive” (*Grammar*, 776).

This paper does not address the potential for the position of some adjectives in relation to their noun to be fixed, with them only able to occur in the first attributive position.

¹⁷ Other examples cited by Wallace (*Greek Grammar*, 306) include Matt 5:26 (τὸν ἔσχατον κοδράντην—the last penny), John 2:10 (τὸν καλὸν οἶνον—the good wine), Acts 9:31 (ὅλης τῆς Ἰουδαίας καὶ Γαλιλαίας καὶ Σαμαρείας—all the Judea and Galilee and Samaria) and Phil 3:2 (τοὺς κακοὺς ἐργάτας—the evil workers). In Acts 3:7 (τῆς δεξιᾶς χειρὸς—the right hand), it is not clear why the author would wish to make ‘right’ prominent. However, Pope (p.c.) suggests that “δεξιός naturally stands before the noun because right side body parts always imply the existence of a left side one”.

Finally, in Matt 4:5 (εἰς τὴν ἁγίαν πόλιν—to the holy city),¹⁸ ἁγίαν is in first attributive position to emphasise “the conjunction of the devil and the sanctuary, which in itself must have been outrageous for his Jewish audience”.¹⁹ As Meyer states, “[t]he designation has something *solemn* in contrast to the devil”.²⁰

3.2 First Attributive Position when a possessive pronoun is present

I indicated above that it is not possible on statistical grounds to determine the default position of the possessive pronoun in NPs that contain an adjective in first attributive position, as they precede the noun on about as many occasions as they follow it. However, the Principle of Natural Information Flow gives us a pointer. In particular, when the Principle is violated by placing less established information before more established information, the presence immediately after the non-established constituent of a pronominal whose referent is established reinforces the fact that the Principle has been violated and thereby adds to the emphasis.²¹

So, when a possessive pronoun is placed immediately after an adjective in first attributive position whose referent is less established than that of the following noun, this helps to emphasise the adjective by underlining the violation of the Principle of Natural Information Flow.

For example, prior to Matt 27:60 (ἐν τῷ καινῷ αὐτοῦ μνημείῳ—in the new his tomb), Joseph of Arimathea has obtained Jesus’ body and wrapped it in a clean cloth (59). This statement activates the idea that he intends to place it in an appropriate place, such as a tomb. However, the context gives no hint that he plans to use his own new tomb. So the referent of καινῷ is less established than that of μνημείῳ, and καινῷ precedes μνημείῳ for emphatic prominence. This prominence is enhanced by placing αὐτοῦ (established information) immediately after καινῷ.

Similarly, in 1 Pet 1:3 (τὸ πολὺ αὐτοῦ ἔλεος—the great his mercy), neither ‘great’ nor ‘mercy’ has featured in the context, so their referents are equally non-established, with πολὺ preceding ἔλεος for emphatic prominence. Once again, this prominence is enhanced by placing αὐτοῦ (established information) immediately after πολὺ.²²

¹⁸ The same expression is found in Matt 27:53. Contrast τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν (the city the holy—Rev 11:2, 21:2; see also Rev 21:10, 22:19), which is the default order when ‘holy’ is no more salient than ‘city’ (contrast BDF §474.1 [small print], who suggests Hebrew influence for the Art N Art Adj order).

¹⁹ Pope, p.c.

²⁰ Meyer, Heinrich August Wilhelm, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of Matthew* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884), 95.

²¹ “The pragmatic effect is probably to increase the prominence that is given to the preposed focal constituent” (Levinsohn, Stephen H., *Self-Instruction Materials on Narrative Discourse Analysis* [Online at <http://www.sil.org/~levinsohns>, 2011], §4.5 #5, footnote 74). See Levinsohn, *Discourse Features*, 39-40, 49 for instances in which a pronominal constituent is placed immediately after a preposed focal constituent and before the verb. For example, both Mark 16:3b (Τίς ἀποκυλίσει ἡμῖν τὸν λίθον ἐκ τῆς θύρας τοῦ μνημείου;—who will.roll.away for.us the stone from the entrance of.the tomb) and Rom 8:35a (τίς ἡμᾶς χωρίσει ἀπὸ τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ Χριστοῦ;—who us will.separate from the love of.the Christ) begin with the focal question word τίς. In the Mark passage, which is a genuine question, the pronoun ἡμῖν is in its default position immediately after the verb. In the Romans passage, however, the question is rhetorical, and placing the pronoun ἡμᾶς immediately after τίς reinforces the fact that absolutely **nothing** can separate us from the love of Christ.

According to David Goldstein (*Wackernagel’s Law in Fifth-Century Greek* [PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2010]), the attachment of a pronominal clitic to a preposed focal constituent results in “strong focus”.

²² See also Rom 1:20, 1:21, 6:6, 6:12; 2 Cor 5:1, 9:15; 1 Tim 5:23; 2 Tim 4:16; 1 Pet 1:18, 2:9, 5:10; Jude 3 (cited by Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 306), Jude 20; and possibly 2 Pet 3:15. The remaining examples of the Art Adj (Poss) N order are discussed in sec. 3.3 (Matt 5:30, 2 Pet 3:16) and sec. 3.4 (Gal 1:14).

The above examples lead me to conclude that the default position of the possessive pronoun is at the end of the NP: Art Adj N Poss.²³ The referent of the adjective may still be less established than that of the noun, but the position of the possessive pronoun does not add to its prominence.

Matt 10:1 (τοὺς δώδεκα μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ—the twelve disciples his) illustrates this. Immediately prior to this verse, Jesus addressed a speech ‘to his disciples’ (9:37-38), so the referent of μαθητὰς is established, whereas a special group of twelve “come before us for the first time as a special entity”.²⁴ The number is in first attributive position for contrastive prominence, but the default position of αὐτοῦ does not add to that prominence.²⁵

A similar argument applies to Acts 1:19b (τῇ ἰδίᾳ διαλέκτῳ αὐτῶν—in.the own language their). Because the NP is preceded by the verb κληθῆναι (to be called), which presupposes that the name will be in some language, it can be argued that the referent of ἰδίᾳ is less established than that of διαλέκτῳ. The result is that ἰδίᾳ is in first attributive position for contrastive prominence, but the default position of αὐτῶν does not add to that prominence.²⁶

I now compare Acts 4:27 (ἐπὶ τὸν ἅγιον παῖδά σου Ἰησοῦν—against the holy servant your Jesus)²⁷ with Jude 20 (τῇ ἁγιωτάτῃ ὑμῶν πίστει—the most.holy your faith).

In Acts 4:27, the possessive pronominal enclitic σου is in its default position at the end of the NP (τὸν ἅγιον παῖδά σου), which parallels τοῦ Χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ (the Messiah his—26) in the quotation from Psalm 2. So, although some prominence is given to ἅγιον by placing it in first attributive position, the emphasis is not such that παῖδά fades into insignificance.

In the Jude passage, in contrast, v. 3 has already stated that one reason for writing the letter was ‘to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints’, so ‘faith’ in v. 20 is an established concept. In addition, ‘most holy’ (20) contrasts with ‘ungodly lusts’ (18), so ἁγιωτάτῃ is emphasised and this emphatic prominence is enhanced by placing ὑμῶν immediately afterwards.

To conclude this section, I apply the above observations to Matt 5:39. The UBS text places σου in brackets after the noun (τὴν δεξιάν σου σιαγόνα [σου]—the right cheek [your]), whereas a number of MSS place it before (τὴν δεξιάν σου σιαγόνα).²⁸ Placing δεξιάν in first attributive position gives it emphatic prominence, in anticipation of the quasi-contrast with καὶ τὴν ἄλλην (also the other). The effect of placing σου immediately after δεξιάν, instead of in its default position at the end of the NP, would be to add to this emphatic prominence.²⁹

²³ A possessive pronoun follows the noun on 17 occasions (Matt 10:1, 11:1, 11:20, 20:21; Acts 1:19, 2:8, 4:27, 4:30; Rom 8:11, 12:1; 2 Cor 4:11; Eph 2:4, 3:5; Col 1:7; 2 Pet 1:3; Rev 5:5, 11:3), plus 5 passages with variants (Matt 5:39, John 1:37, 1 Th 4:11, 2 Pet 3:3, Rev 1:16).

²⁴ Morris, Leon, *The Gospel according to Matthew. The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 242.

²⁵ The possessive pronoun is also in default position in the following NPs with a number in first attributive position: Matt 11:1 (referring to the same occasion as 10:1), 20:21; Rev 5:5, 11:3. See also Matt 11:20 (αἱ πλεῖσται δυνάμεις αὐτοῦ—the most miracles his).

²⁶ See also Acts 2:8. Additional examples in which ἴδιος precedes the noun in some MSS, with the possessive pronoun in default position, are 1 Th 4.11b (ταῖς ἰδίαις χερσὶν ὑμῶν—the own hands your) and 2 Pet 3:3 (τὰς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας αὐτῶν—the own lusts their). In both passages, other MSS omit ἴδιος.

²⁷ Acts 4:30 is similar. In both instances, the NP is followed by an appositional reference to Jesus.

²⁸ Other MSS omit δεξιάν.

²⁹ A similar observation applies to the variant in Rev 1:16 that reads τῇ δεξιᾷ αὐτοῦ χειρὶ. (Another variant has δεξιᾷ in second attributive position, while a further one omits χειρὶ.)

3.3 First Attributive Position with Adj established and N non-established

I now discuss instances in which an adjective in first attributive position is not emphasised because its referent is established, whereas the referent of the noun that it modifies is less established, which means that the Principle of Natural Information Flow is not violated.

In sec. 1, I cited the first NP in Matt 5:30 (ἡ δεξιὰ σου χεῖρ—the right your hand) as an instance in which the order of adjective and noun conforms to the Principle of Natural Information Flow because ὁ δεξιός σου featured in v. 29, whereas χεῖρ did not. Because the more established information (δεξιὰ σου) precedes the less established information (χεῖρ), δεξιὰ σου is not emphasised. This is confirmed by recordings of Matt 5:29-30 in English, which place contrastive stress on ‘hand’ in v. 30.³⁰

It is noteworthy that the possessive pronominal enclitic σου is not in its default position at the end of the NP. The effect, in this instance, is not to emphasise δεξιὰ, but to allow χεῖρ to stand at the end of the phrase as the dominant focal element (DFE).³¹

2 Pet 3:16 (τὴν ἰδίαν αὐτῶν ἀπώλειαν—the own their destruction) is similar. The referent of ἰδίαν αὐτῶν is established, whereas the last reference that related to destruction was in v. 12, and the position of αὐτῶν allows ἀπώλειαν to stand at the end of the phrase as the DFE. In recordings of this verse in English, ‘destruction’ carries primary stress, rather than ‘own’.³²

When a **pronominal** adjective is in first attributive position, its referent is usually active and, therefore, established. If the referent of the following noun is less established than that of the pronoun, then such ordering again conforms to the Principle of Natural Information Flow and the pronominal adjective is not necessarily emphasised. See, for example, Matt 13:27 (ἐν τῷ σῶ ἀγρῷ—in the your field) and Acts 27:34 (τῆς ὑμετέρας σωτηρίας—the your deliverance).³³

Now for an exception! There is one circumstance in which an adjective in first attributive position is emphasised, even though its referent is established. Consider Luke 6:45a-b:

45a ὁ ἀγαθὸς ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ θησαυροῦ τῆς καρδίας προφέρει τὸ ἀγαθόν,
(the good man from the good storehouse of the heart produces the good)

45b καὶ ὁ πονηρὸς ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ προφέρει τὸ πονηρόν·
(and the evil from the evil produces the evil)

The first of the above propositions (45a) contains two articular NPs with the adjective ἀγαθὸς in first attributive position. Because the information it conveys is established (see v. 43), the order of constituents conforms to the Principle of Natural Information Flow, as neither ἄνθρωπος nor θησαυροῦ τῆς καρδίας has featured in the immediate context. However, it is clear from the second proposition (45b) that the good-evil contrast is emphasised three times, so ἀγαθὸς is emphasised even though it conveys more established information than the noun it modifies.³⁴

³⁰ www.audiotreasure.com KJV and World Bible recordings of Matt 5.

³¹ Levinsohn, *Narrative* §4.2.4. See also Heimerdinger, Jean-Marc, *Topic, Focus and Foreground in Ancient Hebrew Narratives* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 167.

³² www.audiotreasure.com KJV and World Bible, and www.divinerevelations.info/bible (NIV) recordings of 2 Pet 3.

Contrast Acts 2:6 (τῇ ἰδίᾳ διαλέκτῳ—the own language), in which ‘language’ is an active concept, because the hearers were bound to be hearing in some language, whereas ἰδίᾳ is contrastively prominent, because they would have expected Galileans to speak in a language other than their mother tongue. Although ἴδιος usually precedes the noun it modifies, Acts 1:25 (τὸν τόπον τὸν ἴδιον—the place the own) shows that it may follow the noun.

³³ See also Matt 24:3; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26, 22:19; John 8:51 (UBS text); Acts 5:4, 24:2, 24:4, 26:5; Rom 10:1; 1 Cor 8:11, 9:3, 11:24, 11:25b, 14:16, 15:31, 16:17 (UBS text); 2 Cor 1:23, 8:8; Gal 1:13, 6:13; Phil 1:26; 2 Tim 4:15; Pmn 10, 12; 2 Pet 1:15; 3 John 4; Rev 2:20.

It is noteworthy that, in the earlier examples of this sub-section, the adjective in first attributive position was not in a contrastive relation to any other adjective in the immediate context. The key factor that makes Luke 6:45a different from these examples seems to be the presence of this contrast.³⁵

I therefore conclude that, when an adjective in first attributive position conveys information that is more established than the noun it modifies, it is not emphasised unless it is in contrast with a corresponding adjective which is stated in or implied by the immediate context.

I close this section by applying the above conclusion to the phrase εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν (in the my remembrance—Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24, 11:25b), as most English versions translate it ‘in remembrance/memorial of me’, with the potential for the primary stress to fall on ‘me’.³⁶ Since the referent of ἐμὴν is established, it should only be emphasised if it is in contrast with a corresponding adjective which is stated in or implied by the immediate context. Such is Edwards’ understanding of the 1 Corinthians passage: “ ‘My commemoration,’ in contrast to that of Moses (x.2)”.³⁷ If no contrast is intended, however, a more appropriate rendering of the phrase might be that of the New Living Translation, “Do this to remember me”, with the primary stress on ‘reMEMber’.³⁸

3.4 First Attributive Position when the referent as a whole is established

I now discuss a second circumstance under which an adjective occurs in first attributive position but without emphasis. This is when the referent of the articular NP as a whole is established and it is part of a larger constituent (NP or complement) that includes an element X whose referent is less established. Consider Acts 10:44b-45:

44b ἐπέπεσεν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐπὶ πάντας τοὺς ἀκούοντας τὸν λόγον.
(fell the Spirit the Holy upon all the.ones hearing the word)

45a καὶ ἐξέστησαν οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς πιστοὶ ὅσοι συνῆλθαν τῷ Πέτρῳ,
(and were.amazed the of circumcision faithful as.many.as accompanied the Peter)

45b ὅτι καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ ἔθνη ἡ δωρεὰ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος ἐκκέχυται·
(that also upon the Gentiles the gift of.the Holy Spirit has.been.poured.out)

In the above extract, 44b introduces the Holy Spirit to the scene, with the adjective ἅγιον in second attributive position (the default position when adjective and noun are equally salient—sec. 2). Then, in 45b, further reference is made to the Holy Spirit within the NP ἡ δωρεὰ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος. This phrase consists of a NP whose referent is established (τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος), preceded by an element X (ἡ δωρεὰ) whose referent is less established. I suggest that the reason that ἁγίου is in first attributive position is not to emphasise ‘holy’, but because another constituent of the clause (καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ ἔθνη) has already been emphasised. Τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος is then the shortest way of referring to the Holy Spirit as an active participant in the story.³⁹

³⁵ 2 Cor 5:1 (ἡ ἐπίγειος ἡμῶν οἰκία τοῦ σκηνῶς—the earthly our house of.the tabernacle) is similar. Examples when the adjective is pronominal and contrastive include Matt 7:3, 7:22 (ter), 18:20; Mark 2:18; John 4:42, 5:47, 7:8 (UBS text), 7:16; Rom 3:7, 11:31, 15:4; 1 Cor 1:15, 5:4?, 7:40, 16:18; 2 Cor 2:3; Pmn 14; together with instances when the author of an epistle tells his readers that he wrote the final words in **his** hand (1 Cor 16:21; Gal 6:11, Col 4:18, 2 Th 3:17, Pmn 19).

³⁶ In contrast, ἐν τῷ ἐμῷ αἵματι (in the my blood—11:25a) is usually translated ‘in my blood’, with the primary stress on ‘blood’.

³⁷ Edwards, T.C., *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* [3rd edition, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1897]).

³⁸ See also the *God’s Word Translation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007) and Barclay, William, *The New Testament: A New Translation* (London: Collins, 1968).

³⁹ A similar pair of references to the Holy Spirit, with the adjective in second attributive position and then in first attributive position, is found in Acts 2:33, 38 and 13:2, 4. See also Acts 9:31 (τῇ παρακλήσει τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος—in.the comfort of the Holy Spirit).

In Gal 1:14c (περισσότερως ζηλωτῆς ὑπάρχων τῶν πατρικῶν μου παραδόσεων), τῶν πατρικῶν μου παραδόσεων (of the ancestral my traditions) is part of a split NP with ζηλωτῆς (zealot) preceding the verb for focal prominence.⁴⁰ Although no previous reference has been made to ‘my ancestral traditions’, the context states, ‘You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism’ (v. 13). The New English Bible understands this to mean, “when I was still a practising Jew”,⁴¹ which means that, to a greater or lesser extent, Paul would be practising his ‘ancestral traditions’. I conclude that πατρικῶν is in first attributive position, not to emphasise ‘ancestral’, but because emphasis falls elsewhere in the clause (first, on περισσότερως and, then, on ζηλωτῆς). Τῶν πατρικῶν μου παραδόσεων is then the shortest way of referring to ‘my ancestral traditions’ as a previously activated concept.⁴²

Acts 1:8a (ἀλλὰ λήμψθε δύναμιν ἐπελθόντος τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς) is slightly different, because τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος (the Holy Spirit) is not part of a larger NP. However, the principle is the same. If we assume that v. 8 relates back to Jesus’ previous reference to the Spirit in v. 5 (‘you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now’), then the Holy Spirit is already an established participant in the conversation. The new and focal information in 8a is ‘you will receive power’ (to be witnesses of Jesus). I therefore conclude that ἁγίου is in first attributive position, not to emphasise ‘holy’, but because τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος is the shortest way to refer to a previously established referent, when some other part of the sentence is more prominent.⁴³

I note that in the above examples, as in sec. 3.3, the adjective in first attributive position was never in a contrastive relation with another adjective in the context.

I conclude that, when the referent of a NP with order Art Adj (Poss) N is established, the adjective may have been placed in first attributive position not to emphasise the adjective, but because it is the shortest way to refer to the referent, in a context in which some other part of the clause is prominent.

Conclusion

While it is true that, in the majority of cases, an adjective in first attributive position (Art Adj N) does receive greater emphasis than the noun it modifies, this paper has shown that there is a significant minority of NPs for which this claim is not true. To determine whether in fact it is the adjective, the noun or some other element that is emphasised, I have appealed to the Principle of Natural Information Flow. When this Principle is violated, then the adjective is indeed emphasised. When the Principle is adhered to, in contrast, it is often the case that the noun or some other element of the clause is emphasised.

The paper has also discussed the location of the possessive pronoun when an adjective is in first attributive position. It concludes that, whether the possessive is a monosyllabic enclitic or an accented pronominal, its default position is at the end of a NP (Art Adj N Poss). The effect of placing

A parallel may be drawn between the relative order of noun and adjective in these passages and the relative order of the indefinite adjective τις and its head noun in Luke-Acts. When τις precedes a head noun in the same case, “such preposing of τις cohesively anchors the referent of the phrase to the context” (Levinsohn, Stephen H., and Anthony G. Pope, *Τις Noun Order as an Anchoring Device in Luke-Acts*, paper presented at the International Conference of the Society of Biblical Literature, Rome, Italy, 2009; online at www.sil.org/~levinsohns, 7).

⁴⁰ See Levinsohn, *Discourse Features*, §4.4.2, for discussion of constituents that are split “because only the *first* or preposed part is in focus, whereas the remainder is supportive”.

⁴¹ See also Stott, John R.W., *The Message of Galatians* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 31.

⁴² Pope (p.c.) disagrees; “‘ancestral’ can be reasonably seen as contrasting with God and his calling action in 15.”

⁴³ Alternatively, “I rather see this as an example of your §3.3. ἁγίου identifies him as from God and is established because of reference to the Father in 7. The stress should come on the word ‘Spirit’.” (Pope, p.c.)

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it immediately after an adjective (Art Adj Poss N) in phrases that violate the Principle of Natural Information Flow is to add to the emphasis on the adjective.