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The Hermeneutical Significance of Chapter Divisions in Ancient Gospel Manuscripts

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The study commences with the five major ways of dividing the gospels in Christian history, after which the focus falls on the hermeneutical significance of the Old Greek Divisions. The most defining characteristic of the Divisions is their tendency to demarcate chapters on the basis of the miracles and parables of Jesus. In lieu of miracles or parables, major units of Jesus' teaching also determine Old Greek Divisions. The Synoptic passion narratives, and particularly Matthew's, display the greatest precision and organization among the Divisions. Titles of divisions aided in locating specific passages, identified corresponding material in the gospels by the same title, and when read or memorized in sequence offered an overview of the gospel narratives.

Keywords: Old Greek Divisions, chapters in gospel manuscripts, miracles, parables, passion narratives

1. Survey of Gospel Divisions

In the history of Christianity, five systems of division have been applied to the NT gospels. The three oldest systems derive from the patristic era. One, perhaps the oldest, was introduced by Eusebius of Caesarea in the early fourth century. The purpose of Eusebius's system, which evidently developed from the pioneering work of Ammonius Saccas (175–242), was to identify passages among the four gospels that were either parallel or similar in content. Eusebius divided each gospel into numbered units (355 in Matthew, 233 in Mark, 342 in Luke, and 232 in John), and by an ingenious system of 10 tables or 'canons' compared the numbered units in one gospel with similar units in the other gospels. All possible combinations are accounted for in the Eusebian Canons except comparisons of Mark and John, and Mark, Luke, and John. The Eusebian Canons evince an early awareness of the challenges presented by a four-fold gospel tradition and a degree of precision in the comparative analysis of that tradition that is still useful today.

A second system of gospel divisions, also from the fourth century, is present in codex Vaticanus (B), which divides Matthew into 170 sections, Mark into 62, Luke into 152, and John into 80. These divisions are of unknown origin and, apart from their reproduction in codex Zacynthius (Ξ, sixth century) and in 579 (thirteenth century), they remained limited to Vaticanus.[1] The pericope divisions of Vaticanus were signified by upright Arabic numerals in the inner margins of the Greek text of Nestle-Aland[25], but they are omitted in subsequent editions.

A third system of gospel divisions appears in codex Alexandrinus (A). Alexandrinus is usually dated to the fifth century, which may make its system of divisions slightly later than those of Vaticanus. Unlike the divisions of Vaticanus, the divisions of Alexandrinus, known as the Old Greek Divisions, became the prototype of chapter divisions in the most widely used ancient manuscripts. The divisions, known as κεφάλαια ('chapters'), numbered 68 in Matthew, 48 in Mark, 83 in Luke, and 18 in John. The numbered chapters were augmented by a list of τίτλοι ('titles') written in the margins. The divisions of Alexandrinus are signified by italic Arabic numerals of normal size in the inner margins of all recent editions of the Nestle-Aland Greek text.[2]

The fourth and fifth systems of division of the biblical text derive from the Medieval and early Modern periods, respectively. The fourth division concerns the chapter divisions that, with minor modifications, are still used in printed Bibles today. Modern chapter divisions were first introduced into the Latin Bible at the beginning of the thirteenth century, perhaps as early as 1205, by Stephen Langton, then lecturer at the University of Paris and later archbishop of Canterbury. Subdivision of chapters into verses followed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Numbered verses for the Hebrew Bible were first established for a concordance to the Masoretic text by Rabbi Isaac Nathan in about 1440; and

1 Chapter enumerations in the Pauline Epistles of Vaticanus indicate that it incorporated the divisions of an earlier exemplar that placed Hebrews between Galatians and Ephesians. Vaticanus enumerates Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians consecutively as chapters 1–58; Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1–2 Thessalonians as chapters 70–93; and Hebrews (until 9.11 at which point it breaks off) as chapters 59–64 (I owe this observation to the anonymous reviewer of this article). The divisions in Vaticanus are not reproduced in codex Sinaiticus, whose text-type and hand are similar to those of Vaticanus. See James Bentley, *Secrets of Mount Sinai: The Story of the World's Oldest Bible—Codex Sinaiticus* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1986) 99. A later editor of Sinaiticus began a system of chapters in Acts 1–15 that was not continued (Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (New York/London: Oxford University, 1964) 22. On the order of the books of the Old Testament in Vaticanus compared with their respective orders in Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus, see Greg Coswell, 'The Order of the Books in the Greek Old Testament', *JETS* 52 (2009) 449–66.

2 For a table of contents of codex Alexandrinus, see Theodor Zahn, *Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons* (Erlangen und Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1890) 2/1, 288–9.

NT verse divisions were first established by Robert Etienne (Stephanus), for his Greek and Latin edition of the NT published in Geneva in 1551.[3]

2. Purposes and Significance of Old Greek Divisions

This article focuses on the third system above, the chapter divisions of codex Alexandrinus. Attention to the Old Greek Divisions is warranted because the pervasiveness of these divisions in manuscripts in the fifth and following centuries provides the closest thing to a normative editorial perspective on the gospels in the patristic period and late antiquity. As noted above, the Old Greek Divisions are signified in the most widely used scholarly edition of the Greek NT, Nestle-Aland[27]. Nevertheless, they are rarely cited or discussed by exegetes and text critics.[4] Unlike the Eusebian Canons, which are generally understood,[5] the origins and purposes of the Old Greek Divisions remain obscure.[6] The present state of knowledge of the text of the NT is unable to shed further light on the origins of the Old Greek Divisions.[7] Analysis of the Divisions themselves,

3 These five systems have been synthesized from Bruce M. Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible: An Introduction to Greek Palaeography* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University, 1981) 40–2; Metzger, *Text of the New Testament*, 22–5; H. K. McArthur, 'The Earliest Divisions of the Gospels', *Studia Evangelica*, iii, Part 2 (ed. F. L. Cross; Texte und Untersuchungen 88; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1964) 266–72; and J. Harold Greenlee, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism* (Peabody: Hendrickson, rev. ed. 1995) 63–4.

4 The following monographs omit reference to chapter divisions. Frederic G. Kenyon, *The Text of the Greek Bible: A Student's Handbook* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1953); J. Harold Greenlee, *Scribes, Scrolls, and Scripture: A Student's Guide to New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985); Greenlee, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*; Philip Comfort, *Encountering the Manuscripts* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005). David C. Parker, *An Introduction to the New Testament Manuscripts and their Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2008) 316, contains a brief paragraph on Old Greek Divisions; and Kurt and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament. An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism*[2] (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Leiden: Brill, 1989) 252, do not expand beyond what is offered in the introduction of Nestle-Aland[27] (78–9).

5 Eusebius's explanatory letter to Carpianus and the 10 canonical tables are set forth in Nestle-Aland[27], 82–9 (an English translation of the letter can be found in H. H. Oliver, *NovT* 3 [1959] 138–45). Further description and discussion of the Eusebian Canons can be found in Metzger, *Text of the New Testament*, 24–5; Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible*, 42; and especially Hermann Freiherr von Soden, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments in ihrer ältesten erreichbaren Textgestalt*, Band I (Berlin: Alexander Duncker, 1902) 388–402.

6 The chapter divisions of Vaticanus are equally obscure, of course, but their obscurity is of less consequence for scholarly investigation since the Vaticanus divisions were rarely reproduced in the subsequent manuscript tradition.

7 It is virtually certain that the Old Greek Divisions did not originate with the evangelists. Among the numerous papyrus fragments, no extant gospel text contains numbered divisions before the fourth century. Legal documents in the Hellenistic world were often divided into chapter units, but there is no evidence that such divisions were applied to Christian literature

however, can shed significant light on the hermeneutical principles by which they were structured. The most dominant structural principle evident in the Old Greek Divisions is a distinctive Christological emphasis, as signified by the crucial role that Jesus' miracles and parables played in demarcating Divisions, by the precision evident in the Synoptic passion narratives, and by the intentional linkage of the passion and resurrection narratives in the Divisions of all four gospels.

3. The Relation of Old Greek Divisions to Early Christian Lectionary Units

Before turning specifically to the hermeneutical principles by which the Old Greek Divisions were structured, it is necessary to consider a prior question, namely, whether Old Greek Divisions were formed for lectionary purposes. Torah (and usually Prophets) were customarily read in Jewish synagogue services (Luke 4.16-21; Acts 13.15, 27; 15.21),[8] a custom that was continued in Christian churches from the apostolic era onward (Col 4.16; 1 Thess 5.27). In mid-second century, Justin Martyr attests that on Sundays 'the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits', followed by verbal instruction by the president.[9] In the early third century, Hippolytus reports that readers of Scripture are appointed by the bishop, and that for a period of three years catechumens must be exposed to the reading of Scripture.[10] The *Apostolic Constitutions* of the fourth century prescribe 'reading of the Law and Prophets and of our letters, acts and gospels'.[11] Public reading of Scripture was a standard component of worship from the inception of Christianity.

Old Greek Divisions can scarcely have been designed for such lections, however. This conclusion is supported by three observations. First, there is no evidence of standard gospel lections before the fourth century at the earliest. Justin's reference to reading 'as long as time permits' implies that lections were not

before the fourth century. Like early Christian documents in general, the autographs and earliest copies of the gospels would have been composed as single blocks of continuous text. The differences between the division of the gospels in Vaticanus and Alexandrinus are difficult, if not impossible, to explain if both codices were copied from prototypes that contained chapter divisions. The editorial differences between the two manuscripts are readily explainable, however, if they derived from subsequent textual editions (on the foregoing, see McArthur, 'Earliest Divisions of the Gospels', 266–8). The Old Greek Divisions must have derived from a respected source, authority, or locale, however, for they are a standard feature, with little or no variation, in manuscripts of the gospels from the fifth century onwards (see von Soden, *Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, 402–3).

8 See Michael Graves, 'The Public Reading of Scripture in Early Judaism', *JETS* 50 (2007) 467–87.

9 *1 Apol.* 67.

10 *Apos. Trad.* 11, 17.

11 *Apos. Const.* 8.5.11.

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regimented in his day, but determined by the discretion of individual congregations and by time constraints in worship services. Even in the third century the liturgical church calendar still existed in rudimentary form.[12] The earliest extant lectionary evidence is the old Armenian lectionary list of the fifth century, which coincides almost exactly with the catechetical readings of Cyril of Jerusalem in the previous century. Neither of these lists, however, corresponds closely with chapter divisions of Alexandrinus or Vaticanus.[13] There is no evidence that the capitulation of either Alexandrinus or Vaticanus corresponded to known lectionary readings in the patristic period.

Second, in order to satisfy the lectionary hypothesis, Old Greek Divisions would presumably need to be of lengths appropriate for public worship. The lengths of the Divisions differ greatly, however.[14] Three of the Old Greek Divisions consist of a single verse,[15] and another of only two verses,[16] whereas in the Gospel of John four divisions include 80-plus verses, the longest of which extends to 168 verses.[17] Such discrepancies stretch the lectionary hypothesis beyond plausibility.

Third, the beginnings of each gospel are unnumbered in the Old Greek Divisions. Without numerical identification these divisions could not have been listed in lectionary tables. It is difficult to imagine the early church excluding Matthew 1, Mark 1.1-22; Luke 1, and John 1 from public worship.[18] The above

12 Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, vol. 1. *The Biblical Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 344–5.

13 E. Yarnold, 'Liturgy and Bible', *Encyclopedia of the Early Church* (ed. Angelo Di Bernardino; 2 vols., New York: Oxford University, 1992) 1.504.

14 See McArthur's discussion of this point in 'Earliest Divisions of the Gospels', 268–70.

15 Mark #34 = 11.25; Luke #66 = 19.12; John #12 = 12.3.

16 Matt #8 = 8.14–15.

17 John #9 = 6.16–8.59.

18 The introductions of the four gospels in the Old Greek Divisions remain a conundrum. The observation of McArthur, 'Earliest Divisions of the Gospels', 271, that 'the custom of dividing materials into numbered sections (κεφάλαια) began in pre-Christian legal documents' and that '[a]s this mode of division acquired popularity in the second and third centuries it was transferred to other forms of literature including the Gospels' speaks to the issue, though (as McArthur admits) it does not resolve it. With regard to the NT as a whole, the Old Greek Divisions introduce books in three different ways: (1) with no introductions, (2) with brief introductions, and (3) with extended introductions. With regard to #1, seven books have no introductions. The Acts of the Apostles, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, and Revelation begin the first chapter of the Old Greek Divisions with the first verse. With regard to #2, the introductory unnumbered sections of the 13 Pauline letters, 2–3 John, and Jude all agree exactly or closely with the introductory salutations of modern editions of the Bible. The only minor exception to this rule is Romans, which stretches the introduction to the first 17 verses. This is longer than the introduction of Romans in modern editions, but it is not implausible. With regard to #3, the Old Greek Divisions endowed all four gospels with extended introductions. The Divisions begin the first chapters of Matthew, Luke, and John with the second chapters in modern editions, and the first chapter of Mark at 1.23. Of

evidence renders the lectionary hypothesis highly implausible. Old Greek Divisions of appropriate length and theme may have served occasionally or even regularly as lections in worship, but that cannot have been the *purpose* of their establishment.

4.1. *Jesus as the Organizational Hermeneutic of the Old Greek Divisions*

The most distinctive feature of the Old Greek Divisions is the tendency to begin chapters with a teaching or action of Jesus. Often, it is not 'plot' that begins Old Greek Divisions, but the point at which Jesus emerges as the acting or speaking subject. Of the 217 gospel Divisions, fully one half (110) begin with either an action or word of Jesus.[19]

The most common action with which chapters begin are miracles. There are a total of 63 miracles in the four gospels: 19 in Matthew, 18 in Mark, 19 in Luke, and seven in John.[20] Sixty of the 63 miracles commence new chapters in the Old Greek

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the above three conventions, only the second corresponds to modern practice. The first and third conventions continue to baffle modern literary instincts.

19 26 chapters in Matthew begin with a word or deed of Jesus, 35 in Mark, 44 in Luke, and five in John.

20 Many of the miracles are shared in common by two or more evangelists. The miracles are here listed not by their parallels, but by occurrence in each gospel in order to indicate where new chapters commence.

Matthew: cleansing leper, 8.1-4; healing centurion's son, 8.5-13; healing Peter's mother-in-law, 8.14-18; healing demoniac, 8.28–9.1; healing paralytic, 9.2-8; healing Jairus's daughter, 9.18-19; healing hemorrhaging woman, 9.20-26; healing two blind men, 9.27-31; exorcism, 9.32-34; exorcism, 12.22-24; healing man with withered hand, 12.9-14; feeding five thousand, 14.15-21; walking on water and rescuing Peter from drowning, 14.22-33; healing daughter of Syrophoenician woman, 15.22-28; feeding four thousand, 15.32-39; healing epileptic boy, 17.14-20; healing blind man at Jericho, 20.29-34; withering fig tree, 21.18-22; opening of tombs in Jerusalem, 27.52-53.

Mark: exorcism, 1.23-26; healing Peter's mother-in-law, 1.29-34; cleansing leper, 1.40-42; healing paralytic, 2.3-12; healing man with withered hand, 3.1-6; many exorcisms, 3.7-12; healing demoniac, 5.1-21; healing Jairus's daughter, 5.22-24; healing hemorrhaging woman, 5.25-43; feeding five thousand, 6.34-56; walking on water, 6.47-56; healing daughter of Syrophoenician woman, 7.24-30; healing deaf man, 7.31-37; feeding four thousand, 8.1-9; healing blind man, 8.22-26; healing epileptic boy, 9.17-27; healing blind man at Jericho, 10.46-52; withering fig tree, 11.12-26.

Luke: exorcism, 4.33-37; healing Peter's mother-in-law, 4.38-39; miraculous catch of fish, 5.4-11; cleansing leper, 5.12-17; healing paralytic, 5.18-26; healing man with withered hand, 6.6-12; healing centurion's son, 7.1-10; raising boy at Nain from dead, 7.11-17; healing demoniac, 8.27-39; healing Jairus's daughter, 8.40-42; healing hemorrhaging woman, 8.43-56; feeding five thousand, 9.12-17; healing epileptic boy, 9.38-45; exorcism, 11.14; healing woman ill for 18 years, 13.10-17; healing man with dropsy, 14.2-6; healing 10 lepers, 17.11-19; healing blind man at Jericho, 18.35-43; healing severed ear of servant, 22.51.

Divisions, although in some instances miscellaneous material is appended to a miracle in the same chapter. There is a 95% chance, in other words, that a miracle will commence an Old Greek Division. Only three miracles do not commence new Divisions: the report of Jesus' exorcisms in Mark 3.7-12, the healing of the severed ear of the high priest's servant at the arrest of Jesus in Luke 22.51, and the opening of the tombs at the crucifixion in Matt 27.52-53. Each of these exceptions can be explained. Regarding the first, modern exegetes normally view Mark 3.7-12 as a narrative summary of Jesus' miraculous activity, and ancient editors evidently also regarded it likewise, rather than an account of a miracle. Regarding the second, the healing of the severed ear at the arrest of Jesus is set within the passion narratives, which are the most highly structured of the Old Greek Divisions.[21] The editors evidently made an exception of not forming a chapter of a single verse in this case in order to avoid further disruption of the synchronization of Luke's passion narrative with Matthew's. Finally, the opening of the tombs at the crucifixion in Matt 27.52-53 is the most instructive of the three exceptions. It is technically not a miracle of Jesus, since Jesus had already died on the cross. It therefore seems evident that Old Greek Divisions commenced not with miracles in general, but with miracles of *Jesus*. With these three exceptions, every miracle of Jesus commences a new chapter in the Old Greek Divisions. This rule is adhered to so rigidly that coherent narratives are sometimes disrupted. The healing of the hemorrhaging woman, for example, is a separate chapter in all three Synoptics, even though it wrenches the woman from the flanking stories of Jairus's daughter. The significance of Jesus' miracles for the formation of Old Greek Divisions is demonstrated with special clarity in the Fourth Gospel. The Gospel of John contains seven miracle accounts, all of which occur in the first half of the gospel. The absence of miracles in the latter half of the gospel (and the complete absence of parables in the Fourth Gospel) deprived the Old Greek Divisions of their chief chapter demarcators. As a result, the remainder of John 13–21 is divided in only *three* chapters averaging one hundred verses each.

The most common speech form with which the Old Greek Divisions begin chapters are Jesus' parables. Like miracles, every major parable begins a new chapter in the Old Greek Divisions. In Matthew this occurs with 11 parables; in Mark with two; in Luke with 13; and with none in John.[22] The Divisions make a

John: changing water to wine, 2.1-11; healing official's son, 4.46-54; healing paralytic at pool of Bethesda, 5.5-16; feeding five thousand, 6.5-15; walking on water, 6.16-21; healing blind man, 9.1-41; raising Lazarus from dead, 11.1-44.

21 See section 4.3.

22 Some parables are shared in common by two or more evangelists. Parables are here listed not by their parallels, but by occurrence in each gospel in order to indicate where new chapters commence.

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distinction between major and minor parables, however. Major parables without exception begin new chapters, whereas brief parables, picturesque sayings, or illustrations of Jesus do not. It is difficult, especially in brief sayings, to differentiate precisely among parables, picturesque sayings, illustrations, and so forth.[23] The Old Greek Divisions regard a parable as a self-contained story long enough to entail plot development. Shorter exceptions to this rule were either not considered parables, or not significant enough to begin new chapters. When a shorter parable is set within a series of parables (e.g., Mark 4.3-34; Matt 13.3-58), or when two shorter parables are joined consecutively (e.g., Tower Builder, Luke 14.28-30, and Warring King, Luke 14.31-33; Lost Sheep, Luke 15.3-7, and Lost Coin, Luke 15.8-10), only the first parable will begin the new chapter division.

Old Greek Divisions may also append miscellaneous material to chapters begun with parables. Thus, Matthew #38 begins with the parable of the Lost Sheep (Matt 18.12-14), to which are appended three independent sayings of Jesus dealing with a brother who sins (18.15-18), the virtue of agreement among followers of Christ (18.19-20), and forgiveness (18.21-22). Parables, and especially shorter parables, thus often commence a didactic miscellany of Jesus' teaching.[24] With regard to the Gospel of John, only two stories—the Good Shepherd (10.1-18) and True Vine (15.1-8)—can potentially qualify as parables. Neither commences a new chapter in the Old Greek Divisions, which indicates that they were not considered parables.

That Old Greek Divisions begin with a teaching or action of Jesus may not seem entirely surprising, since Jesus is the sole protagonist in the gospels. Consider, however, how the following evidence further accentuates the role of Jesus in the Old Greek Divisions. There are 31 instances in addition to the 110 mentioned above where the Old Greek Divisions begin not with the contextual

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Matthew: the Sower, 13.3-9; Lost Sheep, 18.12-14; Unmerciful Servant, 18.23-35; Laborers in the Vineyard, 20.1-16; Two Sons, 21.28-32; Wicked Tenants, 21.33-46; Wedding Banquet, 22.1-14; Thief in the Night, 24.42-44; Wise and Foolish Maidens, 25.1-13; Talents and Pounds, 25.14-30; Sheep and Goats, 25.31-46.

Mark: the Sower, 4.2-9; Wicked Tenants, 12.1-12.

Luke: the Sower, 8.4-8; Good Samaritan, 10.30-37; Rich Fool, 12.16-21; Wedding Banquet, 14.16-24; Tower Builder and Warring King, 14.28-33; Lost Sheep, 15.3-7; Prodigal Son, 15.11-32; Unjust Steward, 16.1-8; Rich Man and Lazarus, 16.19-31; Unjust Judge, 18.1-8; Pharisee and Tax Collector, 18.9-14; Wicked Tenants, 20.9-19; Talents and Pounds, 19.12-27.

23 Whereas a number of shorter sayings are generally regarded as parables (e.g., Seed Growing Secretly, Mark 4.26-29; or Mustard Seed, Mark 4.30-32//Matt 13.31-32//Luke 13.18-19), several others (e.g., Unshrunk Cloth, Mark 2.21; Strong Man, Mark 3.27; Faithful and Unfaithful Steward, Matt 24.45-51//Luke 12.42-46; Humble Servant, Luke 17.7-10) are uncertain.

24 Von Soden, *Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, 424, rightly notes, 'Die Hauptsorge des Einteilers ist, dass die Anfänge der parallelen κεφ[άλαια] in den verschiedenen Evv sich decken'.

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framework with which pericopes in either Nestle-Aland[27] or the NRSV begin, but where the narrative perspective focuses specifically on Jesus.[25] Modern editions of the gospels typically form pericopes according to plot, i.e., setting of context (A), followed by role of Jesus (B). The Old Greek Divisions, however, frequently relegate setting of context (A) to the conclusion of a previous chapter, and begin a new chapter with the role of Jesus (B). A striking example occurs in the call of Simon Peter in Luke 5.1-11, which forms a single pericope in virtually all modern Bibles. In the Old Greek Divisions the setting of the scene in the first three verses—a total of 63 words—belongs to the preceding chapter. A new chapter begins only with Jesus' challenge to Peter in 5.4 to launch out into the deep and lower the fishing nets. Other examples illustrate the same principle. In the miracle of the paralytic who was brought to Jesus by four friends, in all three Synoptics the Old Greek Divisions begin a new chapter not with the gathering of the crowd in a house in Capernaum to hear Jesus teach (so NA[27], NRSV), but at the point where Jesus personally encounters the paralytic (Matt 9.2; Mark 2.3; Luke 5.18). In the eschatological discourse, the Old Greek Divisions begin a new chapter not with the description of the temple buildings (so NA[27], NRSV), but with Jesus' pronouncements regarding the future from the Mount of Olives (Matt 24.3; Mark 13.3). The Parable of the Sower begins in the Old Greek Divisions not with the gathering of the crowds beside the lake (Matt 13.1-2; Mark 4.1; see Luke 8.1-3), but with the parable itself (Matt 13.3ff; Mark 4.2ff; Luke 8.4ff). Finally, in the woes of Luke 11.45-54, the Old Greek Divisions begin a new chapter not with the contextual setting at v. 45 (so NA[27], NRSV), but with Jesus' denunciation of the scribes in v. 46. In 31 instances the Old Greek Divisions accentuate the significance of Jesus by beginning new chapters with his words or deeds rather than with narrative context or 'plot'. In each instance, narrative coherence is disrupted in order to commence a new chapter with Jesus as the speaking or acting subject.

In 141 out of 217 instances, therefore, the Old Greek Divisions commence new chapters according to the word or action of Jesus, even when these chapter breaks do not correspond to the most natural development of the narrative. To be sure, many chapters begin at natural transitions—according to modern literary perspectives. Two-thirds of the chapters, however, betray a *Tendenz* to emphasize the unique role of Jesus. They are concatenated either at a miracle or parable (or teaching) of Jesus. More remarkably, in 31 instances the emphasis disrupts the narrative flow of a pericope. In these 31 instances, especially, the Old Greek Divisions do not follow natural fault lines determined by plot, but create divisions

25 Five instances occur in Matthew (8.19; 9.2; 13.3; 19.3; 24.3), 14 in Mark (1.23, 40; 2.3; 4.2; 5.22; 6.7, 34, 47; 8.15; 9.17; 10.2; 13.3; 14.3, 18), eight in Luke (5.4, 18; 6.13; 8.27; 9.38; 11.46; 15.3; 19.29), and four in John (5.5; 6.5; 12.3; 13.3).

on the basis of Jesus' miracles or parables. A Christological hermeneutic is thus evident in the formation of the Old Greek Divisions.[26]

4.2. *Didactic Units in the Old Greek Divisions*

Major units of dominical teaching also comprise single chapters in the Old Greek Divisions, especially in the First and Fourth Gospels. This would indicate that the designation of teaching units was one among several objectives of the Divisions. In Matthew, the following units comprise single chapters: the Sermon on the Mount, 5–7; teachings related to the mission of the Twelve, 10.1–11.1; teachings related to John the Baptist, 11.2–12.8; parables, 13.3-58; denunciations of scribes and Pharisees, 23.1–24.2; and the eschatological discourse, 24.3-35. Only two didactic units in Mark (both of which parallel Matthew) comprise chapters in the Old Greek Divisions: the parables, 4.2-34// Matt 13.13-58; and the eschatological discourse, 13.2–14.2//Matt 24.3-35. The material in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount that is dispersed in several Lucan chapters does not comprise individual chapters in the Old Greek Divisions of Luke. The only didactic unit in Luke to comprise a single chapter is the eschatological discourse in 21.8-38, which parallels Matt 24.3-35 and Mark 13.22–14.2.[27]

As noted earlier, the Old Greek Divisions of John are the most extraordinary of the four gospels. Slightly shorter in length than the Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of John is divided, in contrast to Matthew's 68 chapters, into only 18 chapters. John's long discourses comprise the largest chapters in the Old Greek Divisions. The four largest chapters are 6.16–8.59 (168 verses), 9.1–10.42 (83 verses), 13.3–15.25 (92 verses), and 15.26–19.37 (138 verses). Each of these chapters is an aggregate of narratives interwoven with didactic material on a variety of topics. We have seen that Jesus' miracles and parables demarcated predictable and convenient chapter divisions of the Synoptic Gospels. The wholesale absence of parables in John and the absence of miracles in its latter half resulted, by contrast, in several massive and unwieldy chapter divisions of the Fourth Gospel.

4.3. *Synoptic Passion Narratives in the Old Greek Divisions*

The Old Greek Divisions of Matthew's passion narrative display an unusually high degree of precision and emerge as the prototype for the passion narratives of Mark and Luke. In two instances, all three Synoptics form separate

26 This corresponds with the hermeneutic that prevailed in patristic exegesis as a whole, which 'was first and foremost Christological', so Arthur A. Just Jr, *Luke* (ACCS 3; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003) xx. On Christological emphases in the spiritual exegesis of the Fathers, see Robert Wilken, *Remembering the Christian Past* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 107–19.

27 Matthew's six major teaching chapters in the Old Greek Divisions versus Luke's one teaching chapter would seem to argue against an awareness of a common sayings source behind the First and Third Gospels. The two gospels that according to the 'Q' hypothesis are the most similar are the two that the Old Greek Divisions capitulate most differently.

chapters of the same material under the same title. The first is the preparation for the Passover, entitled περι (της ετοιμασιας) του πασχα, which forms chapter #63 in Matt 26.17-25, chapter #45 in Mark 14.12-17, and chapter #76 in Luke 22.1-23. The second, entitled περι της αιτησεως του κυριακου and devoted to Joseph of Arimathea, the burial of Jesus, and the resurrection, is the final chapter (#68) in Matthew 27.57–28.20, the final chapter (#48) in Mark 15.41–16.8, and the penultimate chapter (#82) in Luke 23.50–24.13.

In the remaining passion material, the harmonization of Mark with Matthew is clearly evident. Matthew chapters #64 (26.26-46) and #65 (26.47-67), comprising the Last Supper, Jesus' prediction of the apostles' apostasy, his prayer in Gethsemane, arrest, trial before the Sanhedrin, and mockery, are combined in a single Markan chapter (#46; 14.18-65). Matthew chapters #66 (26.69–27.2) and #67 (27.3-56), comprising Peter's denial, Jesus' trial before Pilate, flagellation, crucifixion, and women at the tomb, are likewise combined in a single Markan chapter (#47; 14.66–15.41). A perfect symmetry results.

Matthew #63	=	Mark #45
Matthew #64 Matthew #65	>	Mark #46
Matthew #66 Matthew #67	>	Mark #47
Matthew #68	=	Mark #48

The harmonization of Luke with Matthew is less obvious, due to the additional material in Luke's passion narrative. In so far as possible, however, the Old Greek Divisions order Luke's final chapters in accordance with the primacy of Matthew. The introductory and concluding episodes of the passion accounts, as noted above, form identical book ends in all three Synoptics. The intervening chapters divide Matthew at natural fault lines in the narrative, and Luke is divided where necessary in order to harmonize with Matthew. At some points Luke's divisions violate narrative flow. The most egregious violation involves breaking the interrogation of Jesus by Antipas in half (23.11 begins Luke #79). Matthew #64 and Luke #76 share the Last Supper; Matthew #65 and Luke #78 share Judas's betrayal and the trial before the Sanhedrin; Matthew #66 and Luke #78 share Peter's denial and trial before Pilate; and Matthew #67 and Luke #79, #80, and #81 share the continuation of the trial before Pilate, crucifixion, tearing of the temple curtain, and observers at Jesus' death. Luke #77 (the dispute about greatness, 22.24-30) is the only Lucan Division unrelated to Matthew, because its Synoptic parallels in Matt 20.24-28 and Mark 10.41-45 appear before the passion narratives.

The capitulation of the passion narratives of the Fourth Gospel diverges greatly from that of the Synoptics. The five Matthean Divisions that comprise events from

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the Passover through Jesus' death on the cross (#63-#67; 26.17–27.56) are contained in a single Johannine chapter (#17; 15.26–19.37). Apparently realizing the inability of juxtaposing the Fourth Gospel with Matthew in the same way that Mark and Luke can be juxtaposed with Matthew, the Old Greek Divisions opted for a colossal chapter of 138 verses, entitled περι του παρακλητου.

Although the terms 'passion' or 'passion narrative' do not appear in the titles of the Old Greek Divisions, the passion narratives in the Synoptics were nevertheless carefully capitulated. Their precision may even suggest that they were the first chapters in the gospels to be formed. The harmonization of Mark's passion narrative to Matthew's appears particularly intentional and successful. The primacy of Matthew's narrative is especially evident in the passion accounts, although it is not limited to them, for there are instances elsewhere where a chapter title that is shared by all three Synoptics is relevant only to Matthew.[28]

The last chapters of the Old Greek Divisions also link the resurrection indivisibly with the cross. In all four gospels, the capitulation of the resurrection narratives begins not with Easter morning, but in the passion narratives. The final chapters of Matthew #68 (27.57–28.20), Mark #48 (15.42–16.8), Luke #82 (23.50–24.12), and John #18 (19.38–21.25) all anchor the resurrection account to the story of the burial of Jesus by Joseph of Arimathea. This unanimous division indicates that the Old Greek Divisions did not regard the resurrection as an epilogue or addendum to the gospel, but as a hermeneutical whole with the passion.[29]

4.4. *Synoptic Purposes of the Old Greek Divisions*

One purpose of the Old Greek Divisions was to identify material common to two or more gospels.[30] The assignment of the same title for corresponding material in two, three, or all four gospels signifies an interest in the Old Greek Divisions in rendering elementary assistance in comprehending the thematic overlaps in the gospels. The 'synoptic purpose' of the Old Greek Divisions is further signified by the fact that nearly three-quarters of the Divisions begin at the same point as do the Eusebian Canons, whose defining purpose was to identify material correspondences among the four gospels.[31] This correspondence leaves little doubt that identifying 'synoptic' material was one objective of the

28 E.g., Mark #26 (9.17-32) and Luke #31 (9.38-45) are assigned the title περι του σεληνιαζομενου, which can only derive from Matthew #35 (17.14-23).

29 Von Soden, *Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, 428: 'In [der Ostergeschichte] werden die den einzelnen Evv eigentümlichen Osterscenen nicht ausgelöst; sie bilden einander ergänzend ein zusammenhängendes Ganzes'.

30 The de-emphasis of the synoptic purposes of the Old Greek Divisions in McArthur, 'Earliest Divisions of the Gospels', 270–1, is countered and corrected in von Soden, *Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, 420–8.

31 In 159 instances Old Greek Divisions commence at the same points as do Eusebian Canons.

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Old Greek Divisions.[32] Nevertheless, the Old Greek Divisions do not simply assume and repeat the Eusebian Canons. There are 217 Divisions compared to 355 Canons, which means that three out of five Divisions exceed the lengths of their respective Canons. Moreover, the Canons do not begin with miracles, parables, and with Jesus as the speaking and acting subject as characteristically as do the Divisions (see section 4.1). Despite significant correspondence between the two systems of capitulation, the Christological hermeneutic is not as evident in the Eusebian Canons as it is in Old Greek Divisions.

4.5. *Titles in the Old Greek Divisions*

Of greater importance than the synoptic purpose of the Old Greek Divisions are their various titles, which consist chiefly of proper nouns. Although the Gospels of Matthew and John contain the greatest number of didactic units in the gospels, the designations of these units in the Old Greek Divisions regularly bear the names of persons, objects, or events rather than thematic or conceptual titles. Rare exceptions to this occur in Matthew 24, περι της συντειλιας, 'On the Consummation'; or perhaps in Matt 4.17, περι διδασκαλιας του σωτηρος, 'The Teaching of the Savior'. Otherwise, gospel divisions that bear abstract subtitles in modern translations are regularly identified by concrete descriptors in the Old Greek Divisions. The Sermon on the Mount is entitled περι των μακαρισμων; the Feeding of the Five Thousand, 'The Five Loaves and Two Fishes'; the parable on compassion in Matt 18.23–19.2, 'The Man Who Owed a Thousand Talents'; the parable on the final judgment in Matt 25.31–26.5, 'On the Coming of the Messiah'. The titles of the six chapters in the Gospel of John that contain Jesus' rarified theological teachings in the second half of the gospel are: #13 (12.4-13), 'On What Judas Said'; #14 (12.14-19), 'On the Donkey'; #15 (12.20–13.2), 'The Greeks Who Approached'; #16 (13.3–15.25), 'The Basin'; #17 (15.26–19.37), 'On the Paraclete'; #18 (19.38–21.25), 'The Request for the Body of the Lord'.[33]

From a literary perspective, the Old Greek Division titles emphasize the *narrative* nature of the gospel over its didactic properties, even when these titles result in superficial relationships between title and content. Indeed, as noted in section 4.1, the Old Greek Divisions emphasize the *Christological* narrative nature of the gospels. Even when sayings and teachings are the subject of a given chapter, the chapter titles, not unlike the captions in a modern scrapbook or photo album, invariably bear proper nouns. The many gnostic gospels of the second and following centuries located the essence of Jesus in the purveyance

32 It is beyond the scope of this study to investigate the possible relationship of the Old Greek Divisions and the Eusebian Canons. For a not implausible argument that the Divisions *ante*-date the Eusebian Canons, see von Soden, *Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, 430–2.

33 Von Soden, *Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, 423–4, likewise notes the focus on proper nouns rather than on conceptual 'Stoff' in the chapter titles.

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of wisdom. The titular nature of the Old Greek Divisions conveys a very different understanding of the nature and effects of a canonical gospel. Unlike the primary association of Jesus with mysteries, esoterica, cosmologies, and paradoxes in Gnosticism, the sequential recitation of the Old Greek Division titles portrays the essential significance of Jesus in terms of a narrative of events.[34]

5. Conclusion

The most significant hermeneutical principle to emerge from the foregoing analysis is that the Old Greek Divisions reflect primarily Christological rather than liturgical interests. The Gospel of Luke summarizes the life of Jesus as one 'mighty in work and word' (24.19).[35] The works and words of Jesus were determinative in the Old Greek Divisions, for the gospels were principally capitulated on the basis of his miracles and parables. So important was this principle that in three-score instances new gospel chapters begin not with the setting of the plot, but with Jesus as the speaking and acting subject. These criteria are more evident and determinative for the formation of Old Greek Divisions than were putative lectionary interests. Collections of Jesus' teachings in the Synoptics, such as Matthew's Sermon on the Mount, also played a role in the formation of Old Greek Divisions. Nevertheless, the massive chapters of the Fourth Gospel that resulted because of the absence of miracles and parables indicate that didactic criteria played a secondary role to narrative criteria in the formation of Old Greek Divisions. The unusual precision and symmetry in the Synoptic passion narratives, and the careful linkage of the resurrection accounts in all four gospels to the passion narratives, reveal the special significance of the cross and resurrection in the Old Greek Divisions. Concrete descriptor titles of the various Divisions further reflect narrative determinations rather than didactic themes and concepts. A composite analysis of the Old Greek Divisions of the gospels attests to an ecclesiastical hermeneutic that was not only Christological, but Incarnational.

34 Von Soden, *Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, 423, recognizes the insignificance of teaching units in the Old Greek Divisions. 'Die Redeabschnitte interessieren ihn wenig; bei ihnen müht er sich nicht um eine Einteilung…'

35 δυνατὸς ἐν ἔργῳ καὶ λόγῳ. Similarly, Acts 1.1 speaks of everything Jesus began ποιεῖν τε καὶ διδάσκειν. On the role of the works and words of Jesus in the earliest oral traditions of the gospels, particularly as attested by Luke 1.1-4 and Papias (Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.4-5), see Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006) 15–21.