

Time and Order in the Circumstantial Participles of Mark and Luke

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Stanley Porter has suggested that the order of circumstantial participles in relation to the verbs on which they depend tends to indicate how they relate temporally: antecedent if before the primary verb and contemporaneous or subsequent if following. Grammarians whom he cites as having partly recognized this do not really anticipate his view. More important, numerous examples of circumstantial participles in the Gospels of Mark and Luke show a different pattern and fail to sustain his formulation. Aorist circumstantial participles typically precede their primary verbs but may be temporally antecedent to or contemporaneous with them. Present circumstantial participles may precede or follow their primary verbs and may be temporally antecedent to or contemporaneous with them regardless of order. Perfect circumstantial participles, whether before or after their primary verbs, are typically contemporaneous with them. The careful exegete should focus on the context alone to determine if any given circumstantial participle is temporally antecedent to, contemporaneous with, or even subsequent to its primary verb.

Key Words: circumstantial participles, order of participle and verb, time in participles, NT exegesis

Grammarians of Koine Greek often discuss whether there are any objective indicators of the relative time of circumstantial participles. One view is that the tenses of these participles inherently imply relative time, with aorist participles being antecedent to, and present and perfect participles contemporaneous with the time of the primary verbs to which they are linked.¹ It is not my purpose, here, to deal with this, though I may observe in passing that I do not think NT usage sustains this view.

Instead, it is my purpose to deal with a newer view: namely, that the *order* of the participle and its primary verb indicate the relative time between them. According to this view, participles that precede their primary verbs tend to be relatively antecedent to them, while participles that follow their primary verbs in the sentence tend to be either temporally contemporaneous with or subsequent to them. Stanley Porter believes that

1. I prefer "primary verb" to "main verb" because circumstantial participles are not always linked to finite verbs but may at times be secondary to (subordinate to) infinitives or other participles.

this pattern occurs often enough to signal a general intention on the part of the NT writers. If this is the case, the exegete should recognize this pattern and interpret accordingly.

My study of the participles of Mark and Luke, however, convinces me that this should not be taken into account in interpretation. My purpose in this article is to demonstrate that there are too many exceptions to this pattern to sustain it as intentionally significant.

Two caveats seem in order. First, because of the purpose of this article, I will at times comment on the temporal relationship between participles and their primary verbs even when temporal relationships are not intentionally significant in context. This arises from the nature of the issue being investigated; it does not indicate that Mark or Luke intended us to focus on the relative time of any given participle.

The second caveat is related. Commentators on the text often do not speak directly to the relative time of the circumstantial participle and the primary verbal form to which it is linked. One is left to discern what the interpreters think from the way they read or explain the passage. Consequently, though I attempt to be objective, I cannot guarantee that any commentator whom I cite favorably would agree with my view of the relative time of the participle being discussed.

BACKGROUND AND ASSUMPTIONS

One article can only cover so much, making it necessary to proceed with some things left undefended. First, I may observe that my study of participles grows out of research into contemporary verbal aspect theory as propounded (with important differences) by Stanley Porter, Buist Fanning, K. L. McKay, and others.² I will not expound on or defend this theory but assume—with some qualifications—that the new theory is essentially correct. I have published, elsewhere, an introduction to this theory and its unresolved issues, including extensive bibliographical citations and some evaluation and suggestions of my own.³

In summary, verbal aspect theory regards the Greek tenses as indicating the way the user of the verb subjectively views the action (*aspect* or *perspective*), rather than as an objective indication of any certain time or kind of action (*Aktionsart*). According to this theory, the aorist tense views the action from without, as whole act (“perfective” or wholistic), the present from within as in progress (“imperfective” or progressive), and the perfect as a state of being (“stative”). Perhaps the defense of this theory led Stanley Porter to the view that it is the *order* of participles—and thus not their *tense*—that is responsible for patterns of relative time.

2. Stanley E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with Reference to Tense and Mood* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989); Buist M. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990); K. L. McKay, *A New Syntax of the Verb in New Testament Greek* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994).

3. Robert E. Picirilli, “The Meaning of the Tenses in New Testament Greek: Where Are We?” *JETS* 48 (2005): 533–55.

Second, I can only briefly define my system of classifying participles, though I recognize with C. B. Williams that “before we can deal intelligently with the participles . . . we must decide on some principles of classification.”⁴ Participles are, in form and function, *verbal adjectives*. Accordingly, they should first be classified as in either the attributive or the predicate position—a formal or structural distinction that is usually (though not always) unambiguous. Predicate-position participles can then be further subdivided into two groups to reflect how they are *used*, thus a functional or semantic distinction that requires interpretation and is sometimes debatable.⁵ When *complementary* (or “supplementary,” including periphrastic constructions⁶), the participle is linked so closely to a verb that it “completes” that verb or combines with it to make what is essentially a single unit of thought. When *circumstantial* (or “adverbial,” including genitive absolutes⁷), it does not complete the primary verb but adds information that clarifies, often functioning more or less like an adverbial clause.⁸

This threefold classification of participles as attributive, (predicate) circumstantial, and (predicate) complementary is essentially the same as that followed by Blass, Debrunner, and Funk; and McKay.⁹ I have found it to work well for classifying the participles of Mark and Luke.¹⁰ As indicated, I will discuss only those I classify as circumstantial, because they are the ones most often involved in discussions of relative time.

4. Charles Bray Williams, *The Participle in the Book of Acts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1909), 1. I thank Paul Elbert for pointing me to this lesser-known work.

5. For a helpful discussion of the difference between structural and semantic distinctions, see Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 5–7.

6. I cannot discuss here the limited definition of a “periphrastic” construction in Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 452–54; compare idem, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament* (2nd ed.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 45–49. I reject it, as does McKay, *Syntax*, 9. Compare Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 311.

7. Like McKay (*Syntax*, 63, 64), I regard the genitive absolute as a special type of circumstantial participle; its phrase bears exactly the same *functional* relationship to the main clause as all circumstantial participles, the difference being that it (usually in the NT, all but twice in Luke, always in Mark; see Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 370) includes its own (genitive) “subject.” Some grammarians treat the genitive absolute separately; see Daniel B. Wallace, *The Basics of New Testament Syntax* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 284; and Porter, *Idioms*, 183, 184. Lest it appear that my argument depends on genitive absolutes, I will not use them to illustrate my points, though they are included whenever I give statistical information about circumstantial participles in the two Gospels.

8. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 622 (incl. n. 24), offers objections to the term *circumstantial*, but he is also aware of objections to *adverbial*, which he prefers (n. 26).

9. F. Blass, A. Debrunner, and Robert W. Funk (*A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* [Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961], 212–20) classify as *attributive*, *supplementary* (my “complementary”), and *circumstantial*; McKay (*Syntax*, 60, 61) states the same three classes and defines them briefly but appropriately. Compare A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934), 1105–30. This system does not include so-called independent (imperative) participles. None of these occurs in Mark or Luke. For discussion, see Porter, *Idioms*, 185, 186.

10. By this I mean that I am never left uncertain as to the validity of the categories, even though there is occasional uncertainty whether a given participle fits best into one category or another. Language is often subject to such ambiguities.

A third assumption is that there is no other objective indicator typically present in the Greek text to indicate the relative time between a circumstantial participle and its primary verb; as indicated above, this includes the tense of the participle. This means, then, that if neither the participle's tense nor its order in the sentence signals relative time, we are left to determine this, as objectively as we can, by context alone. Rodney Decker has noted that, often with participles, in contrast to the indicative, there are no temporal ("deictic") indicators in the text.¹¹

THE VIEW OF STANLEY PORTER

As noted above, Stanley Porter is a chief architect of contemporary verbal aspect theory. As something of a by-product of his studies, he has introduced the theory that the order of the circumstantial participle in the sentence usually indicates its time relative to that of its primary verb.¹² He discerns a significant tendency, in the NT, for circumstantial participles (he calls them "verb-modifying" or "so-called adverbial") to signal relative time by whether they precede or follow their primary verbs.¹³

If a participle occurs before the finite verb on which it depends (or another verb which forms the governing or head term of the construction¹⁴), the participle tends to refer to antecedent (preceding) action. If a participle occurs after the finite (or other) verb on which it depends, it tends to refer to concurrent (simultaneous) or subsequent (following) action.¹⁵

We must not overlook the "tends to": Porter acknowledges that this is "only a generalization, but one which holds in a surprisingly large proportion of instances where temporal reference is at issue." Indeed, he thinks this syntactical pattern, though not unanimous, "appears to be used to make relative statements about when the process is seen to have occurred" and that this "conforms to Grice's maxim of manner, in which conversation must be orderly."¹⁶

This view has not been widely discussed and may not have been formulated, as such, by anyone before Porter. He observes that it "has been recognized at least in part by" Moulton, Rose, Robertson, and Blass.¹⁷ My

11. Rodney Decker, *Temporal Deixis of the Greek Verb in the Gospel of Mark with Reference to Verbal Aspect* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 122.

12. Perhaps I should clarify that the issue, here, is *not* whether the action of circumstantial participles is in some time but whether their order in the clause signals this time. Most participles are in some time, really and in relation to that of their primary verbs.

13. Technically, participles do not modify verbs; nothing about them grammaticalizes such a relationship. It is the participial *phrase* (at times consisting only of the participle) that *functions* adverbially.

14. This refers to the fact that some primary verbs to which circumstantial participles are linked may be infinitives, subjunctives, imperatives, or even other participles.

15. Porter, *Idioms*, 188 (italics his).

16. Idem, *Verbal Aspect*, 381.

17. Ibid.

first task, then, was to check carefully these four sources; this led me to conclude that the case for their earlier recognition of this pattern is tenuous. If, indeed, these four recognized this “in part,” it was only in a very small way. I will deal with each individually.

Moulton merely explains that “the connotation of past time has largely fastened on this [the aorist] participle, through the idiomatic use in which it stands before an aorist indicative to qualify its action,” a phenomenon that “presumably . . . would happen less completely when the participle stood second”; he adds quickly that this “assumption” is not necessary and that, “in many cases, especially in the NT, the [aorist] participle and the main verb denote *coincident* or *identical* action”; of five examples he gives, two have the participle first and three afterward!¹⁸

Robertson cites this very passage from Moulton (misstating him) and observes for himself that it is “a characteristic of Luke’s style to use frequently the coincident participle (both aorist and present) placed after the principal verb”—where he is speaking especially of Acts.¹⁹ This is much narrower than the theory of Porter, who might have missed that Robertson already said, when pressing the point that aorist participles can commonly express antecedent or simultaneous action, that “the order of the part. is immaterial” and provided examples of coincident participles before and after their verbs.²⁰

Blass comes only a little nearer anticipating Porter. He observes that, when an aorist participle precedes a finite verb, it is “usually” antecedent, just as when two finite verbs appear in the same sentence the first is usually antecedent to the second. But he hastens to add that this is not necessarily so, in either case, and that if the participle is after the verb “it may happen . . . that the true sequence of time is not expressed.”²¹

Rose, on the other hand, deals only with participles in Thucydides, not in the NT. Furthermore, he says nothing like what Porter infers; he only proceeds to emphasize that, though “the ordinary use of the aorist participle is to express time prior to that of the main verb” and “that of the present to express time contemporaneous with the time of the main verb,” these notions are nothing more than inferences reflecting the nature of the tenses involved, and that this “is clearly seen when the aorist participle expresses time contemporaneous with or subsequent to, [and] the present participle time prior to or subsequent to, that of the main verb.”²² He

18. James Hope Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, vol. 1 (3rd ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1978), 130–31.

19. Robertson, *Grammar*, 1113.

20. *Ibid.*, 860–61.

21. Friedrich Blass, *Grammar of New Testament Greek* (trans. H. St. J. Thackeray; 2nd ed.; London: Macmillan, 1905), 197.

22. Jesse L. Rose, *The Durative and Aoristic Tenses in Thucydides* (Language Dissertation 35, Supplement to Language 18:1; Baltimore: Linguistic Society of America, 1942), 34. This is the page Porter refers to; not only did I find nothing here that refers to the order of participle and verb, I found nothing on this subject in the rest of Rose’s treatment.

makes no comments about order but provides examples both before and after verbs.

What these writers were contending for, then, falls very short of Porter's formulation. Indeed, they are recognizing nothing more than the tendency for conversation or narrative writing to be orderly. In this sense we may readily agree that, when two actions are mentioned in the same sentence, the one mentioned first will often have occurred first. But this flows from the language user's natural sense of orderliness and is ignored in so many cases that to formulate it as a conscious tendency or general principle is, I believe, an exaggeration that will tend to mislead the exegete. One may often provide a participle of prior cause, for example, after stating the main action in the primary verb. And when actions are contemporaneous, there may be any number of reasons for mentioning one or the other first. To illustrate, while it is obviously natural to say, "I am unworthy, kneeling before him, to untie his shoes" (Mark 1:7), it would likewise be reasonable to say, "I am unworthy to untie his shoes, kneeling before him"; and in both one would realize that the kneeling was subordinate to the untying and (immediately) prior to it.

THE EVIDENCE OF MARK AND LUKE

Whether Porter's theory is entirely new or not, the basic question is whether NT writers—Mark and Luke, in this case—had this in mind. Should we assume that circumstantial participles that precede their primary verbs usually also precede them in time and that those that follow usually temporally coincide with or follow their primary verbs? Was order consciously decided on that basis or deliberately intended to signal it, even usually?

A good place to begin is with a statistical report of the patterns involved. Of Mark's 562 and Luke's 1,068 participles, I have classified 357 (63.5%) and 608 (56.9%) as circumstantial, respectively.²³ Table 1 shows the incidence of order for these. Noteworthy, first, is that the characteristics of the two Gospels, in this respect, are very similar, both in their use of tenses in circumstantial participles and in whether they place them before or after their primary verbs. More important, for anyone aware of the temporal tendencies of present, aorist, and perfect participles, this table alone begins to raise doubt that order is a key to understanding the relative time of the participles. Specific examples will clarify and confirm this doubt.

Perfect-Tense Participles

To deal first with the smallest group: the *perfect* participles are almost evenly divided, and examination shows no temporal differences. For the

23. The numbers assume the critical text as it appears in UBS⁴, including both the longer and shorter endings of Mark. Without both endings, there are 540; the shorter ending adds one. My inclusion of both endings is for the purpose of having the largest "Markan" corpus possible—without implications for authenticity; thus "Mark," throughout, means this corpus.

TABLE 1. *The order of circumstantial participles in Mark and Luke*

<i>Participles</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>
Present		
before verb	44 (40.4%)	87 (36.6%)
after verb	65 (59.6%)	151 (63.4%)
Aorist		
before verb	232 (95.5%)	344 (95.3%)
after verb	11 (4.5%)	17 (4.7%)
Perfect		
before verb	2 (40%)	4 (44.4%)
after verb	3 (60%)	5 (55.6%)

perfect tense, which is stative, the time of the state of affairs is at issue,²⁴ and in all instances this is contemporaneous with the primary verb whether it precedes or follows it in order.²⁵ In the first two examples the participle follows the verb.²⁶

Mark 6:20: ὁ γὰρ Ἡρώδης ἐφοβεῖτο τὸν Ἰωάννην, εἰδὼς αὐτὸν ἄνδρα δίκαιον—For Herod was fearing John, *knowing* him [to be] a righteous man (cf. 12:24, 14:51).

Luke 1:11: ὄφθη δὲ αὐτῷ ἄγγελος κυρίου ἐστῶς ἐκ δεξιῶν τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου—And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, *standing* on the right side of the altar (cf. 1:3, 8:53, 16:20).

In the following two examples, the participle precedes the verb.

Mark 5:33: ἡ δὲ γυνή . . . , εἰδυῖα ὃ γέγονεν αὐτῇ, ἦλθεν—And the woman . . . , *knowing* what had happened to her, came (cf. 12:15).

Luke 18:13: ὁ δὲ τελώνης μακρόθεν ἐστῶς οὐκ ἤθελεν οὐδὲ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἐπῆραι—And the publican, *standing* afar, was not willing even to lift his eyes (cf. 9:47; 11:15, 21).

It should be obvious that the latter two examples, using exactly the same participles in exactly the same ways, depict a state as contemporaneous with the primary verbs as the first two.

24. Not the time of the prior event that produced the state, whenever that is implied; it isn't always.

25. To use the terminology of Porter and O'Donnell, then, it is *equiprobable* (more or less equally probable) that circumstantial perfect participles will occur before or after their verbs. See Stanley E. Porter and Matthew Brook O'Donnell, "The Greek Verbal Network Viewed from a Probabilistic Standpoint: An Exercise in Hallidayan Linguistics," *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 14 (2001): 3–41. It is, however, highly likely (*skewed*—in this instance, 100%) that they will be contemporaneous with their primary verbs, although the strength of that skewing may vary, depending on whether all will agree with my interpretations.

26. Throughout this article, I will use the convention of underlining the participle in question in the Greek text and italicizing it in the English translation. Translations will typically be "wooden"; the reader should understand that, to whatever degree my translations seem interpretive, they merely *reflect* my understanding of the text and do not provide any *basis* for or influence that understanding.

Present-Tense Participles

Present circumstantial participles show a similar freedom to precede or follow the primary verb without signaling temporal considerations. By nature they *tend* to be (but are not always) contemporaneous with their primary verbs, regardless of order; and many follow those verbs, which would fit well with Porter's view. But a number of present participles precede their verbs and are still contemporaneous with them, as is clear in numerous examples.

*Mark 1:10: ἀναβαίνων ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος εἶδεν σχιζομένους τοὺς οὐρανοὺς—
Going up out of the water, he saw the heavens being rent.*

Surely this means that Jesus saw the vision *as he was going up*; the progressive perspective of the present tense fits best with that. Gundry observes: "The vision and audition happen as Jesus is coming up out of the water."²⁷

Mark 1:16: παράγων παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν τῆς Γαλιλαίας εἶδεν Σίμωνα καὶ Ἀνδρέαν—Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew.

Again, it seems obvious that Taylor is correct in commenting: "As Jesus passes by He sees Simon and Andrew."²⁸ So also Edwards: "As he passes along the shore and sees the two pairs of brothers, he issues a summons."²⁹ Bratcher and Nida are even more specific: "The present participle . . . is simultaneous with the main verb *eiden*."³⁰

*Mark 9:43: . . . ἢ τὰς δύο χεῖρας ἔχοντα ἀπελθεῖν εἰς τὴν γέενναν—
. . . than, having two hands, to enter into Gehenna.*³¹

Surely the meaning is to enter Gehenna in contemporaneous possession of both hands, as in the NIV: "than with two hands to go into hell."

Mark 11:20: Καὶ παραπορευόμενοι πρὸς εἶδον τὴν συκῆν—And, going along in the morning, they saw the fig tree.

Certainly they saw this *while* they were on their way into Jerusalem, an understanding that fits the progressive perspective of the present-tense participle. Gundry is correct in observing that they see the fig tree "as they go along in the morning."³²

Indeed, Mark's 44 present participles that precede the primary verb are more likely to be temporally contemporaneous with this verb than an-

27. Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 47–48.

28. Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 168.

29. James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 49.

30. Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of Mark* (Leiden: Brill, 1961), 39.

31. Here the participle is dependent on the infinitive ἀπελθεῖν as its primary verb.

32. Gundry, *Mark*, 648.

tecedent to it; compare 2:14; 9:9, 45, 47; 10:32, 46; 13:1, 3; 14:3, 18, 22, 43, 66; 15:15, 31.³³

Luke 2:48: ὁ πατήρ σου κἀγὼ ὀδυνώμενοι ἐζητοῦμέν σε—Your father and I, grieving, were seeking you.

The participle clearly indicates their emotional state *during* the search, and the progressive aspect of its present tense fits well with that. Bock explains that they “searched for him with anxiety.”³⁴ Plummer agrees that the search was conducted “in great anguish of mind.”³⁵

Luke 7:38: κλαίουσα τοῖς δάκρυσιν ἤρξατο βρέχειν τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ—Weeping, she began to be wetting his feet with tears.

Marshall comments, “When she spontaneously broke out weeping, her tears fell on Jesus’ feet and wetted them.”³⁶ It is even more in accord with the tense to render: *as she was weeping* she began to wet Jesus feet with her tears. Fitzmyer appropriately renders, “Her tears bathed his feet.”³⁷

Luke 10:13: πάλαι ἂν ἐν σάκκῳ καὶ σποδῷ καθήμενοι μετενόησαν—Long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes, they would have repented.

Indeed, to position oneself thus was the outward sign of the (obviously contemporaneous) inward repentance. As Green notes, the repentance is “marked all the more through the image of ‘sitting in sackcloth and ashes’—a traditional symbol for repentance.”³⁸

Again, a long list of examples equally clear can be cited: compare 3:21; 7:2, 6, 42; 8:10, 23, 47, 49; 9:42, 57; 10:29, 33; 11:13, 16, 45; 12:25, 28; 13:14, 16; and many others. As in Mark, the present participles preceding their primary verbs are about as likely to be contemporaneous with those verbs as those that follow their verbs.

If it seems strange, by the way, that both Mark’s and Luke’s *present* circumstantial participles follow their verbs more often than the corresponding *aorist* participles, I may note that of the 65 (Mark) and 151 (Luke) present participles that follow their verbs, half (34 and 84, respectively) are of the verb λέγω, used to introduce quotations, as in

Luke 1:63: ἔγραψεν λέγων· Ἰωάννης ἐστὶν ὄνομα αὐτοῦ—He wrote, saying, “John is his name.”

33. By no means does this observation prove that present-tense circumstantial participles are by reason of their *tense* contemporaneous with their primary verbs. But demonstrating that is a matter for another study.

34. Darrell L. Bock, *Luke* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 3; 2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994–96), 1:268.

35. Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1896), 77.

36. I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 30.

37. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke (I–IX)* (AB 28–28A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), 683.

38. Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 417.

The only logical position for this usage is after the verb. Apart from these, both writers place present circumstantial participles before their verbs more often than after.³⁹

Aorist-Tense Participles

The picture for *aorist* participles is even more obvious: Mark and Luke nearly always place aorist circumstantial participles before their primary verbs, whether they are antecedent to (more often) or contemporaneous with their primary verbs.⁴⁰

Aorist participles that precede their primary verbs and are antecedent to them need not be illustrated, given that Porter's theory would expect that. But aorist participles that precede their primary verbs may also be contemporaneous with them, as seen in the following.

Mark 6:22: καὶ ὀρχησαμένης ἤρεσεν τῷ Ἡρώδῃ—And, dancing, she pleased Herod.

Though the aorist participle views the dance as a whole (perfective aspect), it makes better sense to take this to mean *when* she danced than *afterward*. Lane has it right, I think: "The performance pleased both Herod and his guests."⁴¹ So also France: "The nature of the dance is left entirely to our imagination, beyond the fact that it 'pleased' Antipas and his apparently male party."⁴²

Mark 9:8: ἐξάπινα περιβλεψάμενοι οὐκέτι οὐδένα εἶδον—Suddenly, looking about, they no longer saw anyone.

Again, *when* rather than *after*: the aorist aspect sets before us their entire look, but that sweeping glance revealed no one but Jesus. Gundry refers to their "looking around and no longer seeing anyone but Jesus."⁴³ France comments, "Now that all is quiet again, they look up, and the scene has changed."⁴⁴

Mark 16:4: καὶ ἀναβλέψασαι θεωροῦσιν ὅτι ἀποκεκύλισται ὁ λίθος—And looking up they observed that the stone had been rolled back.

39. To use the Porter-O'Donnell terminology again (see n. 25), with all examples included, the ratio for present circumstantial participles is 38% before and 62% after, still within the range they call *equiprobable*. But with the participles of λέγω to introduce quotations removed, the ratio is 57% before and 43% after, almost reversed but still *equiprobable*.

40. Once more, using the terminology of Porter and O'Donnell (see nn. 25, 39), the ratio is *skewed*, with 95.4% before and 4.6% after. For these authors, this may mean that, when aorist participles follow their verbs, they are *marked* in comparison with those that precede, a concept implying *prominence* that goes beyond the scope of this article; but analysis of these 28 participles does not reveal to me any semantic implications of this markedness, including emphasis.

41. William L. Lane, *The Gospel according to Mark* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 221.

42. R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 258.

43. Gundry, *Mark*, 461.

44. France, *Mark*, 355.

The relationship is the same as in the preceding: with that upward look, they see. Taylor comments: "Looking up, he says, the women see that the stone has been rolled away."⁴⁵ Lane's wording is similar and appropriate: "The women looked up and saw that it had been removed."⁴⁶

Luke 2:48: ἰδόντες αὐτὸν ἐξεπλάγησαν—*Seeing him, they were astounded.*

Plummer understands them to be "astonished at finding him there."⁴⁷ The aorist participle views the sight as a whole, and it was the sight that astonished them. As Marshall observes, "Jesus' parents are amazed at the scene."⁴⁸

Luke 5:5: δι' ὅλης νυκτὸς κοπιᾶσαντες οὐδὲν ἐλάβομεν—*Toiling through the whole night, we caught nothing.*

Marshall represents this as "a fruitless and wearisome night's fishing trip."⁴⁹ Though the aorist participle views the whole night's labor in summary, it is clear that it was during that night that their fishing was unsuccessful, not afterward. Bock observes, "They had worked to the bone, but had caught nothing."⁵⁰

Luke 8:12: ἵνα μὴ πιστεύσαντες σωθῶσιν—*Lest they believe and are saved.*

As often in Luke, this closely links faith and salvation (salvation by faith).⁵¹ Marshall comments, "Those who so believe are saved."⁵²

Luke 11:27: ἐπάρασά τις φωνὴν γυνὴ ἐκ τοῦ ὄχλου εἶπεν αὐτῷ—*A woman, raising her voice, spoke to him out of the crowd.*

Clearly, she did not first raise her voice and then speak; instead, she spoke loudly, with her voice raised. Arndt observes that she "burst forth in an (indirect) eulogy."⁵³

Surely in most or all of these (and numerous others⁵⁴) the activity in the participle should not be read as having occurred *before* the activity in the primary verb. And the clincher comes when one observes a whole class of aorist participles placed before their primary verbs that are not only contemporaneous with those verbs but in fact restate them: namely, aorist

45. Taylor, *Mark*, 605.

46. Lane, *Mark*, 586.

47. Plummer, *Luke*, 77.

48. Marshall, *Luke*, 128.

49. *Ibid.*, 203.

50. Bock, *Luke*, 1:456.

51. Compare *ibid.*, 1:733.

52. Marshall, *Luke*, 325.

53. William F. Arndt, *Bible Commentary: The Gospel according to St. Luke* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1956), 302.

54. Maximilian Zerwick (*Biblical Greek* [English ed. adapted by Joseph Smith from 4th Latin ed.; Scripta Pontificii Institutii Biblici 114; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963], 85) uses Luke 15:23 as an example of this.

participles of ἀποκρίνομαι, as in Luke 13:8: ἀποκριθεὶς λέγει αὐτῷ—“*Answering*, he says to him. . . .” There are 15 of these in Mark and 37 in Luke. In each, the participle does not refer to a prior action but serves only (almost redundantly) to show that what is said is a response to something said or done.⁵⁵

Furthermore, those few aorist circumstantial participles that follow their primary verbs are about as likely to show antecedent as contemporaneous circumstances. Consider the following:

Mark 1:31: ἤγειρεν αὐτὴν κρατήσας τῆς χειρὸς—He raised her, *grasping* her hand.

Gundry appropriately views ἤγειρεν as the purpose to which κρατήσας is circumstantially preliminary: “Jesus grasps a woman’s hand to raise her from a prone position.”⁵⁶ Cranfield’s view that κρατήσας means “take hold of” here supports viewing it as antecedent.⁵⁷ So also Lane: Jesus “seized the woman’s hand and lifted her up.”⁵⁸ Taylor’s view is not as convincing: “κρατήσας . . . expresses concurrent (Swete, 23) rather than antecedent action (Burton, §134).”⁵⁹

Mark 7:1: συνάγονται πρὸς αὐτὸν οἱ Φαρισαῖοι καὶ τινες τῶν γραμματέων ἐλθόντες ἀπὸ Ἱεροσολύμων—The Pharisees and some of the scribes gather to him, *coming* from Jerusalem.

Obviously their trip from Jerusalem preceded their coming together to Jesus—even if one regards ἐλθόντες as effective, focusing on their arrival. Bratcher and Nida render “who had come from Jerusalem.”⁶⁰ Similar is France: “They ‘came together . . . having arrived from Jerusalem.’”⁶¹

Mark 11:8: ἄλλοι δὲ σιβὰδας κόψαντες ἐκ τῶν ἀγρῶν—And others [spread] branches, *cutting* [them] from the fields.

Bratcher and Nida suggest, “which they had cut from the fields,”⁶² which obviously means that the cutting preceded the spreading. As France notes, “We must assume that the vegetation, once cut, was . . . spread on the road.”⁶³

Luke 1:9: ἔλαχε τοῦ θυμᾶσαι εἰσελθὼν εἰς τὸν ναὸν τοῦ κυρίου—He obtained by lot to burn incense, *entering* into the holy place of the Lord.

55. Zerwick (*ibid.*, 127) calls this usage “pleonastic” and an “empty formula.”

56. Gundry, *Mark*, 86.

57. C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (CGTC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 82.

58. Lane, *Mark*, 77.

59. Taylor, *Mark*, 179.

60. Bratcher and Nida, *Handbook*, 219.

61. France, *Mark*, 279.

62. Bratcher and Nida, *Handbook*, 345.

63. France, *Mark*, 433.

The participle is linked to the infinitive *θυμιᾶσαι* “and has a pluperfect sense—‘having previously entered.’”⁶⁴

Luke 2:36: αὕτη προβεβηκυῖα ἐν ἡμέραις πολλαῖς, ζήσασα μετὰ ἀνδρὸς ἔτη ἑπτὰ ἀπὸ τῆς παρθενίας αὐτῆς—She [was] advanced in many days, living with a husband seven years from her virginity.

The aorist participle views her whole life, in summary, as having preceded (and culminated in) her great age. Plummer understands that “she *had* lived seven years as a wife and eighty-four years . . . as a widow.”⁶⁵

Luke 7:29: πᾶς ὁ λαὸς . . . ἐδικαίωσαν τὸν θεὸν βαπτισθέντες τὸ βάπτισμα Ἰωάννου—All the people . . . justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John.

Marshall explains, “because they had already been baptised by him”;⁶⁶ so also the NRSV. Some, like Plummer, take the entire observation to be past-referring and the participle as contemporaneous: namely, they had justified God and been baptized in response to John’s preaching,⁶⁷ but this is not convincing and is not adopted by most of the versions; see further discussion of this participle below.

Whether perfect, present, or aorist circumstantial participles, then, the evidence is clear: their being before or after the primary verbs they are linked to has neither necessary nor consistent implications for their relative time.

EVALUATION OF PORTER’S VIEW

How, then, was Porter led to think that there is a significant pattern of order, for circumstantial participles, to indicate relative time? While I cannot speak for him, I can think of two things that might have contributed to his hypothesis. First, in making the case, he examined 85 instances when 2 circumstantial participles, one aorist and one present, are linked to the same primary verb. He concluded that in 75 of these instances the aorist precedes and is antecedent, while the present follows and is contemporaneous.

Several things may be said about this. First, the evidence cited is too narrow. The significance of the tendency should not depend on instances where 2 participles are linked to the same verb, unless one wishes to state the tendency so that it applies only in such cases. But Porter’s statement of the tendency is not limited to those cases and should apply equally when only one participle is linked to a given verb.

Nor should the evidence focus specifically on instances where the 2 participles are aorist and present: 2 aorists or 2 presents, for example, are entirely as meaningful for this analysis because the issue concerns order, not tense.

64. Marshall, *Luke*, 54.

65. Plummer, *Luke*, 72 (italics mine).

66. Marshall, *Luke*, 299.

67. Plummer, *Luke*, 206; see also Green, *Luke*, 301 n. 60; Bock, *Luke*, 1:676–77.

Furthermore, among the examples he cites are 7 from Mark (6:25; 9:20, 25; 10:16, 22; 14:57, 60) and at least 18 from Luke (1:63; 2:45; 5:8, 12, 13; 7:18, 19, 39; 8:24, 54; 10:34; 15:5, 9; 19:7; 22:19, 41, 42, 64).⁶⁸ But in 17 of these 25 (and in several of his other examples), the present participle that follows is of λέγω, used to introduce a quotation. Now, in both Gospels this participle is *always* present tense and *always* follows its primary verb—the only “logical” place it can occur, as noted above. Perhaps if Porter had eliminated these from his evidence, given the pervasive and fixed nature of this “standard” formula, he might not have thought the syntactical pattern so consistent.⁶⁹

Indeed, there are clear examples of multiple circumstantial participles linked to the same primary verb that Porter’s argument overlooks, some of them noted already. In Luke 3:1, 2, for example, there are three present participles, all placed before the primary verb and all contemporaneous with it. (That these are genitive absolutes does not lessen the significance of this point.)

Porter would have us regard the following as manifesting the typical pattern:

Luke 5:25: παραχρήμα ἀναστὰς ἐνώπιον αὐτῶν, ἄρας ἐφ’ ὃ κατέκειτο, ἀπῆλθεν εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ δοξάζων τὸν θεόν—Immediately, standing up before them, taking up [that] on which he was lying, he went forth to his house, glorifying God.

Here two aorist participles precede the primary verb, both indicating antecedent action, and one present participle follows it, indicating contemporaneous or subsequent action.

But most sentences containing two (or more) participles in this pattern (in Mark and Luke) have a present participle of λέγω following the verb, as already described. Apart from those, the following examples are every bit as “typical.”

Luke 5:22: ἐπιγνοὺς δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς τοὺς διαλογισμοὺς αὐτῶν ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτοῦ—And Jesus, knowing their reasonings, answering, said to him. . . .

Two aorist participles precede the primary verb. The first may be contemporaneous; thus apparently Bock: “He knows their reasonings.”⁷⁰ But I think that ἐπιγνοὺς is more likely (immediately) antecedent, with the sense *recognizing*; thus Green: “when Jesus perceived their questionings.”⁷¹ Either way, the second, ἀποκριθεὶς, is clearly contemporaneous.

Luke 7:29: πᾶς ὁ λαὸς ἀκούσας καὶ οἱ τελῶναι ἐδικαίωσαν τὸν θεὸν βαπτισθέντες τὸ βάπτισμα Ἰωάννου—All the people and the publicans, hearing, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John.

68. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 381–85.

69. Zerwick (*Biblical Greek*, 128) calls this use of the participle of λέγω “stereotyped.”

70. Bock, *Luke*, 1:484.

71. Green, *Luke*, 238.

Here are two aorist participles, the first preceding the main verb and perhaps being contemporaneous with it (though possibly antecedent) and the second following and apparently antecedent.

Indeed, this example does not seem even to fit what Porter says about Grice's maxim (quoted above): the second participle apparently occurred before the first. The NIV rendering is "All the people . . . when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right, because they had been baptized by John." I have noted, above, that Plummer takes the entire clause to refer to the people's past response to John, but this requires reading the unmodified ἀκούσας as referring to their hearing *John* previously rather than hearing Jesus' present observations. The context and construction are almost certainly against this; in that case, ἀκούσας would be well served by an object that pointed to John, and ἐδικαίωσαν could well be pluperfect. Fitzmyer tends to agree with Plummer but quickly acknowledges that "it is hard to think that Luke would have composed such a sentence."⁷²

Luke 7:37, 38: καὶ ἐπιγνοῦσα ὅτι κατάκειται ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ τοῦ Φαρισαίου, κομίσασα ἀλάβαστρον μύρου καὶ στᾶσα ὀπίσω παρὰ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ κλαίουσα τοῖς δάκρυσιν ἤρξατο βρέχειν τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ—And she, *knowing* that he was reclining at table in the house of the Pharisee, *bringing* an alabaster of myrrh and *standing* behind [him] by his feet, *weeping*, began to be wetting his feet with her tears.

All four participles are before the same primary verb; the first three are aorist and the fourth is present. The first two aorists are apparently antecedent and the other aorist contemporaneous—unless it is to be viewed ingressively to mean *taking a position* (thus also antecedent). The present seems clearly contemporaneous, because the weeping is a necessary part of the wetting of Jesus's feet (see the discussion of this participle above).⁷³

Luke 12:28: εἰ δὲ ἐν ἀγρῷ τὸν χόρτον ὄντα σήμερον καὶ αὔριον εἰς κλίβανον βαλλόμενον ὁ θεὸς οὕτως ἀμφιέζει—And if God thus clothes the grass, *being* in the field today and *being cast* tomorrow into an oven.

Two present participles precede the primary verb, and both are contemporaneous with it—if the second is not in fact subsequent. Green may be right in taking the two participles together to refer to "the brief existence of field grasses";⁷⁴ Marshall, similarly, refers to "the brief life-span of flowers."⁷⁵ Even so, it is during that existence or life-span that God clothes them.

72. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 676. Most versions agree with my reading; though I did not make an exhaustive search, I found only the LB and CEV in agreement with Plummer.

73. It may be argued that the weeping at least logically preceded the wetting of Jesus' feet, and of course the weeping was necessary to the result stated. But it seems better to understand that, as the tears of weeping fell, they wet Jesus' feet.

74. Green, *Luke*, 493.

75. Marshall, *Luke*, 529.

Luke 23:48: θεωρήσαντες τὰ γενόμενα, τύπτοντες τὰ στήθη ὑπέστρεφον—
Observing the things that occurred, *beating* their breasts, they were
 returning.

Two participles, one aorist and one present, precede the verb; the aorist sums up what they had seen and is probably antecedent, while the progressive present is contemporaneous. Marshall interprets, “beating their breasts as they begin to depart.”⁷⁶

See also Luke 7:6; 8:47; 9:6; 13:14; 14:31, 32; 15:4; 16:23; 24:5, 41. There are also numerous examples in Mark, but Luke shows considerably greater variety in linking multiple participles to the same primary verb.

My conclusion at this point is that Porter’s examples are not adequate to make his case, at least not for Mark or Luke. In these two Gospels, the positioning of circumstantial participles before or after their primary verbs does not point to a temporal relationship, neither for single participles nor for multiple participles with the same primary verb.

A second factor that might have contributed to Porter’s conclusion relates to the distinction between circumstantial and complementary participles. Complementary participles in effect combine with their primary verbs so closely as to produce essentially one verbal idea, rather than a mere attendant circumstance. By definition, then, they are necessarily in the same time as their primary verbs, and almost 100% of the complementary participles, in both Mark and Luke (as I classify them), follow their primary verbs. Porter’s discussion reveals that he allows many of these to contribute to his count of participles that follow verbs and are contemporaneous.

OTHER RESPONSES TO PORTER’S VIEW

I am aware of but two responses to Porter’s theory. One of these is a recent intermediate grammar by Richard Young. Reflecting Porter, he observes, “There is evidence that the time relation between the participle and main verb is signaled by their relative positions: a participle before the verb indicating antecedent time and a participle after the verb indicating subsequent time (Porter 1989:381).”⁷⁷ (He should have said that the latter indicates coincident or subsequent time.) But Young does not develop this tendency for students who use his text.

Rodney Decker has given this view passing consideration. He picked three chapters in Mark (2, 6, 15) as a sample, found 77 participles there (not counting periphrastics, attributive participles, or genitive absolutes), of which 55 are aorist and 22 present. He suggests that (in 15:17) the aorist *πλέξαντες* (“weaving”), which comes after the verb *περιτίθεασιν* (“placed”), is antecedent; and that (in 6:37 and elsewhere) the standard *ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν* (“answering, he said”) involves a contemporaneous participle coming

76. *Ibid.*, 877.

77. Richard A. Young, *Intermediate New Testament Greek: A Linguistic and Exegetical Approach* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 147.

before the verb. Of those in the present tense, he notes that in 15:31 the participle ἐμπαίζοντες (“mocking”), though preceding the verb, is contemporaneous with it. His conclusion is that word order is not an adequate criterion for relative time.⁷⁸ And as I have shown in this article, there are many more examples than these.

ANOTHER VIEW OF ORDER

A more nuanced view of the implications of order for Mark’s participles has been suggested by Robert Longacre, reflecting his interest in discourse analysis as a tool for understanding the text.⁷⁹ Though evaluating this approach goes well beyond the purposes of this article, I would be remiss not to make reference to it as an intriguing alternative view of the role of “preposed” and “postposed” participles (those placed before and after their primary verbs). In his detailed analysis of Mark 5:1–43, Longacre suggests that participles placed before an aorist primary verb “supply the immediate backup to the storyline by adding preliminary detail,” adding that participles in front of historical present and imperfect primary verbs also provide “backup.” But a participle that follows its primary verb “is of the same semantic rank as the verb that it follows; that is, it is *consecutive* on the preceding main verb and continues its function.”⁸⁰

It is evident from Longacre’s discussion that he does not mean these two roles as narrowly temporal functions; they are more rhetorical and indicators of prominence. He identifies these preposed participles as *preparatio* and thinks of them as preliminary or preparatory and “of lesser salience than the main verb which they precede”; linguists call this a “medial-final chaining” structure. A postposed participle, however, fits what linguists call an “initial-consecutive” chaining structure: it “continues the sense and function of the main verb.” He illustrates with Matt 28:19, 20, where the preposed πορευθέντες (“going”) is “a preparatory action” and the postposed βαπτίζοντες and διδάσκοντες (“baptizing” and “teaching”) are “semantically coordinate with the primary verb, issuing in a threefold command ‘Make disciples . . . baptize . . . teach.’”⁸¹

Interestingly, Longacre diagrams a scheme of relative salience which he calls a “cline of dynamicity,” ranking different verbal constructions from highest to lowest, as follows:

78. Decker, *Temporal Deixis*, 123.

79. Robert E. Longacre, “Mark 5:1–43: Generating the Complexity of a Narrative from Its Most Basic Elements,” in *Discourse Analysis and the New Testament* (ed. Stanley E. Porter and Jeffrey T. Reed; JSNTSup 170; Studies in New Testament Greek 4; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 169–96. For a helpful introduction to discourse analysis, see Jeffrey T. Reed, *A Discourse Analysis of Philippians* (JSNTSup 136; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), ch. 1; and his “Discourse Analysis as New Testament Hermeneutic: A Retrospective and Prospective Proposal,” *JETS* 39 (1996), 223–40. See also David Alan Black, ed., *Linguistics and New Testament Interpretation Essays on Discourse Analysis* (Nashville: Broadman, 1992).

80. Longacre, “Mark 5:1–43,” 177.

81. *Ibid.*, 177, 178.

- 1.1. Aorist verbs and consecutive (postposed) participles
- 1.2. Participles preposed before aorist verbs
 - 2.1. Historical present verbs and consecutive participles
 - 2.2. Participles preposed before historical present verbs
 - 3.1. Imperfect verbs and consecutive participles
 - 3.2. Participles preposed before imperfect verbs
 4. "Be" verbs and verbless clauses.⁸²

It is beyond the scope of this essay to pursue Longacre's view, though I may make a few observations. The suggestion is intriguing and should be tested out for all of Mark, in detail. I tend to doubt that it will help explain all the circumstantial participles in Mark, though it appears to clarify some of those in Mark 5. Longacre himself acknowledges that in various languages there are three possible relationships of "medial" verbs (to which he has compared preposed participles) to their primary verbs: either may "outrank" the other, or the two may be equal in rank.⁸³ The various temporal possibilities illustrated above serve, I believe, to indicate that "salience" may not always be lower for participles that appear before their primary verbs or higher for those that follow.

CONCLUSION

The view that the order of circumstantial participles in the clause, whether before or after the primary verbs to which they are linked, signals relative time does not hold up under close inspection.

Is there even a statistical preponderance in the direction of Porter's theory? If so, it is not a very strong one. Among conclusions that are clear are these.

(1) Aorist-tense circumstantial participles (the largest number) will be *before* their primary verbs, whether they are temporally antecedent to or contemporaneous with them; see the table given earlier. Of a total of 604 circumstantial aorist participles in the two Gospels, 576 (95%) precede their primary verbs; of these more than 100 seem clearly contemporaneous. Of the 28 that follow their primary verbs, at least a third are temporally antecedent.

(2) Present-tense circumstantial participles are by a great majority contemporaneous with their primary verbs, whether they precede or follow those verbs. As table 1 shows, in the two Gospels, 131 precede and 216 follow their verbs in the sentence. In my judgment, roughly 90% of each group indicate temporally contemporaneous action.

(3) As already noted, perfect-tense circumstantial participles are almost evenly divided with regard to whether they precede or follow their primary verbs; all of them represent action that is temporally contemporaneous with those verbs.

82. *Ibid.*, 179.

83. *Ibid.*, 179 n. 14.

The preponderance, therefore, is far from overwhelming. Even if it were, statistical preponderance is a poor indicator of semantic dominance and an insufficient (if not misleading) guide to exegesis. If one has encountered a word or construction 100 times, say, and 95 of them have one meaning and 5 another, the next one encountered is, *per se*, just as likely to have the meaning of the 5 as of the 95—or yet another meaning entirely.⁸⁴ Statistical measurements are nothing more than reports of what has occurred; they are without significance as predictors of meaning.

More important, there is too much variety—in Mark and Luke, anyway—to justify the formulation of patterns along these lines, much less “rules.”⁸⁵ Whether aorist, present, or perfect, the circumstantial participles that precede their primary verbs, in these Gospels, regularly occur in a time that is relatively antecedent to or contemporaneous with those verbs; and the circumstantial participles that follow their main verbs can as normally express action that is relatively antecedent to, contemporaneous with, or even (occasionally) subsequent to that of their verbs.

My concern is for accurate exegesis, and I believe the best way to obtain it, in regard to this issue, is to be fully open to the idea that any given circumstantial participle may—at least theoretically—be antecedent to, contemporaneous with, or subsequent to its primary verb. To determine this, we should rely entirely on the context rather than on *a priori* assumptions about order (or tense, for that matter). Certainly, this means that the decision will be a matter of interpretation, which in turn means that interpreters will differ. But this is the nature of language and of exegesis.

In my view, these facts are so in evidence that we should drop, once for all, the idea that the order of circumstantial participles and their primary verbs signals relative time. Instead, the exegete should, with a mind open to all possibilities, carefully analyze the context of each individual circumstantial participle to determine its time relative to its primary verb—if it seems important to consider this at all!⁸⁶ Assuming that a given participle, because it precedes or follows its primary verb, is more likely in a certain time relative to the primary verb is far too likely to prejudice the interpreter and lead to incorrect interpretation.

84. For a helpful observation about the implications of statistical preponderance (in a slightly different context), see Porter and O'Donnell, “Greek Verbal Network,” 13: “These probabilities should not be viewed as operating in a predictive manner, in saying ‘the next choice should be A with odds of nine to one,’ but rather as providing an interpretative framework for choices once they have been made.”

85. While my study is limited to Mark and Luke, I believe I know participles in the rest of the NT well enough to suggest that essentially the same phenomena will be found throughout.

86. Randall Tan, whom I must thank for reading an earlier draft of this article and offering helpful suggestions, observed: “In light of your evidence, I wonder if ‘time’ is really an issue that the authors involved intended us to concern ourselves with that much—except when clear time indicators are used.”

