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Paragraphing in 2 and 3 John

The Data in Manuscripts, Editions and Commentaries
Combined with Stichometry as a New Tool

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The two brief letters of John are the shortest writings of the New Testament. Therefore they are a good starting point for comparing ways of paragraphing applied in ancient manuscripts, in editions, and in modern interpretations. As a first step the data of the two letters are listed here. In part 2 the two letters are analysed according to content and rhetoric structure. Finally (part 3), the proposed paragraphs are measured by the ancient standard line, the *stichos* of fifteen syllables; the results may hint at the disposition the author had in mind.

1. Synopsis of the paragraphing in 2 and 3 John

The following synopsis is an attempt to give a tabular overview of a number of manuscripts, editions and commentaries in a concise manner. A paragraph is indicated by a line between two verses. Some of the caesuras are placed within a verse (according to the verse division introduced in the 16th century); the beginning of the following clause is denoted by the first Greek letters. Very often there is a distinction between two structural levels, therefore a continuous and a dotted line are distinguished in the tables. The upper level usually refers to a hanging indent (*ekthesis*) in manuscripts or to a line break in editions, the lower level to a space within the line. In 2 and 3 John there is no need for more than two levels. A synopsis for the Greek text is given first (*tables 1-2*), then for the commentaries and interpretations (*tables 3-6*). Thus it is possible to compare the results of the two letters.

1.1 Manuscripts and editions of the Greek text

The survey of manuscripts is limited to uncials.¹ The examples of editions refer to the first prints of the 16th c., then to the main text critics preceding and accompanying Nestle's text, and finally to the modern standard editions of Nestle (father and son), Aland (and others) and *the Greek New Testament (GNT)*. In *tables 1-2* the following sources are abbreviated at the top of the columns:

Ⲙ Codex Ⲙ 01 (Sinaiticus, 4th c.): see <http://codexsinaiticus.org/de>.

A Codex A 02 (Alexandrinus, 5th c.): *New Testament and Clementine Epistles (The Codex Alexandrinus, NT)*, (London 1909); see also: ntvmr.uni-muenster.de.

¹ Three manuscripts containing 2 and 3 John are excluded: K 018 (9th c.; text and commentary are intermingled); P 025 (9th c.; not available via ntvmr.uni-muenster.de); 048 (5th c.; palimpsest, paragraphing not visible).

- B Codex B 03 (Vaticanus, 4th c.): *Bibliorum Sacrorum Graecorum Codex Vaticanus B* (*Vat. gr. 1209*), (Rome 1999).
- L Codex L 020 (Angelicus, 9th c.): see ntvmr.uni-muenster.de.
- Ψ Codex Ψ 044 (Athous Laurensis, 9/10th c.): see ntvmr.uni-muenster.de.
- Er: ERASMUS Roterodam[us], *Novvm Instrumentu[m] omne [...]* (Basileae [Froben], 1516), p. 186r. 187r; *Novvm Testamentvm Omne [...]*, Tertio [...] recognitum ([Basel: Froben], 1522), p. 525–526.
- Ste: [Robertus] STEPHANUS, *Tes Kaines Diathekes Hapanta = Nouum Iesv Christi D. N. Testamentum [...]*, [Editio] Regia, ([Paris] 1550), p. 169–170.
- Ti: Constantinus TISCHENDORF, *Novum Testamentum Graece [...]*, Ed. octava critica maior II (Leipzig 1872).
- W-H: Brooke Foss WESTCOTT / Fenton J.A. HORT, *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (Cambridge / London 1881).
- Weiß: Bernhard WEISS, *Das Neue Testament. Die Apostelgeschichte, Katholischen Briefe, Apokalypse* (1st ed. = vol. 1; 2nd ed. = vol. 3; Leipzig 1894/1902).
- vSod: Hermann VON SODEN, *Griechisches Neues Testament, Handausgabe* (Göttingen 1913).
- Nest: Eberhard NESTLE, *Novum Testamentum Graece* ([1st ed.] Stuttgart 1898); Erwin NESTLE, Kurt ALAND (25th ed.; Stuttgart 1963).
- GNT: *The Greek New Testament*, ed. by Kurt ALAND *et al.* ([1st ed.] New York / Stuttgart 1966; 5th revised ed., Stuttgart 2014).
- NA²⁶: *Novum Testamentum Graece, post Eberhard et Erwin NESTLE communiter ediderunt Kurt ALAND et al.* (26th ed., Stuttgart 1979; 28th revised ed., Stuttgart 2012).

The first impression we get from these codices is that they noticeably differ in structuring the text. Codex **Ⲙ** has no break at all, whereas A, L and Ψ have 5-8 paragraphs in each letter, indicated by a *spatium* within the line or at its end and a hanging indent (*ekthesis*) in the following line. Where there is only a *spatium* without *ekthesis*, this is marked by a dotted line in the tables. In codex B, two marginal figures are found: an A at the beginning and a B indicating a new paragraph at 2 John 12, but such numbering system is lacking in 3 John. Apart from that, dots above the line followed by a small *spatium* mark some caesuras, as indicated by a dotted line. Before 3 John 2, 13 the new sentences begin with a new line, which may be by chance. Since the number and the placement of the caesuras vary in the different manuscripts, it is not possible to trace back any of these paragraphing systems to the time of the author.

In Erasmus' editions, each of the two epistles is printed in one paragraph. A capital letter at the beginning of a new sentence is a hint of a caesura, but it occurs only in three instances: in 2 John 4 (only 1516), in 2 John 8 (only 1522) and in 3 John 12 (but there the capital can also be due to the personal name Demetrius at the beginning). Stephanus in his *editio regia*, before introducing the verse division, used Greek capitals for structuring the text in four parts. However, the caesuras before 3 John 4, 8 are unusual and not found in other editions.

2Joh	Ⲙ IV	A V	B IV	L IX	Ψ IX/X	Er '16	Er '22	Ste 1550	Ti 1872	W-H 1881	Weiβ 1902	vSod 1913	Nest 1898	GNT 1966	NA ²⁶ 1979
1			A					[A]							
2															
3															
4								B							
5															
6a															
6b				αυτ											
7								Γ							
8															
9															
10								Δ							
11															
12			B												
13															

Table 1: Greek text of 2 John: Ancient manuscripts and early/modern editions

3Joh	Ⲙ IV	A V	B IV	L IX	Ψ IX/X	Er '16/22	Ste 1550	Ti 1872	W-H 1881	Weiβ 1902	vSod 1913	Nest 1898	GNT 1966	NA ²⁶ 1979
1							[A]							
2														
3														
4							B							
5														
6a														
6b		ους												
7														
8							Γ							
9														
10														
11							Δ							
12a														
12b				κατημ										
13														
14														
15a														
15b		ασπ	ασπ								ασπ			

Table 2: Greek text of 3 John: Ancient manuscripts and early/modern editions

In the more recent text editions, it is obvious that a certain consensus has developed. The seven examples of 2 John show two main caesuras dividing the corpus of the letter (vv. 4-11) from the beginning (vv. 1-3) and the end (vv. 12-13). Only Weiß and Nestle-Aland have subdivisions in the corpus, but at different places. In the ending the greetings (v. 13) are separated very often as a (sub-)paragraph. In 3 John a similar consensus is documented concerning the division between corpus and ending (vv. 13-15), although for some the corpus begins in v. 2 and for others in v. 5. Six of the seven editions have a main caesura before v. 9, five before v. 11, and four have an additional main caesura or subdivision before the greetings in v. 15 (or v. 15b).

1.2 Commentaries, etc.

In *tables 3-6* the paragraphing of 26 interpretations is documented, sixteen in German and ten in English or French. The selection of the German commentaries covers most of the titles published since 1918, while the other interpretations are chosen from about 1980 and according to availability. The abbreviations given at the top of the columns refer to the following publications:

- Baum: Otto BAUMGARTEN, “Die Johannes-Briefe,” in: *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, vol. 4 (3rd ed.; Göttingen 1918), 185–228.
- Win: Hans WINDISCH, *Die katholischen Briefe* (HNT 15, 2nd ed.; Tübingen 1930).
- Büch: Friedrich BÜCHSEL, *Die Johannesbriefe* (ThHK 17; Leipzig 1933).
- Hau: Friedrich HAUCK, *Die Briefe des Jakobus, Petrus, Judas und Johannes* (NTD 10; Göttingen 1933, 8th ed. 1957).
- Schna: Rudolf SCHNACKENBURG, *Die Johannesbriefe* (HThK 13/3, 2nd ed.; Freiburg 1963; 7th ed. 1984).
- Bult: Rudolf BULTMANN, *Die drei Johannesbriefe* (KEK 14, 7th ed.; Göttingen 1967).
- Schnei: Johannes SCHNEIDER, *Die Briefe des Jakobus, Petrus, Judas und Johannes* (NTD 10, 10th ed.; Göttingen 1967).
- Balz: Horst BALZ, “Die Johannesbriefe”, in: *Die “Katholischen” Briefe* (NTD 10, 11th ed.; Göttingen 1973), 150–216.
- Wen: Klaus WENGST, *Der erste, zweite und dritte Brief des Johannes* (ÖTK 16; Gütersloh/Würzburg 1978).
- Schu: Gerd SCHUNACK, *Die Briefe des Johannes* (ZBK.NT 17; Zürich 1982).
- Stre: Georg STRECKER, *Die Johannesbriefe* (KEK 14; Göttingen 1989).
- Vou: François VOUGA, *Die Johannesbriefe* (HNT 15/3; Tübingen 1990).
- Klauck: Hans-Josef KLAUCK, *Der zweite und dritte Johannesbrief* (EKK 23/2; Zürich / Neukirchen-Vluyn 1992).
- Vogl: Werner VOGLER, *Die Briefe des Johannes* (ThHK 17; Leipzig 1993).
- Beut: Johannes BEUTLER, *Die Johannesbriefe* (RNT; Regensburg 2000).
- Schnel: Udo SCHNELLE, *Die Johannesbriefe* (ThHK 17; Leipzig 2010).
- duRa: J.A. DU RAND, “Structure and Message of 2 John,” *Neotest.* 13 (1981), 101–120; *idem*, “The Structure of 3 John,” *ibid.* 121–131.
- Brow: Raymond E. BROWN, *The Epistles of John* (AncB 30; Garden City/NY 1982).
- Watson: Duane F. WATSON, “A Rhetorical Analysis of 2 John According to Greco-Roman Conventions,” *NTS* 35 (1989), 104–130; *idem*, “A Rhetorical Analysis of 3 John: A Study in Epistolary Rhetoric,” *CBQ* 51 (1989), 479–501.
- Zodh: Spiros ZODHIATES, *The Epistles of John* (ECS; Chattanooga/TN 1994).
- Pain: John PAINTER, *1, 2, 3 John* (Sacra Pagina 18; Collegeville/MN 2002).
- Morg: Michèle MORGEN, *Les épîtres de Jean* (CbNT 19; Paris 2005).
- Smal: Stephen S. SMALLEY, *1, 2, 3 John* (WordBC 51; Nashville/TN 2007).
- Lieu: Judith M. LIEU, *I, II, & III John* (NT Library; Louisville/KY 2008).

Yarb: Robert W. YARBROUGH, *1, 2, 3 John* (Baker Exegetical Commentary NT; Grand Rapids/MI 2008).

vWah: Urban C. VON WAHLDE, *The Gospel and Letters of John 3. Commentary on the Three Johannine Letters* (Eerdmans CritCom; Grand Rapids/MI 2010).

2Joh	Baum SNT ³ 1918	Win HNT 1930	Büch ThHK 1933	Hau NTD 1935	Schna HThK 1963	Bult KEK 1967	Schnei NTD 1967	Balz NTD 1973	Wen ÖTK 1978	Schu ZBK 1982	Stre KEK 1989	Vou HNT 1990	Klauck EKK 1992	
1					Prä- skript				1.				Prä- skript	
2														
3														
4					1.				2.				Proöm.	
5													Korpus	
6														
7					2.				3.					
8														
9														
10					3.				4.					
11														
12					Brief- schluss				5.				Brief- schluss	
13														

Table 3: Interpretations of 3 John in German

2Joh	Vogl ThHK 1993	Beut RNT 2000	Schnel ThHK 2010	duRand Neot. 1981	Brow AncB 1982	Watson NTS 1989	Zodh ECS 1994	Pain SPag 2002	Morg CbNT 2005	Smal WBC 2007	Lieu NTL 2008	Yarb Bak. 2008	vWah ECC 2010
1			I. Prä- skript	1.	A.			1.a				1.	
2					Salutat.								
3								1.b					
4	1.		II.Dank	2.Thank.	B.	exord.		2.a				2.	1.0
5			III.1	3.	C.	narrat.							1.
6			BrKorp.	Petitio		probat.							
7	2.		III.2	4.	D.			2.b					
8				Appeal									2.
9												3.	
10	3.		III.3										3.
11													
12			IV. BrSchl.	5.	E.	peror.		3.				4.	
13					Conclus.	F.			4.				

Table 4: Interpretations of 3 John in German and in English or French

3Joh	Baum SNT ³ 1918	Win HNT 1930	Büch ThHK 1933	Hau NTD 1935	Schna HThK 1963	Bult KEK 1967	Schnei NTD 1967	Balz NTD 1973	Wen ÖTK 1978	Schu ZBK 1982	Stre KEK 1989	Vou HNT 1990	Klauck EKK 1992
1					Präskr.				1.				Präskr.
2					1.				2.				Pro-
3													ömium
4													Korpus
5													
6													
7													
8													
9					2.				3.				
10													
11					3.				4.				
12													
13					Brief-				5.				Brief-
14					schluss								schluss
15													

Table 5: Interpretations of 3 John in German

3Joh	Vogl ThHK 1993	Beut RNT 2000	Schnel ThHK 2010	duRand Neot. 1981	Brow AncB 1982	Watson CBQ 1989	Zodh ECS 1994	Pain SPag 2002	Morg CbNT 2005	Smal WBC 2007	Lieu NTL 2008	Yarb Bak. 2008	vWah ECC 2010
1			I.	1.	B.			1.a				1.	
2			Präskr.	Salutat.		exord.		1.b					
3	1.		II.	2.	C.			2.a					
4				Thanks.									
5			III.1	3.	D.	narrat.						2.	1.
6				Appeal		probat.							
7				(pos.)									
8													
9	2.		III.2	4.	E.			2.b				3.	
10				Appeal									
11	3.		III.3	(neg.)	F.							4.	2.
12				5.Recom.				2.c					
13			IV.	6.	G.	perorat.		3.				5.	
14			Brief-	Conclus.									
15			schluss		H.								

Table 6: Interpretations of 3 John in German and in English or French

What is the result of this tabular presentation? Three points can be made in reference to both letters and in almost the same way.

Firstly, the distinction between beginning, corpus and ending of the letters is to be seen in most of the columns. It is more obvious in 2 John, since there is at least a dotted line before v. 4 and v. 12. Only Morgen (2005) takes vv. 1-4 together as the beginning. In 3 John the first caesura has often been put before v. 2 or v. 3, as long as the exegetes were following the original Nestle-text (with vv. 2-8 as one paragraph). In the last decades the caesura before 3 John 5 has been accepted more often. Furthermore, almost all interpreters define vv. 13-15 as the

ending; only the columns of Beutler (2000) and von Wahlde (2010) do not have even a dotted line before v. 13.

Secondly, some exegetes refer explicitly to categories of ancient epistolography and rhetoric. The three epistolographic terms *Präskript*, *Briefkorpus* and *Briefschluss* are used not only as headings by those mentioned in the tables but also by some others in their exegetical remarks. A special problem is whether 2 John 4 and 3 John 2-4 or 3-4 may be defined as *prooemium* or *thanksgiving* (du Rand 1981, Klauck 1992, Schnelle 2010). This means that the corpus of 2 John consists only of vv. 5-11 (instead of vv. 4-11), and the beginning of 3 John has two parts (instead of the praescript only). Watson (1989) tried to find the four parts of a classical speech in both letters. However, what he defined as *narratio* is neither narrative nor an argumentative unit. In the case of the *probatio* he did not sufficiently consider the structuring signs of style and argumentation. Thus his analysis sounds rather artificial.

Finally, there are the further subdivisions of the corpus. In 2 John the majority of the German interpretations agrees in defining vv. 4-6 as the first sub-paragraph (11 of 16 commentaries), but only two of the ten non-Germans do (Zodhiates 1994, Painter 2002). Concerning the other sub-paragraphs the picture is not as impressive: vv. 10-11 are combined by half of the Germans (8 of 16) and by only one of the others (von Wahlde 2010), and vv. 7-11 by five of the Germans and three of the others. In 3 John, vv. 5-8 are regarded as one sub-paragraph by seven (of 16) German interpretations and five (of 10) others. The acceptance of the next two sub-paragraphs is much higher: 3 John 9-10 is accepted by fourteen (of 16) Germans and four (of 10) others, together eighteen (of 26) and vv. 11-12 by twelve Germans and four others, so together sixteen (of 26). At least in German commentaries the caesuras before 3 John 5, 9 and 11 have received broad support.

2. *Argumentative and rhetoric structure of 2 and 3 John*

This survey of the paragraphing yields insights about the well-accepted caesuras as well as about those that are debatable. As a second step the two letters are further analysed, especially the structure of argumentation.²

2.1 Outline of 2 John

The praescript (vv. 1-3) follows the tripartite pattern of Paul, with *superscriptio*, *adscriptio* and *salutatio*. The latter, however, is a full sentence with a *verbum finitum* right at the beginning, not merely a nominal clause as in Paul.

As we have seen, most German interpreters regard vv. 4-6 as the first paragraph of the corpus. Because of the new apostrophe in v. 5 and the parallel phrase in 3 John 3, 2 John 4 is called *prooemium* and separated from the following verses by Klauck and others (s. *tables 3-4*). Yet there is a homogeneous train of thought in vv. 4-6. The keywords “walk” (vv. 4, 6a, 6b) and “commandment” (vv. 4, 5, 6a, 6b) tie together the paragraph. The topic is right conduct of the Christians in the congregations addressed, who are called “children” (v. 4) of the “lady” (v. 5), that is, members of the Church. The author is praising them because they are “walking in

² For a more detailed analysis see: Friedrich G. LANG, “Disposition und Zeilenzahl im 2. und 3. Johannesbrief. Zugleich eine Einführung in antike Stichometrie,” *BZ NF* 59 (2015), 54–78, esp. 61–68.

truth” (v. 4), and this means “walking according to the commandments” and is the same as “walking in love” (v. 6). The whole paragraph is to be seen as an appeal for loving each other, especially in the present situation of a conflict about right doctrine.

About the structure of vv. 7-11 there is no common opinion. The decisive point in our view is the change between the main persons: subject in v. 7 is the teachers coming from outside who are spreading a wrong doctrine about Christ; subject in vv. 8 and 10 are the addressees. Only a minority of the exegetes puts a caesura before v. 8, taking verse 7 as a separate sub-paragraph. However, the reason of the letter is precisely this point in its centre: the appearance of people who “do not confess that Jesus Christ has come in flesh”. Whosoever teaches in that way is criticized as a seducer and identified as antichrist.

Then the third sub-paragraph (vv. 8-11) is an urgent request, containing imperatives in v. 8 and v. 10 that are based on the general sentences of v. 9 and v. 11. The addressees are asked not to deviate from the right doctrine lest they lose the connection with God and Christ. The false teachers should be refused entry and not even be greeted.

The last two verses (vv. 12-13) consist of two parts with three main clauses. Personal remarks about letter writing and a planned visit are followed by a new sentence with greetings from congregation to congregation. These two verses are clearly separated from the corpus. Therefore they belong together and there is no need to separate the greetings in v. 13 as an extra sub-paragraph.

2.2 Outline of 3 John

In the opening paragraph (vv. 1-4) the first verse is a nominal clause containing the *superscriptio* and the *adscriptio*. The *salutatio* of the Pauline pattern is missing. The wish for well-being (vv. 2-4) introduced by a new apostrophe can be regarded as a substitute; some call it a *prooemium* (Klauck 1992). The addressee Gaius is characterized by the sender ὁ πρεσβύτερος (“the Presbyter”) not only as “beloved one whom I love in truth” (v. 1), but also as somebody “walking in truth” (v. 4). So vv. 1-4 belong together, having unity in content.

The corpus is dealing with a conflict in one of the congregations addressed by the presbyter. He wants Gaius to participate in his missionary activity, which seems to concern several congregations. There are three sub-paragraphs, the first and the third beginning with a new apostrophe.

At the beginning (vv. 5-8) Gaius is praised because he has received foreign brethren into his house. He is expected to be supportive to them on their journey. By doing so, Christians are fulfilling their duty and becoming co-workers of the truth. In the middle (vv. 9-10) the focus changes from Gaius to Diotrephes. He is the head of Gaius’ congregation and is criticized vehemently because he has rejected the presbyter, that is, his letter and his emissaries. He is even expelling those receiving them from the congregation. The last sub-paragraph (vv. 11-12) seems to be an indirect request to receive Demetrius, the bearer of the letter. The general admonition not to follow the evil but rather the good way may refer in this context to the attitude these Christians take in relation to the presbyter’s emissaries: either a positive one like Gaius (v. 5) or a negative one like Diotrephes (v. 10).

The recommendation of Demetrius at the end (v. 11) comes suddenly, but fits a situation where he is appearing personally at Gaius’ door bearing the letter in his hand. In this understanding, the verse contains the scope of the sub-paragraph or even of the whole letter, and

hence it is a constitutive part of this last unit. It should not be separated from the preceding verse by a new caesura.

As in 2 John the conclusion (vv. 13-15) has three parts: a remark on letter writing, the announcement of a visit, and the greetings. The last part is tripartite as well: the peace formula in a nominal clause, the greetings from the presbyter's congregation to Gaius, and those from the presbyter to Gaius' congregation. According to the epistolographic pattern, the three verses are traditional parts of the conclusion and belong together as one paragraph.

The corpus in each of the letters starts with praise, that is, an epideictic element. In 2 John 4 the congregation's "walking in truth" is praised, and Gaius' hospitality in 3 John 5-6a. This functions as a *captatio benevolentiae* meant to motivate the addressees to corresponding behaviour. The request in 2 John 5 and the use of the future tense in 3 John 6b characterize the deliberative element; in each letter it is the centre of the first sub-paragraph. The criterion for the expected behaviour is the "commandment from the Father" (2 John 4) and acting "worthy of God" (3 John 6), the first referring to the *status legalis* (§ 238), the other to the *status qualitatis*, with the typical question of what is *honestum* to do (§§ 233-236).

The middle sub-paragraph criticizes the opposite behaviour, in contrast to the preceding praise, thus it is an epideictic element again. The appearance of false teachers is narrated in 2 John 7, the refusal of hospitality is narrated in 3 John 9-10; the *narratio* is an optional element in an epideictic context (§ 245). The criticism refers to offences against the truth, either by "deceivers" (2 John) or through "malicious words" (3 John). The bad behaviour is explained by the satanic influence of the "antichrist" (2 John 7) or by tyrannical inclinations (3 John 9: "wishing to be the first"). These parallels endorse the decision to regard 2 John 7 as a separate sub-paragraph.

In the last sub-paragraphs, 2 John 8-11 and 3 John 11-12, the imperative mood indicates again the deliberative character. If the goal is called "receiving a full reward" (2 John 8), then it is a typical question concerning the *utile* in the *status qualitatis* (§§ 233-236). It is a spiritual reward, of course, called "having God / having the Father and the Son" (2 John 9) or "being of God / seeing God" (3 John 11). The connection with God can be retained through the true doctrine about Christ or by right behaviour. These general, almost gnomic sentences aim at special requests. The congregation of 2 John is explicitly asked to shun the false teachers, that is, the power of evil (v. 10). In 3 John 12 Gaius is implicitly supposed to receive Demetrius. When this is understood, it is not necessary to distinguish a fourth sub-paragraph at the end.

The content of the two letters analysed according to their argumentation and rhetoric structure is summarized in *Tables 7-8*. The similarity of 2 and 3 John is manifest. The corpus consists of three (sub-)paragraphs in both cases, and these together with the beginning and the conclusion give each letter five paragraphs.

2 John Verses	Parts	Content
1-3	1.	Beginning (praescript): Truth and love as topic
4-11	2.	Corpus: Staying in love and truth
4-6	2.1	Appeal for a walking according to the commandment of loving the brethren
7	2.2	Criticism of emissaries with a false doctrine about Jesus Christ
8-11	2.3	Appeal for staying in the true doctrine and for shunning the false teachers
12-13	3.	Conclusion: Instead of a long letter – preference for a visit, greetings
1-13	1.-3.	Epistle of the Presbyter to an unnamed Christian congregation

3 John Verses	Parts	Content
1-4	1.	Beginning (praescript and prooemium): Walking in truth as topic
5-12	2.	Corpus: Reception of the Presbyter and of his emissaries
5-8	2.1	Appeal for the support of the Presbyter's emissaries
9-10	2.2	Criticism of the church leader Diotrefes because of his refusing the Presbyter
11-12	2.3	Appeal for the reception of the letter-bearer Demetrius
13-15	3.	Conclusion: Instead of a long letter – preference for a visit, greetings
1-15	1.-3.	Epistle of the Presbyter to Gaius, his confidant in another congregation

Tables 7-8: Outline of 2 and 3 John

3. Confirmation of the outline by stichometry

The paragraphing found through text interpretation will remain a matter for discussion. Yet there may be a mathematical way to confirm it. Since I have begun to count the lines of New Testament texts and to compare the size of the single paragraphs, I have discovered proportions that appear to have been calculated by the ancient authors. To demonstrate this I will explain stichometry in general first, then the stichometry of 2 and 3 John in *Tables 9-10*, and finally the special proportions supposedly applied.

3.1 The stichos as standard line in Greek prose

At present, the length of a text is usually measured by the number of words or characters. This has also been done in the case of these two short letters of John. Schnackenburg (1963) has counted 1126 letters in 2 John, 1105 in 3 John, and Morton (2006) 1132 and 1118 letters.³ Brown (1982) has counted 245 words in 2 John, 219 in 3 John.⁴ In each case 3 John is somewhat shorter than 2 John.

However, these are modern counting units. In antiquity the texts were read aloud, so they were perceived by the ear more than by the eye. Therefore syllables were counted; the number of vowels and diphthongs constituting a syllable are the basis of the size. This is well-known

³ SCHNACKENBURG (1963), XI, 295; A.Q. MORTON, "A Gospel Made to Measure," *JHC* 12 (2006), 63–67, esp. 64, 67. The difference may be due to the different text editions they used (Nestle, 24th ed., 1960; *GNT*, 4th ed., 1993).

⁴ BROWN (1982), 727 n. 1 (explicitly based on Nestle, 21st ed., 1952).

2 John Parts	GNT ⁴ - lines	Counted <i>stichoi</i> = “real” §§			Calculated proportions					
		x34	x21	x13	x8	x5	x3	= “ideal”		
1.	7	8	7:11	1					1x8	= 8
2.	18	21	20:04	3	1x21					= 7x3 = 21
2.1	7	9	8:07							3x3 = 9
2.2	4	3	3:00							1x3 = 3
2.3	7	9	8:12							3x3 = 9
3.	5	5	4:11	1					1x5	= 5
1.-3.	30	34	32:11	5	1x34 = 1x21 + 1x13					= 34

3 John Parts	GNT ⁴ - lines	Counted <i>stichoi</i> = “real” §§			Calculated proportions					
		x34	x21	x13	x8	x5	x3	= “ideal”		
1.	8	9	8:02	1					3x3	= 9
2.	19	21	20:02	3	1x21 = 1x13 + 1x8					= 21
2.1	7	8	7:06						1x8	= 8
2.2	6	7	6:12		21/3					= 7
2.3	6	6	5:14						2x3	= 6
3.	5	5	4:05	1					1x5	= 5
1.-3.	32	35	32:09	5	2x13				+ 3x3	= 35

Tables 9-10: Stichometrical analysis of 2 and 3 John

in poetry; hexameter and other meters are defined in syllables. It is also true in prose. The standard line, the *stichos* (or *versus* in Latin), has fifteen syllables, like the average hexameter (or sixteen in Latin literature and Greek texts of late antiquity). For more detailed information see my 1999 article, which is based on the available references in Greek or Latin.⁵

Since the *stichos* was rediscovered around 1880, it has been acknowledged that it was used by ancient publishers and librarians for paying the scribes, calculating the prices and determining the original size of the finished books. Unfortunately it was not realized that the authors used it also in writing their books of prose. There are, however, enough instances proving that the *stichos* served as the standard measure in rhetorical instruction and in literary production. The most important examples are quoted in my article of 2015, many others in my 1999 article.⁶ Thus it is possible that even apostles and evangelists of the New Testament applied the *stichos* when disposing their texts, as we can assume in the case of other educated writers.

3.2 The stichometry of 2 and 3 John

Tables 9-10 follow the outline of the two letters listed in Tables 7-8 (column 1). The lines of the GNT (4th edition, converted into the units in question) are noted in column 2, the number of paragraphs and sub-paragraphs in column 5.⁷ Most important is column 4, containing the results of exact counting. For that purpose the Greek text of the (sub-)paragraphs was divided into lines of 15 syllables each. The number of complete *stichoi* is figured before the colon, the

⁵ Friedrich G. LANG, “Schreiben nach Maß. Zur Stichometrie in der antiken Literatur,” *NT* 41 (1999), 40–57.

⁶ LANG, *Schreiben* (1999), 49–56; idem, *Disposition* (2015; s. note 2), 74–76.

⁷ Deviating from the GNT two additional line breaks are set before 2 John 7 and 8, the one before 3 John 2 is cancelled.

syllables of the incomplete last line of a paragraph are figured thereafter. In column 3 the result of column 4 is rounded up to full *stichoi*. By reviewing and comparing these figures, three observations are noteworthy.

The first is that corresponding parts of the two letters have the same size. On the one hand, this refers to the total sum, which is 32:11 *stichoi* in 2 John and 32:09 in 3 John. The difference is just two syllables; the two letters have *de facto* the same size. Furthermore, the three main parts are almost equal in size as well. The difference amounts to not more than six syllables between the beginnings of 2 and 3 John (7:11 and 8:02 *stichoi*), two syllables between the middle parts (20:04 and 20:02 *stichoi*) and six syllables between the conclusions (4:11 and 4:05 *stichoi*). When rounded up, the corpus and the conclusion have exactly the same number of *stichoi* (21 and 5), whereas there is a difference of a single *stichos* between the two first parts (8 and 9 *stichoi*) and hence between the totals as well (34 and 35 *stichoi*). It seems that the author composed the two letters intentionally in such a way that their formal dispositions became very similar. It is not very likely that these parallel units have the same size by chance.

The second observation is connected with the sub-paragraphs of the corpus. The number 21 (i.e. the sum of the *stichoi*) can be understood as the product of 3×7 , and the two factors appear in the two middle sub-paragraphs. In 2 John it is 3 *stichoi* in size (exactly 3:00), and in 3 John it is 7 (6:12), which is a third of the corpus. In 2 John the first and last sub-paragraphs are equal in size, too (8:07 and 8:12 *stichoi*); when rounded up, the difference of five syllables disappears, and the nine *stichoi* of each unit may be the product of 3×3 . It is assumed in this calculation that the basic units are the paragraphs and that the author counted the last incomplete lines as full *stichoi* when drafting the letter. Later in the manuscripts, however, the paragraphs of the original disposition are usually not marked by line breaks any more, but have become invisible in the *scriptio continua*.

Finally, a third observation: the number of *stichoi* in five of the six main parts and in the sum of 2 John are 5 and 8, 21 and 34. These belong to a particular numerical series. Even the number 3 of the *stichoi* count in the sub-paragraph 2 John 7 and the number 13 for the two sub-paragraphs in 3 John 9-12 are in this series. Each number is the sum of the two numbers before: $1+1 = 2$; $1+2 = 3$; $2+3 = 5$; $3+5 = 8$; $5+8 = 13$; $8+13 = 21$; $13+21 = 34$ etc. The ratio of two successive numbers is approaching the irrational value 0.6180339... or the so-called “golden ratio”. Six of these figures are listed in the right columns of *Tables 9-10* to demonstrate how the numbers of counted *stichoi* can be derived from them.

Is it possible that an ancient author knew about these connections? The name “Fibonacci series” for these numbers – as also the term “golden section” – was coined only in the 19th century.⁸ However, the series itself is already described by Nicomachus of Gerasa (2nd c. AD)⁹

⁸ The name Fibonacci (son/grandson of Bonaccio) refers to the mathematician Leonardo of Pisa (around 1200); the series was named after him in: É. LUCAS, “Recherches sur plusieurs ouvrages de Léonard de Pise,” *Bulletino di bibliografia e di storia delle scienze matematiche e fisiche* 10 (Rome 1877), 129–193. 239–293. The first reference to the term *Goldener Schnitt* in: M. OHM, *Die reine Elementar-Mathematik 2* (2nd ed.; Berlin 1835), 194 note, cf. 268 note.

⁹ NICOMACHUS, *Introd. arithm.* II 28.6, 10; cf. IAMBlichus (around 300), *In Nicom. arithm. intr.* (ed. Pistelli/Klein) 117.20-23; 118.9-18.

and also in a scholion of Euclid (around 300 BC)¹⁰, the idea of which may date back to Hip-pasos of Metapont (5th c. BC), a disciple of Pythagoras.¹¹ If that is the case, it has been possible since then to use the numbers in architecture, sculpture or literature. That is a matter of debate among scholars. The crucial point is whether there is an evident relationship between the measured proportions in any of these fields and the numbers of this series. This seems convincing to me in 2 and 3 John and in many other writings of the New Testament as well. The number 21, for instance, is often used as basis of numerical dispositions, for it can be divided by three and according to the golden ratio: $21 / 3 = 7$ or $21 = 13 + 8$. In 3 John 5-12, the two ways are combined: $21 = 6 + 7 + 8$. Thus it may be not by chance, but due to the logic of numbers, when the same factors are used in the disposition of Romans 1:16–11:36: $7 \times 34 + 8 \times 34 + 6 \times 34$.

3.3 Paragraphing on the basis of proportions

The idea of observing proportions in analysing literature may be quite unfamiliar to us today, but the classical approach was different. It was Plato (4th c. BC) who stated: “Every speech must be put together like a living creature, with a body of its own; it must be neither without head nor without foot, but it must have a middle and extremities that are fitting to one another and to the whole in the written work.”¹² The phrase “have a middle and extremities” seems to allude to the Greek term of the “golden ratio”: “divide in the middle and external ratio”.¹³ Therefore it is not astonishing that caesuras of this ratio were found in Plato’s *Phaidros* or, for example, in Isocrates and Lucianus.¹⁴ The ancient authors were apparently accustomed to dispose their books in such a way. The principle stated by Pseudo-Libanius (4th-6th c.) may have been applied throughout the whole of antiquity: “Only the man who aims at due proportion while expressing himself eloquently articulates clearly what is being said.”¹⁵

¹⁰ EUCLIDES, *Elem.* 5/1 (2nd ed., Heiberg/Stamatis; Leipzig 1977), 185.13-24: Scholion 73 on II 11. The oldest of the three manuscripts containing the scholion: Cod. Paris. 2344 (12th c.); see *ibid.*, XIII-XIV, XXV.

¹¹ S. HELLER, “Die Entdeckung der stetigen Teilung durch die Pythagoreer” (1958), in: O. BECKER (ed.), *Zur Geschichte der griechischen Mathematik* (WdF 33; Darmstadt 1965), 319–354, here 346.

¹² PLATO, *Phaidr.* 264C: Δεῖν πάντα λόγον ὡς περ ζῶον συνεστάναι σῶμά τι ἔχοντα αὐτὸν αὐτοῦ, ὥστε μήτε ἀκέφαλον εἶναι μήτε ἄπουν, ἀλλὰ μέσα τε ἔχειν καὶ ἄκρα, πρέποντα ἀλλήλοις καὶ τῷ ὅλῳ γεγραμμένα (trans. after A. Nehamas / P. Woodruff), see: PLATO, *Complete Works* (ed. J.M. Cooper; Indianapolis/IN, 1997), 541.

¹³ EUCLIDES, *Elem.* VI 30: ἄκρον καὶ μέσον λόγον τεμεῖν. See F. SECK, “Die Komposition des ‘Panegyrikos’,” in: idem (ed.), *Isokrates* (WdF 351; Darmstadt 1976), 353–370, esp. 365–366.

¹⁴ See SECK, Komposition, 367–368; LANG, Schreiben (s. note 5), 56.

¹⁵ PSEUDO-LIBANIUS, *Epist. Charact.* 49: μετ’ εὐφραδείας τῆς συμμετρίας στοχαζομένου; see A.J. MALHERBE, *Ancient Epistolary Theorists* (SBL.Sources 19; Atlanta 1988), 72–73.

4. *Summary*

In regard to the paragraphing of 2 and 3 John the old manuscripts are too divergent to provide hints at the author's original segmentation. Yet in the editions of the text and in commentaries one may observe an increasing consensus about the main caesuras. In order to decide the open questions, this paper tries to confirm the proposed structure in two ways. On the one hand, the rhetorical structure is described in detail, particularly by comparing the similarities of the two letters. On the other, the formal arrangement is analysed by considering the size and the proportions of parallel units. For this purpose the *stichos* is introduced, the ancient standard line of fifteen syllables. Surprisingly, the numbers of *stichoi* found in the individual paragraphs often match the numbers of the so-called Fibonacci series.¹⁶

¹⁶ I wish to thank Dr. Beverly Olson-Dopffel, Heidelberg, for improving my English and Drs. Ernst Boogert, Amsterdam/Groningen, for critical and helpful remarks.