

Friedrich Gustav Lang  
**Mathematics in Matthew:  
Stichometric Composition Analysis**

2020

In his commentary on Matthew, Ulrich Luz has observed that the six antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:21-48) have the same length as the corresponding passage 6:19–7:11 (on possessions, judging, and requests) and that they are divided into two parts of the same length. The measure he applied was the number of print lines in Nestle-Aland (26th edition) in the first case,<sup>1</sup> the number of letters and words in the other.<sup>2</sup>

In classical Greek literature, however, the measure was a standard line of 15 syllables, the length of an average hexameter. This so-called *stichos* was used by ancient publishers for calculating the wages of scribes and the prices of books. It was probably used also by authors when disposing their works, as has been demonstrated in several articles.<sup>3</sup> In Latin prose and in Greek texts of late antiquity the *stichos* was defined as 16 syllables.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See U. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus (Mt 1–7)*, EKK I/1, 5th ed. (Düsseldorf, Neukirchen-Vluyn 2002) 254: “je 56 Nestlezeilen” (referring to NA<sup>26</sup> of 1979); cf. 27 n. 19: reference to J. Kürzinger, “Zur Komposition der Bergpredigt nach Matthäus”, *Bib* 40 (1959) 569-589, at 572-573.

<sup>2</sup> See Luz, *Matthäus*, 1:325 n. 1: “258/244 Worte [*sic*]; 1131/1130 Buchstaben!”; cf. Kürzinger, “Komposition”, 573: 33 and 32 print lines in A. Merk’s NT edition (1933).

<sup>3</sup> See F.G. Lang, “Schreiben nach Maß: Zur Stichometrie in der antiken Literatur”, *NovT* 41 (1999) 40-57; *idem*, “Disposition und Zeilenzahl im 2. und 3. Johannesbrief: Zugleich eine Einführung in antike Stichometrie”, *BZ* 59 (2015) 54-78, at 68-76; *idem*, “Adam – Where to Put You? The Place of Romans 5 in the Letter’s Composition”, in *Textual Boundaries in the Bible* (Pericope 9; Leuven 2017) 189-218, at 195-214. – Cf. J. Smit Sibinga, “Eine literarische Technik im Matthäusevangelium”, in *L’Évangile selon Matthieu* (ed. M. Didier; BEThL 29; Gembloux 1972) 99-105: examples of counting syllables, but not *stichoi*.

<sup>4</sup> The *stichos* of 15 syllables is postulated on the basis of exact calculations, see H. Diels, “Stichometrisches”, *Hermes* 17 (1882) 377-384, at 379. The *stichos* of 16 syllables (*versus Virgilianus*) is explicitly mentioned in a publisher’s note (perhaps of the 4th cent.), see T. Mommsen, “Zur lateinischen Stichometrie”, *Hermes* 21 (1886) 142-156, at 146.

In this article<sup>5</sup> I will analyze the whole Gospel of Matthew on the basis of the *stichos* of 15 syllables, not only passages cited by Luz.<sup>6</sup> I hope the result will corroborate this approach. The two parts of the antitheses, for example (Matt 5:21-32, 33-48) number 33 *stichoi* + 14 syllables and 33 *stichoi* + 4 syllables (written as 33:14 and 33:04 *stichoi*). Rounded up these are 34 *stichoi* each, the difference being just 10 syllables.

## 1. Stichometry of the Five Great Sermons

It has long been noted that the Gospel of Matthews is characterized by five particularly emphasized sermons.<sup>7</sup> At the end of each appears a stereotypical formula: “When Jesus had finished these sayings” (7:28; 19:1), “instructing his disciples” (11:1), “these parables” (13:53), or “all these sayings” (26:1). Three of them have a solemn beginning emphasizing the speaker’s place: the mount (5:1-2), the boat (13:1-2), and the Mount of Olives (24:1-3). The composition of the gospel can be understood as a repeated alternation between narrative sections and the speeches: Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5–7), Commissioning of the Twelve (10), Parables (13), Sermon on Discipleship (18), and Eschatological Discourse (24–25).

What can we observe about the length and the proportions of these sermons? Before going into the stichometrical details, a methodological remark is necessary. We must distinguish between two types of *stichoi* numbers. On the one hand there are the exact numbers of lines of 15 syllables, counted without any spaces at the end of a paragraph. On the other hand are the rounded up numbers, meaning that the last line of a paragraph is counted as a full *stichos* though usually incomplete. On basis of the rounded numbers the sum of *stichoi* in a textual unit depends on the number of its paragraphs. In the following analyses, the exact numbers help to calculate the exact ratios, and the rounded numbers allow to demonstrate how the author may have been able to adjust the particular units to the overall disposition of his book.<sup>8</sup> The textual basis of these analyses is the

---

<sup>5</sup> Revised version of a paper prepared for the International SBL-Meeting in Helsinki 2018. I wish to thank Dr. Beverly Olson-Dopffel, Heidelberg, for linguistic assistance.

<sup>6</sup> See Luz, *Matthäus*, 1:27 on “längenmäßige Entsprechungen”: About the same length is seen in 10:5-42; 18:1-35 (2nd and 4th sermon); in 2:1-12; 2:13-23; in 8:1-17; 8:18–9:1a; 9:1b-17; 9:18-34; in 18:1-14; 18:21-35; in 24:4-41; 25:14-46 “usw.”

<sup>7</sup> The thesis has been extensively presented by B.W. Bacon, *Studies in Matthew* (New York 1930).

<sup>8</sup> For a more extensive explanation see: Lang, “Adam—where to put you”, 205-206.

*Greek New Testament* (UBS<sup>5</sup>) of 2014.<sup>9</sup> The deviations in text and paragraphing are specified in the footnotes.

The following points seem remarkable:

Firstly, the two speeches addressed to the disciples (10:5-42; 18:1-35) are of the same size, as noticed already by Luz.<sup>10</sup> They have 90:14 and 91:13 *stichoi*, the difference being 14 syllables. When rounded up they are 93 *stichoi* each. In this analysis each sermon consists of three paragraphs: 10:5-15, 16-25, 26-42 and 18:1-10, 12-20, 21-35.<sup>11</sup>

Secondly, the Sermon on the Mount (5:1–7:29) is 270:13 *stichoi* in exact counting, a quarter of which is about 67:11, very close to the 67:03 *stichoi* of the six antitheses in 5:21-48. It seems that the number 34 is used as a modulus, the number we have come across by rounding up the two parts of the antitheses. Hence the sermon's total may be rounded up to  $8 \times 34 = 272$  *stichoi*. This number is based only on six paragraphs over against 25 of UBS<sup>5</sup>: 5:1-16, 5:17-48; 6:1-18; 6:19–7:12; 7:13-27; 7:28-29.<sup>12</sup>

Thirdly, the Parables in 13:1-52 are exactly half the size of the Sermon on the Mount having  $136 = 4 \times 34$  *stichoi*. The text of UBS<sup>5</sup> understood as one single paragraph measures exactly 135:07 *stichoi*; the double length (270:14) is just one syllable more than the Sermon on the Mount. If one prefers to divide the parable chapter into several paragraphs comparable to the other sermons one may return to the original Nestle text in 13:44-45, without the five syllables of πάντα and ἀνθρώπων.<sup>13</sup> The remaining 135:02 *stichoi* can be divided into four paragraphs: 13:1-2, 3-23, 24-35, 36-52, without exceeding the limit of 136 *stichoi*.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *The Greek New Testament* (5th ed.; Stuttgart 2014).

<sup>10</sup> See Luz, *Matthäus*, 1:27: “fast genau gleich lang”.

<sup>11</sup> Contrary to UBS<sup>5</sup>, there are no line breaks before 10:24, 32, 34, 40 nor before 18:6, 15, 18; the line break before 18:10 is transposed to 18:12.

<sup>12</sup> Contrary to UBS<sup>5</sup> there are no line breaks before: 5:3, 13, 21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43; 6:2, 5, 16, 22, 24, 25; 7:1, 7, 15, 21, 24.

<sup>13</sup> In both cases Nestle<sup>25</sup> follows cod. B, in 13:45 also  $\aleph^*$ ; UBS<sup>5</sup> follows  $\aleph^{(1)}$  D and  $\aleph$ ; see Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece* (27th ed.; Stuttgart 1993; NA<sup>28</sup> of 2012 does not inform about the original Nestle text any more). Cf. B.M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (corr. ed.; Stuttgart 1975) 34: either πάντα in 13:44 may be influenced by Luke 18:22, or its absence may be due to “the Alexandrian penchant for pruning unnecessary words.”

<sup>14</sup> Contrary to UBS<sup>5</sup> there are no line breaks before 13:10, 18, 31, 33, 34, 44, 45, 47, 51. The proposed paragraph 13:36-52 measuring 43:01 *stichoi* should be rounded down to 43 *stichoi*; the three preceding paragraphs measure 4:09, 51:11 and 35:11 *stichoi* or, rounded up,  $5 + 52 + 36 = 93$ .

Fourthly, the exact size of the Eschatological Discourse (24:1–25:46) is 220:10 *stichoi* in UBS<sup>5</sup>. Rounded up, these are 221 *stichoi*, and this results in a remarkable ratio between the middle and the last of the five sermons. For 136 can be dissolved as 17x8, and 221 is the product of 17x13. Thus the ratio of the two speeches is  $8/13 = 0.61538\dots$ , very close to the irrational golden ratio which is  $0.6180339\dots$ <sup>15</sup>

It is rather hard to believe that such relations were created by the author intentionally. However, is it possible that they happened by chance? If just one such relation, one would regard it as coincidental. Yet here all five speeches are in a specific relation to another one. We can even list a fifth point. The first narrative section following the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' journey in 8:1–9:34, is 168:06 *stichoi* in USB<sup>5</sup>, or rounded up  $170 = 5 \times 34$  *stichoi*. Within this limit four paragraphs can be formed: 8:1-27; 8:28-34; 9:1-17; 9:18-34.<sup>16</sup> It would be nice to have a fifth paragraph before 8:18, but this would imply a change in text or a rounding down of three syllables.<sup>17</sup> At any rate, the relation between narrative and sermon is  $5/8 = 0.625$ , again close to the golden ratio.<sup>18</sup> Consequently, the relation between the first sermon plus the first journey (5:1–9:34) and the last sermon (24:1–25:46) is  $34 \times 13 / 17 \times 13 = 2/1$ .

When we view together these proportions, it is not only the relation 1/1 as between the two speeches to the disciples, or the relation 1/2 as between the Parables and the Sermon on the Mount and between the last sermon and 5:1–9:34, but also the rather sophisticated relations 5/8 and 8/13. All these numbers belong to a special series in which every number is the sum of the two preceding numbers, and the relation of two neighboring numbers is more and more approximating the golden ratio: 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21 .... Even the number 34 that we found as a modulus in the Sermon on the Mount fits into this series.

Is it possible that an ancient author knew about such series and could apply it when writing a book? It is called the "Fibonacci series", after the medieval

<sup>15</sup> Within the limit of 221 *stichoi* the sermon can be divided into four paragraphs: 24:1-35; 24:36–25:13; 25:14-30; 25:31-46 measuring  $78:14 + 59:14 + 40:13 + 40:14 = 220:10$  *stichoi* (contrary to UBS<sup>5</sup> no breaks before 24:3, 15, 29, 32, 45; 25:1, 41). A further new paragraph would be fine before 24:4, but then the 10:02 *stichoi* of 24:1-3 should be rounded down to 10 *stichoi* (1 syllable could be saved by reading ἐκ instead of ἀπό in 24:1, with Cod. B against most others).

<sup>16</sup> That means, 8 of 12 line breaks in USB<sup>5</sup> have been removed: before 8:5, 14, 18, 23; 9:9, 14, 27, 32.

<sup>17</sup> The paragraph 8:1-17 is 43:03 *stichoi* in USB<sup>5</sup>/NA<sup>28</sup>; in 8:7 καί could be deleted with cod. B, and in 8:13 the bracketed [αὐτοῦ] with B ⚭, in both cases together with Nestle<sup>25</sup>, against the other old codices and ⚭.

<sup>18</sup> On basis of syllables the exact relation is:  $168:06 / 270:13 = 0.6217\dots$

mathematician Leonardo of Pisa, the (grand-)son of Bonaccio, who lived around 1200. First in the 19th century was it so named.<sup>19</sup> The series itself is much older. The oldest reference we can date is characterized by the numbers 3, 5, 8 and is found in Nicomachus of Gerasa (2nd cent. AD). It is the last of ten numerical sequences presented as Pythagorean tradition.<sup>20</sup> That means the series is certainly older than the NT and its discovery may even go back to the early Pythagoreans. Hippasus of Metapontum (c. 500 BC) was perhaps the first to come across this series when he discovered the so-called irrational numbers.<sup>21</sup> Therefore it is not necessary to refer back to some remarks in Sanskrit prosody.<sup>22</sup> Admittedly, the Fibonacci numbers are not mentioned in the textbooks of rhetoric, but this is also true in cases of ancient architecture or sculpture even though there are good reasons to assume that architects and sculptors used them without mentioning. Perhaps Polykleitus had described the numbers in his famous “Canon” applying them to the human body, but unfortunately the book is lost.<sup>23</sup>

## 2. Structure of the Book of Matthew

If the evangelist has composed the five sermons in this elaborated way, they seem to be also important elements for structuring the book. It was Bacon who made a proposal for such an outline in 1930.<sup>24</sup> Because the similar clauses at the end of the sermons remind one of the LXX wording of Moses’ last speech in Deut 31:1, Bacon sees five books in Matthew, like a new Pentateuch. Each of

---

<sup>19</sup> The name was introduced, after Fibonacci’s = Leonardo’s book had been printed in 1857; see 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, at 135.

<sup>20</sup> See Nicomachus, *Introd. arithm.* 2.28.6, 10; cf. Iamblichus (c. 300), *In Nicom. arithm. intr.* (ed. Pistelli/Klein) 117.20-23; 118.9-18: the tenth place is chosen by Nicomachus not by chance, for ten is a “perfect number” in Pythagorean tradition.

<sup>21</sup> See S. Heller, “Die Entdeckung der stetigen Teilung durch die Pythagoreer”, in *Zur Geschichte der griechischen Mathematik* (ed. O. Becker; WdF 33; Darmstadt 1965) 319-354, at 342-343.

<sup>22</sup> See P. Singh, “The So-called Fibonacci Numbers in Ancient and Medieval India”, *Historia Mathematica* 12 (1985) 229-244; cf. [www.en.wikipedia.org](http://www.en.wikipedia.org), “Fibonacci number”.

<sup>23</sup> See F. Hiller, “Zum Kanon Polykleits”, in *Marburger Winckelmann-Programm 1965* (Marburg 1966) 1-15, at 4: interpretation and translation of Plutarch, *Mor.* 45c-d, most likely referring to Polykleitus’ Canon: “Bei jedem Werk wird das Schöne gleichsam aus vielen auf ein Gesamtmaß ausgerichteten Teilzahlen kraft einer bestimmten Symmetrie und Harmonie zustande gebracht.”

<sup>24</sup> See Bacon, *Studies*, 82; cf. *idem*, “The ‘Five Books’ of Matthew against the Jews”, *The Expositor* 15 (1918) 56-66, at 65-66.

them consists of a narrative section and a sermon. Each of them has a special topic: discipleship in chapters 3–7, apostleship in 8–10, the mysteries of the kingdom in 11–13, the duties of Church administrators in 14–18, and the coming judgment in 19–25. The main criticism of this outline refers to the beginning and end of Matthew. The classification as “preamble” or “epilogue” for chapters 1–2 and 26–28 does not reflect the weight of these sections, especially concerning Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection.<sup>25</sup>

A contrary outline was proposed by Kingsbury in 1975. His starting point is the verbatim parallel of 4:17 and 16:21: “From that time Jesus began...” (ἀπὸ τότε ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς ...).<sup>26</sup> Kingsbury was not the first one to observe this parallel. It was used for structuring Matthew by Keim already in 1867.<sup>27</sup> Kingsbury derives a tripartite, rather thematic than narrative structure from this parallel: 1:1–4:16 “The Person of Jesus Messiah”; 4:17–16:20 “The Proclamation of Jesus Messiah”; and 16:21–28:20 “The Suffering, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Messiah”.<sup>28</sup> Many other commentators agree with Kingsbury and begin new main sections in 4:17 and 16:21. The main structural idea, however, is now the narrative thread of Matthew that by and large follows the plot of Mark, especially in chapters 12–28.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Bacon’s outline is still in use, see D.L. Turner, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids 2008) VII-VIII: 1:1–2:23 as “Prologue/Introduction”, 26:3–28:20 as “Epilogue/Conclusion”; C.H. Talbot, *Matthew*, Paideia (Grand Rapids 2010) 8: 1:1–2:23 and 26:1b[!]-28:20 as “Birth Narratives” and “Passion and Resurrection Narrative”; H.C. Waetjen, *Matthew’s Theology of Fulfillment, Its Universality and Its Ethnicity* (London 2017) 9: 1:1–25 as “Prologue”, 26:2–28:20 as “Culmination”. Cf. G.R. Osborne, *Matthew* (Zondervans Exegetical Commentary 1; Grand Rapids 2010) 41-47: first main caesura before 4:12, the others after the five sermons; R.H. Smith, *Matthew* (ACTN; Minneapolis 1989) 24-28: first main caesura before 5:1, then caesuras after the sermons and additionally before 16:1; 21:1; 28:1.

<sup>26</sup> See J.D. Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (1975) (repr. with a new preface; Minneapolis 1989) VII-IX.

<sup>27</sup> See T. Keim, *Geschichte Jesu von Nazara*, vol. 1 (Zürich 1867) 52 n. 3; cf. F. Neiryneck, “ΑΠΟ ΤΟΤΕ ΗΡΞΑΤΟ and the Structure of Matthew” (1988), in *idem*, *Evangelica*, vol. 2 (BETL 99; Leuven 1991) 141-182, here 141 n. 3. See also E. Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Matthäus*, ed. W. Schmauch (KEK Sonderband; Göttingen 1956) 65; E. Krentz, “The Extent of Matthew’s Prologue. Toward the Structure of the First Gospel”, *JBL* 83 (1964) 409-414, at 410.

<sup>28</sup> See Kingsbury, *Matthew*, 9; cf. D.R. Bauer, *The Structure of Matthew’s Gospel* (BLS 15; Sheffield 1988) 73; C.L. Blomberg, *Matthew* (NAC 22; Nashville 1992) 24; D.E. Garland, *Reading Matthew: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the First Gospel* (New York 1993) 9.

<sup>29</sup> See the research report in Luz, *Matthäus*, 1:23-25; cf. *idem*, “Matthäusevangelium”, *RGG*<sup>4</sup> 5 (2002) 916-920, at 916: “Die meisten Erklärer sehen im Anschluß an Kingsbury in 16,21

There are numerous variants of this type of outline. A few scholars regard the Galilean section 4:17–16:20 as a unit without other first level caesuras.<sup>30</sup> Others prefer some more divisions in this section, usually before 9:35 and 12:1. The summaries in 4:23 and 9:35 are almost identical: “Jesus went throughout Galilee,” or “went about all the cities and villages,” in both places “teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness.” Therefore 9:35 is seen as the beginning of the next main part.<sup>31</sup> In 12:1 Matthew takes up the Markan thread anew, for some a good reason to begin a new main part here.<sup>32</sup> A special proposal is made by Luz who understands the two corresponding summaries as *inclusio*. His section 4:23–9:35 comprises the first two subsections within his second main part 4:23–11:30.<sup>33</sup> The following section 12:1–16:20 is the next main part for Luz and others.<sup>34</sup> Another division is proposed by Konradt who begins a new main part after Jesus’ second sermon (after 4:17–11:1) containing 11:2–16:20.<sup>35</sup> In the section 16:21–28:20 additional caesuras are usually set before 21:1 (Jesus’ entry in Jerusalem) and before 26:1 (Jesus’ passion and resurrection).<sup>36</sup> In any case, the characteristic feature of this outline type is the main caesura in 16:21.

---

(= Mk 8,31) den Beginn eines neuen Hauptabschnitts und gliedern damit das Mt nach dem Modell des Mk.”

<sup>30</sup> See the comprehensive list in Neiryneck, “ΑΠΟ ΤΟΤΕ”, 144 nn. 13-14. Among others are mentioned: W.G. Kümmel, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (17th ed.; Heidelberg 1973) 75-77 (contrary to the previous editions!); R. Schnackenburg, *Matthäusevangelium 1,1–16,20 / 16,21–28,20*, 2 vols. (EB 1,1/2; Würzburg 1985/87); A. Sand, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (RNT; Regensburg 1986) 6; J. Gnilka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, vol. 2 (HThK 1,2; Freiburg 1988) 524; H. Frankemölle, *Matthäus: Kommentar*, 2 vols. (Düsseldorf 1994/97) 1:82.

<sup>31</sup> See W. Klaiber, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 2 vols. (Botschaft des NT; Neukirchen-Vluyn 2015) 1:7-9; cf. A. Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Matthäus* (Stuttgart 1929) 120; W. Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (THKNT 1; Berlin 1968) 110: 4:23–9:34 as main part, but without a main caesura before 16:21 (Schlatter, 502: before 16:13).

<sup>32</sup> See E. Schweizer, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (NTD 2; Göttingen 1973) 38: 4:17–11:30; Klaiber, *Matthäusevangelium*, 1:10, 193: 9:35–11:30.

<sup>33</sup> See Luz, *Matthäus*, 1:34, 244 (the other subsections being 9:36–11:1; 11:2–30).

<sup>34</sup> See U. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus (Mt 8–17)* (EKK I/2; Zürich, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1990) XII, 225; cf. *idem*, *Matthäus*, 1:33: “Mt 12,1–16,20” (differently 1st ed. 1985, 25: “12,1–16,12”); Klaiber, *Matthäusevangelium*, 1:10, 241.

<sup>35</sup> See M. Konradt, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (NTD 1; Göttingen 2015) 3; cf. R.B. Gardner, *Matthew* (Scottsdale, PA, 1991) 7-9: main section 11:1–16:20; W. Carter, *Matthew on the Margins: A Socio-political and Religious Reading* (JSNTSup 204; Sheffield 2000) v-ix: 11:2–16:20.

<sup>36</sup> See U. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus (Mt 18–25)* (EKK I/3; Zürich, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1997) xi-xii, 172; M. Müller, *Kommentar til Matthæusevangeliet* (Dansk KNT 3;

Sometimes, however, the new steps in Matthew's plot are pulled forward to 4:12 and 16:13. Especially Neiryneck in 1988 has argued that Jesus' public ministry and his way to suffering begin one pericope earlier, following Mark 1:14 and 8:27, when Jesus moves first to Capernaum, later to Caesarea Philippi in the North, where Peter's confession takes place. Yet despite his criticism of Kingsbury in this respect, Neiryneck agrees with him on main caesuras in chapters 4 and 16, his first two main parts being 1:1–4:11 and 4:12–16:12; at the end, he has set an additional caesura before 26:1.<sup>37</sup> Some others follow this variant, at least in one of the two chapters.<sup>38</sup>

This short overview shows the problem of Kingsbury's approach. The many variants raise doubts whether the observed parallel in 4:17 and 16:21 is really a clear marker of Matthew's composition. Kingsbury uses it for a basically thematic structure. However, when analyzing the gospel as narrative, i.e. by observing the shifts of place, time and persons, other caesuras seem to be more important, and further caesuras have to be added following the Markan *Vorlage*. The question is, how to combine these two points convincingly: the clear emphasis on the five sermons and the narrative thread of the book. There are several proposals, all arranging the sermons in a concentric way. Chapter 13 is considered the center of the composition; chapters 10 and 18, both dealing with discipleship, correspond not only in length. An early solution from Lohr in 1961 distinguishes between six narrative sections and five sermons, five parts before and five parts after chapter 13, corresponding to each other symmetrically.<sup>39</sup> A similar concentric composition was proposed by Green in 1968, defining chapter

---

Aarhus 2000) 10-14; Klaiber, *Matthäusevangelium*, 2:11; cf. R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids 2007) xv: additional caesura before 28:16.

<sup>37</sup> See Neiryneck, "APIO TOTE", 178; cf. D.R. Hare, *Matthew* (IBC; Louisville 1993) ix-xi: main caesuras only before 4:12; 16:13.

<sup>38</sup> See Schweizer, *Matthäus*, 398: main caesuras before 4:17; 12:1; 16:13; 21:1; 26:1; U. Luck, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (ZBK.NT 1; Zürich 1993) 5-8: main caesuras before 4:12; 16:13; 21:1; 26:1; D. Senior, *Matthew* (ANTC; Nashville 1998) 7-13: main caesuras before 1:2; 4:12; 11:2; 16:13; 21:1; 28:16. Cf. J. Schniewind, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (NTD 2; Göttingen 1936) 187; P. Vielhauer, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur* (Berlin 1975) 356: 16:13–20:34 as one of several subsections.

<sup>39</sup> See C.H. Lohr, "Oral techniques in the Gospel of Matthew", *CBQ* 23 (1961) 403-435, at 427; cf. J.C. Fenton, *Saint Matthew* (PNTC; London 1963) 15; P.F. Ellis, *Matthew: His Mind and His Message* (Collegeville 1974) 12; D.C. Allison, "Matthew: Structure, Biographical Impulse and the *Imitatio Christi*", in *The Four Gospels* (Neiryneck-Festschrift, ed. F. van Segbroeck; BETL 100; Leuven 1992) 2:1203-1221, at 1208.



11 as the “apex” of a “parabola”, but the postulated correspondences between sermons and narrative sections cannot convince.<sup>40</sup>

Sometimes elements of the plot are included, so that narrative parts are combined with sermons in the strict sense. Combrink, for example, defines the passage 16:21–20:34 as “Fourth Discourse within Narrative”.<sup>41</sup> Very often the speech against Scribes and Pharisees (chapter 23) is connected with the Eschatological Discourse (24–25) as the fifth sermon section.<sup>42</sup> In the solution of Klaiiber, the first two sermons precede the narrative sections (4:17–9:34; 9:35–11:30), the next two are within narrative parts (12:1–16:20; 16:21–20:34), the last sermon follows the narrative (21:1–25:45).<sup>43</sup>

In this case the concluding formulas of four of the sermons are not used as indications of main caesuras any more. This leads to the general observation: When Kingsbury’s caesura of 16:21 or the variant of 16:13 is accepted, the structuring function of the sermons is obscured. The attempt to structure Matthew’s book apart from the five great sermons is to my mind not convincing.

My own solution is oriented around the geographical information of Jesus’ public activity, given at the beginning of new sections. The first important note (Neiryneck’s point) is already in 4:12-13:<sup>44</sup> “Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali.” The next caesura of comparable weight follows in 9:35 (as we have seen): “Jesus went about all the cities and villages ...” It is the beginning of the second Galilean section. These two geographical notes are connected with summaries (4:17, 23-25; 9:35)

---

<sup>40</sup> See H.B. Green, “The Structure of St Matthew’s Gospel”, in *Studia Evangelica* 4 (TU 102; Berlin 1968) 47-59, at 58: correspondence e.g. of chs. 3–4 and 24–25.

<sup>41</sup> See H.J.B. Combrink, “The Structure of the Gospel of Matthew as Narrative”, *TynB* 34 (1983) 61-90, at 71; cf. *idem*, “The Macrostructure of the Gospel of Matthew”, *Neot* 16 (1982) 1-20, at 16.

<sup>42</sup> See Combrink, “Structure”, 71; contrarily e.g. Allison, “Matthew: Structure”, 1208.

<sup>43</sup> See Klaiiber, *Matthäusevangelium*, 1:16. Cf. P. Gaechter, *Die literarische Kunst im Matthäus-Evangelium* (SBS 7; Stuttgart 1965) 12-13, 62-65: seven main sections beginning in 1:1; 5:1; 9:35; 13:1–16:20; 16:13[1]; 20:17; 26:1, the “Parabelrede” ch. 13 as part of the central section. The same structuring in *idem*, *Das Matthäus-Evangelium* (Innsbruck 1963) 16-17.

<sup>44</sup> For 4:12 as the beginning of the new main section see: J. Weiß and W. Bousset, “Die drei älteren Evangelien”, in (*SNT* 1, 3rd ed.; Göttingen 1917) 245; J. Schmid, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (RNT 1; Regensburg 1965) 22; Luck, *Matthäus*, 5; P. Fiedler, *Das Matthäusevangelium* (ThKNT 1; Stuttgart 2006) 95.

and with the call of disciples (4:18-22; 10:1-4), strong indications of a parallel function, as they already have in Mark 1:14-20 and 3:7-19.<sup>45</sup>

When have Jesus' Galilean wanderings finished definitively? The mere announcement of the turn to Jerusalem in Matt 16:21 does not constitute a real break. The next decisive geographical note is only in 19:1, after the sermon of chapter 18: "When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went to the region of Judea, [on the way] beyond the Jordan," that is, through Perea.<sup>46</sup> It is a break as we have it in Mark 10:1, even emphasized by the following summary (Matt 19:2): "Large crowds followed him, and he cured them there." Usually this break is underestimated in the commentaries.

If we take together the whole of Matt 9:35–18:35 as the middle main section, it contains an introduction (9:35–10:4) and five subsections, three of them sermons, at the beginning (10:5-42), in the middle (13:1-52) and at the end (18:1-35), and between them two longer narrative subsections (11:1–12:50; 13:53–17:27). Before and after the middle main section a symmetrical order can be observed. The first sermon, the Sermon on the Mount (5:1–7:29), precedes the narrative part (8:1–9:34), and the last one, the Eschatological Discourse (24:1–25:46), follows the narrative (19:1–23:39). This outline, I think, combines the two constitutive elements of Matthew's Gospel:<sup>47</sup> the narrative according to the Markan plot, and the great sermons containing "everything that I have commanded you", as the risen Lord reminded his disciples in the very last verse (28:20).

### 3. Matthew's Main Sections and Subsections

Before the middle main section, I see only one significant caesura, the division between Jesus' background and his public activity beginning in 4:12. In contrast, the shift between Jesus as child and as adult in 3:1 does not have the same

---

<sup>45</sup> See F.G. Lang, "Maßarbeit im Markus-Aufbau: Stichometrische Analyse und theologische Interpretation", *BN* 140 (2009) 111-134; 141 (2009) 101-115, at *BN* 140: 120.

<sup>46</sup> Why assume that the author was not familiar with the geographical-historical facts when "beyond the Jordan" can be explained as the precise information on the selected route? Against Luz, *Matthäus*, 3:92 n. 17; cf. (on the parallel in Mark 10:1) F.G. Lang, "Über Sidon mitten ins Gebiet der Dekapolis': Geographie und Theologie in Markus 7,31", *ZDPV* 94 (1978) 145-160, at 146 n. 4.

<sup>47</sup> There is "no one structural principle", so rightly W.D. Davies and D.D. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh 1988) 72; their conclusion, however, is not convincing: they abstain totally from a structuring outline and list 89 pericopes instead. Similarly D.J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew* (SP 1; Collegeville, MN, 1991): 81 pericopes.

weight though from here Matthew begins to follow the story of Mark.<sup>48</sup> The first main section (1:1–4:11) combines five different elements, but in all of them it addresses the question of Jesus' identity. He is introduced as son of Abraham and David in the genealogy (1:1-17), as “Emmanuel” in the birth story (1:18-25), as God's Son “out of Egypt” in the center of the central story (2:1-23), and as Son of God again in the baptism story (3:1-17) and in the temptations (4:1-11). This first main part seems to be a well-balanced composition.

The second main section (4:12–9:34) consists of an introduction (4:12-25), like the middle main section, and of two subsections, the first sermon (5:1–7:29) and the first journey narrative (8:1–9:34). Both subsections seem to be concentric compositions, each in five larger parts. Concerning the Sermon on the Mount, a symmetric structure was proposed by Kürzinger, without a central pericope, however.<sup>49</sup> Grundmann was probably the first to observe that the Lord's prayer is the center of the central part on “your piety” (6:1-18).<sup>50</sup> Before that, the beatitudes (5:3-16) are followed by the antitheses about the law (5:17-48). Thereafter radical ethical imperatives (6:19–7:12) are followed by a serious call for decision (7:13-27). The verses at the beginning (5:1-2) and at the end (7:28-29) form the narrative frame of the sermon.<sup>51</sup> Concerning the following journey, the two parts with healings, at the beginning in Capernaum (8:1-17), at the end along the way (9:18-34), correspond to the two parts with teachings, on discipleship on the way across the sea (8:18-27) and the controversies back in Capernaum (9:1-17). The episode in Gadara forms the center (8:28-34), the story of the two demoniacs calling Jesus “Son of God”.<sup>52</sup>

The middle section consists of two narrative subsections framed by sermons. The first one (11:1–12:50) begins with the Baptist's question on the identity of Jesus: “Are you the one who is to come?” (11:3). The first and the last of the five parts (11:1-24 and 12:22-50) contain controversies about his identity. In the

---

<sup>48</sup> In some commentaries a first level caesura is proposed at 3:1, see Grundmann, *Matthäus*, 89; Luck, *Matthäus*, 5; W. Wiefel, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (THKNT 1; Leipzig 1998) 50.

<sup>49</sup> See Kürzinger, “Komposition”, 586: “streng symmetrisch”, the antitheses 5:21-32 and 5:33-48 corresponding with 6:1-18 and 6:19–7:6, the axis being 5:48.

<sup>50</sup> See Grundmann, *Matthäus*, 205; cf. Schweizer, *Matthäus*, 130; Luz, *Matthäus*, 1:254; Frankemölle, *Matthäus*, 1:243.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. the similar structuring of Luz, *Matthäus*, 1:253-254; Klaiber, *Matthäusevangelium*, 1:80: they register an extra correspondence between 5:17-20 and 7:12.

<sup>52</sup> Usually the Gadara story is connected with the preceding passage(s); see C. Burger, “Jesu Taten nach Matthäus 8 und 9”, *ZThK* 70 (1973) 272-287, at 285: 8:18-34; Luz, *Matthäus*, 2:20; Konradt, *Matthäus*, 139: 8:18–9:1; Klaiber, *Matthäusevangelium*, 1:156: 8:23–9:8. However, the Christological title makes this story particularly significant.

central part (12:1-14) the conflict intensifies when the Pharisees conspire “how to destroy him” (12:14). In contrast, the two remaining small parts are rather reflections than episodes, when Jesus defines his own mission as Son of the Father (11:25-30) and is identified with God’s chosen servant of Isaiah (12:15-21). By this analysis, the subsection forms a concentric composition as well, and there is no reason for a major caesura before 12:1.

The subsection 13:53–17:27 also begins with the question of Jesus’ identity: “Where did this man get this wisdom ...?” (13:54). Yet the question is now answered. Jesus is revealed in epiphany scenes twice as Son of God, when he appears upon the nightly sea (14:33) and on the mountain of transfiguration (17:5). Thus the surrounding episodes may belong together as corresponding parts (14:13-36; 17:1-13). Accordingly, when Peter confesses Jesus as “the Christ, the Son of the living God,” this has been revealed to him by the “Father in heaven”, as Jesus says (16:16-17). The scene in Caesarea Philippi (16:13-28) contains a second point, the announcement of Jesus’ passion in Jerusalem (16:21), and insofar it is a counterpart to the scene with the delegation from Jerusalem investigating his teachings on purity (15:1-20). It is not so obvious that the remaining parts at the beginning and at the end (13:53–14:12; 17:14-27) are also corresponding. The center of the seven parts (15:21–16:12) seems to be related to the center of the first journey (8:28-34), since Jesus travels here outside Galilee in the “district of Tyre and Sidon” (15:21). At any rate, the subsection can be understood as a unity, and there is no need to make a deep cut before 16:13 or 16:21.

The next narrative subsection (19:1–23:39) is geographically divided between parts upon the journey to Jerusalem (19:1–20:34) and parts taking place in Jerusalem (21:1–23:39). Jesus’ entry to the city and the cleansing of the temple (21:1-17) fills one separate day, therefore it seems to be a distinct part forming the center of the subsection and the climax of the conflict. In the previous narrative, a new part begins when they are going up to Jerusalem (21:17-34). A further caesura marks the scenes with opponents and with disciples (19:1-15; 19:16–20:16).<sup>53</sup> Jesus’ teachings in the temple on the day after arriving (21:18–23:39) can also be divided into three parts. The speech against Scribes and Pharisees addressed “to the crowds and to his disciples” (23:1-39) is certainly a part in itself. In the foregoing controversies with the opponents, there is a caesura marked by the note on their reaction (21:45-46). Thus we can distinguish two

---

<sup>53</sup> The blessing of the children (19:13-15) could also be combined with the following scene of the rich young man (19:16–20:16). Yet the three verses seem to form a counterpart to 19:1-2, so that 19:1-15 is a well-balanced first part of the subsection.

parts of controversies (21:18-46; 22:1-46), and the whole subsection consists of seven parts.

The Eschatological Discourse (24:1–25:46) begins with a short narrative introduction (24:1-3) containing the move from the temple to the Mount of Olives and the announcement of the two following themes: “when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming?” (24:3).<sup>54</sup> At first Jesus talks about the signs of “the end of the age” (24:4-35), then “about that day and hour” and the necessity of watchfulness (24:36–25:13). Often the parable of the fig tree (24:32-35) is combined with the subsequent topic, but its “lesson” refers to the visibility of the signs. The new theme is introduced explicitly only in 24:36.<sup>55</sup> The parable of the ten bridesmaids (25:1-13) belongs to the part on watchfulness and “day and hour”, as is explicitly stated in the last verse. Two larger narratives conclude this subsection. The parable of the talents (25:14-30) is related to the parable of the faithful and the unfaithful slave (24:45-51), with a new accent, however. The story of the last judgment (25:31-46) refers back to the coming of the Son of Man (24:30). Thus the four parts after the introduction are arranged in axial symmetry: two parts on constant readiness in the middle, two parts on the parousia (24:3) at the beginning and at the end.<sup>56</sup>

The last main section (26:1–28:15) is clearly structured according to space, time and persons.<sup>57</sup> The seven subsections follow the plan of Mark:<sup>58</sup> the days before Passover (26:1-16), the evening of the Last Supper (26:17-29), the night at the Mount of Olives (26:30-56), the trial in the High Priest’s house including the decision on Judas’ silver coins (26:57–27:10), the morning at Pilatus’ praetorium (27:11-31), later Jesus’ crucifixion and death at Golgotha including his burial (27:32-61), finally the guards at the tomb comprising the Sabbath day and the Easter morning (27:62–28:15). The commissioning of the disciples (28:16-

<sup>54</sup> Usually this narrative is divided, see UBS<sup>5</sup>; cf. Luz, *Matthäus*, 3:386: the verses 24:1-2 even regarded as conclusion of the woes against Scribes and Pharisees (23:1–24:2); Konradt, *Matthäus*, 368: 24:1-2 as subsection in itself. In favor of the delimitation 24:1-3 see Schweizer, *Matthäus*, 292; Frankemölle, *Matthäus*, 2:391.

<sup>55</sup> See Frankemölle, *Matthäus*, 2:406; differently Luz, *Matthäus*, 3:441; Klaiber, *Matthäusevangelium*, 2:179; Konradt, *Matthäus*, 377.

<sup>56</sup> Differently Luz, *Matthäus*, 3:403: “Die Dreiteiligkeit von Kap 24-25 ist heute fast durchweg anerkannt”, i.e. 24:3-31; 24:32–25:30; 25:31-46; similarly Konradt, *Matthäus*, 369.

<sup>57</sup> Differently U. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus (Mt 26–28)* (EKK I/4; Düsseldorf, Neukirchen-Vluyn 2002) 4: “Es ist ein vergebliches Unterfangen, in der matthäischen Passionsgeschichte einen systematischen Aufbau feststellen zu wollen.” His “sechs Hauptabschnitte” (5) plus 27:62–28:15 (6), however, are identical with our delimitation, even the subsection on the Mount of Olives begins in 26:30 (UBS<sup>5</sup>: 26:31).

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Lang, “Maßarbeit im Markus-Aufbau”, *BN* 140: 133.

20) is separated from the preceding story of Jesus' passion and resurrection, for it takes place in Galilee, not in Jerusalem any more; it is an epilogue to the whole Gospel. The center of the section forms the trial before the Sanhedrin when Jesus declares himself as "the Christ, the Son of God" and is sentenced to death (26:63-66). The second and sixth subsections seem to correspond in their Christological weight: the institution of the Lord's Supper (26:26-28) and the posthumous insight of the centurion and his companions: "Truly this man was God's Son!" (27:54). The first and last subsections are connected insofar as they cover the two days before and after Passover whereas the five subsections in between take place within one single day from "evening" (26:20) to "evening" (27:57).

By overviewing this analysis it becomes obvious that the author has elaborated the middle parts of most narrative sections with great diligence. It can hardly be a coincidence that the title "Son of God" appears in the center of the first and last sections (2:15; 26:63) as well as in the center of the first journey subsection (8:29), and that in the center of the last journey subsection Jesus is proclaimed as "king" and "Son of David" (21:5, 9, 15). In the journey subsections of the middle section the important Christological statements are arranged in a decentralized way, but still in corresponding parts as we have seen (11:27; 12:18; 14:33; 17:5). There are some weighty pericopes that do not fit into this scheme, for instance Jesus' baptism (3:17) or Peter's confession (16:16). Four of the five great sermons lack a distinct center. In the Sermon on the Mount, however, the Lord's prayer is certainly placed in the center intentionally.

#### 4. Stichometry of Matthew

The observations made by analyzing Matthew's Gospel in terms of content can now be corroborated by a stichometrical analysis as we have done already concerning the great sermons. The main result refers to the size of the middle main section (9:35–18:35): it covers precisely one third of the whole book. The exact numbers are 863:02 of 2605:11 *stichoi*, which is a ratio of 0.331. In my reconstruction I propose a total of 105 paragraphs and  $2652 = 78 \times 34$  *stichoi*, and 40 paragraphs and  $884 = 26 \times 34$  *stichoi* for the middle section. In UBS<sup>5</sup> Matthew is divided into 179 paragraphs. They were reduced in an attempt to adjust the *stichoi* sums of the main sections, subsections and major parts to a consistent plan of the gospel's composition, and to the proportions found on the basis of

exact counting.<sup>59</sup> Our result concerning the middle section, found on this basis, can hardly be regarded as a random result, after we have seen the refined stichometrical relations between the five sermons. The author has disposed his book this way intentionally. Our result is a strong confirmation of the proposed main caesura at Matt 19:1.

When going into details, we observe remarkable proportions also between the subsections of the middle main section. It consists of a short introduction and five subsections. On the one hand, the introduction plus first and last subsections (9:35–10:4 + 10:5–42 + 18:1–35) add up to  $22 + 93 + 93 = 208 = 16 \times 13$  *stichoi* – the same total as for Matthew’s first main section (1:1–4:11).<sup>60</sup> The fourth subsection, the narrative part 13:53–17:27, has a size of  $336 = 16 \times 21$  *stichoi*,<sup>61</sup> so that these parts together have  $16 \times 34$  *stichoi*, the numbers 13, 21, 34 being Fibonacci numbers. On the other hand,  $16 \times 34$  is equal to  $34 \times 2 \times 8$ . The two remaining subsections have  $340 = 34 \times 2 \times 5$  *stichoi* together, the narrative part (11:1–12:50) with  $204 = 34 \times 2 \times 3$  *stichoi*, the central sermon (13:1–52) with  $136 = 34 \times 2 \times 2$  *stichoi*,<sup>62</sup> the numbers 2, 3, 5, 8 also being Fibonacci numbers.

When looking on the further segmentation, it is hard to recognize a specific stichometrical idea in the journey of 11:1–12:50. Yet we can observe that the first and last of its five parts are the longest ones (11:1–24 with 59 *stichoi*, 12:22–50 with 83), the second and fourth parts the shortest ones (11:25–30 with 16 *stichoi*, 12:15–21 with 14), the controversies in the center having a middle size (12:1–14 with 32 *stichoi*).<sup>63</sup> In the other journey (13:53–17:27) a nice division can be observed: the first and last two of its seven parts (13:53–14:36 with 96 *stichoi*; 17:1–27 with 72) measure  $8 \times 21 = 168$  *stichoi* together, or half the size of this narrative subsection.<sup>64</sup> Accordingly, the three middle parts measure also 168 *stichoi* together, the first of them being a fourth of this sum (15:1–20 with  $42 = 2 \times 21$  *stichoi*), the two others being in the Fibonacci ratio of 13/8

<sup>59</sup> Additionally, five variants of the UBS<sup>5</sup> text have been considered in order to allow for an appropriate paragraphing, see above nn. 13 (13:44–45), 15 (24:1) and 17 (8:7, 13). The exact total of Matthew would then be reduced by 9 syllables to 2605:02 *stichoi*.

<sup>60</sup> The exact numbers are  $21:09 + 90:14 + 91:13 = 204:06$  *stichoi*; concerning the paragraphing see above n. 11. The exact number of the main section 1:1–4:11 is 206:07 *stichoi*.

<sup>61</sup> The exact number is 325:13 *stichoi* in USB<sup>5</sup>, segmented in seven major parts (see above). In USB<sup>5</sup> 19 paragraphs, here 16: no line breaks before 14:22, 34; 15,10; 17,9; additional line break before 16:24.

<sup>62</sup> The exact numbers of UBS<sup>5</sup> (cf. n. 13) are  $197:06 + 135:07 = 332:13$  *stichoi*; the ratio  $197:06 / 332:13 = 0.593$  is very close to  $3/5 = 0.6$ .

<sup>63</sup> The exact numbers of the five parts are:  $56:13 + 15:06 + 31:00 + 13:02 + 81:00$  in  $3 + 1 + 2 + 1 + 5$  paragraphs.

<sup>64</sup> The exact numbers are:  $39:04 + 55:06$  plus  $32:14 + 37:05 = 164:14$  *stichoi* in 7 paragraphs.

(15:21–16:12 with  $78 = 6 \times 13$  *stichoi*, 16:13–28 with  $48 = 6 \times 8$ ).<sup>65</sup> The sermon in between, the parables in 13:1–52, when divided into an introduction and three paragraphs, shows a remarkable proportioning as well, the first parable (13:3–23) measuring  $52 = 4 \times 13$ , the remaining parts  $84 = 4 \times 21$  *stichoi*.<sup>66</sup>

Striking proportions can also be observed in the other sections. In the first main section, the first two subsections (1:1–17, 18–25) are of the same size together as the third one (2:1–23), the exact numbers being 65:14 and 66:08 *stichoi*, a difference of 9 syllables. The sizes of the remaining two subsections (3:1–17; 4:1–11) seem to represent square numbers:  $48 = 3 \times 4 \times 4$  and  $27 = 3 \times 3 \times 3$ , the sum being  $75 = 3 \times 5 \times 5$ .<sup>67</sup> The numbers 3, 4, and 5 form the well-known example of the Pythagorean triple. If these relations were realized by the author intentionally, he may have subtracted the 75 *stichoi* from 208 ( $= 16 \times 13$ ), the intended sum of the section, and then divided the remaining 133 *stichoi* into two halves, the one with 66, the other one with 67 *stichoi*.

In the second main section, the introduction (4:12–25) is  $39 = 3 \times 13$  *stichoi* in three paragraphs.<sup>68</sup> Since the two following subsections have a size of  $34 \times 13$  together, the number 13 seems to be a modulus used for the whole section which then has a size of  $37 \times 13 = 481$  *stichoi*. In the Sermon on the Mount it is noteworthy that the part about “your piety” (6:1–18) stands exactly in the middle. The two parts before (5:1–48) and the two parts after including the conclusion (6:19–7:29) are of the same size with 113 *stichoi* each; counted exactly, the difference is just 6 syllables (112:06 and 112:12).<sup>69</sup> The stichometrical middle is at the beginning of 6:8, shortly before the Lord’s prayer in 6:9b–13.

The first journey subsection (8:1–9:34) can be divided into two halves of exactly the same length:<sup>70</sup> the three parts 8:1–17, 18–27, 28–34 are 85 (84:04) *stichoi* together, the two remaining parts 9:1–17, 18–34 are 85 (84:02) as well, a difference of 2 syllables.<sup>71</sup> If we take together first two and then three parts (8:1–27; 8:28–9:34), the ratio is  $66 / 104$  *stichoi*, almost the ratio  $65 / 105 = 13/21$ . In these calculations the first part (8:1–17) is counted as 43 *stichoi*, though the ex-

<sup>65</sup> The exact numbers are: 40:14 + 74:01 + 45:14 = 160:14 *stichoi* in 9 paragraphs.

<sup>66</sup> The exact numbers are: 51:11 / 83:11 in USB<sup>5</sup> (or 51:11 / 83:06 according to nn. 13–14).

<sup>67</sup> The exact numbers are: 47:13 + 26:02 = 74:00 *stichoi*.

<sup>68</sup> The paragraphs beginning with 4:12, 18, 23 number 13 (12:05), 14 (13:02), and 12 (11:14) *stichoi*.

<sup>69</sup> The five parts of the Sermon on the Mount number 32 (31:08), 81 (80:13), 46 (45:10), 69 (69:00), and 40 (39:13) *stichoi*, the conclusion (7:28–29) 4 (3:14) *stichoi*.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Luz, *Matthäus*, 1:27: 8:1–9:1a and 9:1b–34 being “annähernd gleich lang”.

<sup>71</sup> The five parts of 8:1–9:34 number 43 (43:03), 23 (22:05), 19 (18:11), 47 (46:12), and 38 (37:05) *stichoi*.



act size is 43:03. The number 43 can be realized either by rounding down or by elimination of the line break before 8:18 or by slightly changing the USB<sup>5</sup> text.<sup>72</sup> We do not know how precisely authors wanted to work when applying a stichometrical disposition.

After the middle section the last narrative subsection (19:1–23:39) is divided into seven parts as we have seen. All together they measure  $481 = 37 \times 13$  *stichoi*, based on a reconstruction in 33 paragraphs. The first, middle and last parts (19:1-15; 21:1-17; 23:1-39), numbering  $39 + 47 + 99$ , add up to  $185 = 37 \times 5$  *stichoi*.<sup>73</sup> The two parts before the middle part and the two thereafter, numbering  $75 + 45$  plus  $83 + 93$ , add up accordingly to  $296 = 37 \times 8$ .<sup>74</sup> Thus we come across the ratio  $5/8$  again. In addition, remarkable sums can be observed by adding the corresponding parts: the second and the sixth parts are  $75 + 93 = 168 = 21 \times 8$  *stichoi* together, the third and fifth parts  $45 + 83 = 128 = 16 \times 8$ .

The following Eschatological Discourse (24:1–25:46) has been divided above into a short introduction and four parts. The stichometrical total is  $221 = 17 \times 13$ . The parts dealing with the parousia (24:4-35; 25:31-46), numbering  $69 + 41 = 110$  *stichoi*, are virtually of the same size as the remaining parts on the necessary watchfulness including the introduction (24:1-3; 24:36–25:30), numbering  $10 + 60 + 41 = 111$  *stichoi*.<sup>75</sup> It is noteworthy that the two parts at the end, the parable of the talents (25:14-30) and the judgment of the nations (25:31-46), are of equal length, each with 41 *stichoi*, the difference being just one syllable.

The last main section, the story of Jesus' death and resurrection (26:1–28:15) including the epilogue (26:16-20), has a size of  $377 = 29 \times 13$  *stichoi*. It would be nice if the epilogue would measure 13 *stichoi*, but it is only 12 (11:08 in exact counting). That means: 1 *stichos* is missing or at least 8 syllables. The author was obviously able to follow a very elaborate stichometrical plan. Why not here? Maybe, he made a mistake in counting, or he needed a compensation for the very tight section 26:1–28:15. Its exact total is 362:01 *stichoi* divided into 7 paragraphs which summarize to 365 *stichoi*, one *stichos* more than  $28 \times 13 = 364$ .<sup>76</sup> Otherwise we would need to assume that the original wording of the epilogue was unintentionally shortened in a very early stage so that no traces are

---

<sup>72</sup> See above n. 17.

<sup>73</sup> The exact numbers are:  $38:02 + 44:02 + 94:14 = 177:03$ ; the paragraphing follows USB<sup>5</sup>, with additional line breaks before 21:4, 6; 23:34; no line break before 23:37.

<sup>74</sup> The exact numbers are:  $73:04 + 43:14 + 79:09 + 91:03 = 288:00$ ; the paragraphing follows USB<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>75</sup> The exact numbers of the 5 parts are listed in n. 15.

<sup>76</sup> As in the first main section (1:1–4:11) there are no paragraphs within the seven subsections, the other 14 line breaks of UBS<sup>5</sup> are disregarded.

left in the extant manuscripts. It is difficult to find an explanation for this exceptional deviation from the modulus 13.

At any rate, the following stichometrical calculations are based on the hypothesis that the sixth subsection (27:32-61) was 64 *stichoi* in the original plan (instead of the counted 65:00), and the epilogue 13 *stichoi*. Under this presupposition we can observe remarkable proportions in two ways. Without the epilogue, the seven subsections can be arranged in two halves of the same size: the first three on Jesus' last days with his disciples and the last one on his resurrection (26:1-56; 27:62-28:15) number  $32 + 32 + 68 + 50 = 182 = 14 \times 13$  *stichoi*, the three telling his trial and death (26:57-27:61) number  $68 + 50 + 64 = 182$  *stichoi* as well.<sup>77</sup> The epilogue included, the first three subsections together with the epilogue add up to  $32 + 32 + 68 + 13 = 145 = 29 \times 5$  *stichoi*, the other four to  $68 + 50 + 64 + 50 = 232 = 29 \times 8$  *stichoi*. Again we come up to the ratio 5/8.

The overview of all main sections has shown that the disposition in detail is based on the modulus 13. The total of Matthew, 2652 *stichoi*, can be understood as  $6 \times 34 \times 13 = 204 \times 13$ , and the 884 *stichoi* of the middle section as  $2 \times 34 \times 13 = 68 \times 13$ . The other main sections have the following totals: 208 =  $16 \times 13$  *stichoi* for Jesus' beginnings, 481 =  $37 \times 13$  *stichoi* for his first appearance in Galilee, together  $53 \times 13$ . The sections after the center measure: 702 =  $54 \times 13$  *stichoi* for Jesus' public appearance in Perea and Judea, 364 =  $28 \times 13$  for his passion and resurrection, and  $1 \times 13$  for the epilogue in Galilee, together  $83 \times 13$  *stichoi*.

Between these numbers one can observe three special links:

Firstly, the journey subsection of the fourth section (19:1-23:39) measuring  $37 \times 13$  *stichoi* is as large as the second main section (4:12-9:34), and the last sermon subsection (24:1-25:46) measuring  $17 \times 13$  *stichoi* is half the size of the second section without introduction (5:1-9:34) measuring  $34 \times 13$  *stichoi*.<sup>78</sup>

Secondly, the first and the last main sections (1:1-4:11; 26:1-28:15) number together  $16 \times 13 + 28 \times 13 = 44 \times 13$  *stichoi*, the second (without introduction) and the fourth subsections (5:1-9:34; 19:1-25:46) measure together twice as much:  $34 \times 13 + 54 \times 13 = 88 \times 13$  *stichoi*.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>77</sup> The seven subsections number exactly:  $31:10 + 31:04 + 67:07 + 67:02 + 49:08 + 65:00 + 50:00 = 362:01$ .

<sup>78</sup> In the first case the exact numbers differ considerably: 4:12-9:34 with 476:10, and 19:1-23:39 with 465:03 *stichoi* (based on 14 or 33 paragraphs respectively); the difference is partly due to the seven woes in 23:1-39 delimited into seven short paragraphs (following UBS<sup>5</sup>). In the second case the numbers are very close: 439:04 *stichoi* for 5:1-9:34, and 220:10 for 24:1-25:46.

<sup>79</sup> The exact numbers are: 568:08 *stichoi* for 1:1-4:11 + 26:1-28:15, and 1125:02 *stichoi* for 5:1-9:34 + 19:1-25:46; half this size is 562:09.

Thirdly, the second main section without introduction (5:1–9:34) and the fourth one together with the epilogue (19:1–25:46; 28:16–20) are in the ratio of  $34 \times 13 / 55 \times 13$ , and  $34/55$  is a ratio in the Fibonacci series.<sup>80</sup>

All three examples refer to the second main section without introduction, so it seems that the author used the size of this passage, the first sermon and the first journey (5:1–9:34), as a kind of reference text in his calculations. Its size is the product of 34 and 13, the one being the modulus used for the overall plan, the other one being the modulus of the further structuring.

## 5. Outline of Matthew as Summary

The evangelist seems to have composed his gospel very carefully. This view is not accepted everywhere. Luz, for instance, denies “a clear disposition”; Matthew, in his understanding, seems to be more interested in a continuous narrative than “in clear caesuras”.<sup>81</sup> However, the remarkable proportions between different parts we have established on the basis of *stichoi* have to be explained. Recourse to the Fibonacci numbers has turned out to be an appropriate key to explain the elaborate *stichoi* numbers in all parts of the book. The idea of an evangelist counting syllables may be rather outlandish. Yet who has a better solution?

Similar analyses of other New Testament writings have been published in the last years. It seems that the *stichos* and the Fibonacci numbers were also used by other authors when designing their gospels or epistles. So far our thesis has been verified for the Gospel of Mark, Paul’s epistles to Romans and 2 Corinthians, the epistles to Ephesians and Hebrews, and the two small letters of John.<sup>82</sup> Articles on other writings are being prepared. Note that these books differ from one another in author and literary genre, yet each new analysis of this kind corroborates the approach. It appears clear that the author of Matthew was not unique in this respect.

The structure of the Gospel of Matthew can be seen in the following outline (table 1). The five main sections structure the narrative according to the geo-

<sup>80</sup> The exact ratio is:  $439:04 / 697:06 = 0.62986\dots$ , whereas  $34/55 = 0.61818\dots$ .

<sup>81</sup> See Luz, *Matthäus*, 1:25-26: “Eine klare Disposition liegt offenbar nicht ‘auf der Hand’ ... Matthäus legt offenbar eher auf einen lückenlosen Erzählablauf Wert als auf klare Zäsuren.”

<sup>82</sup> See F.G. Lang, “Maßarbeit im Markus-Aufbau” (2009); *idem*, “Adam – where to put you” (2017); *idem*, “Remarkable Proportions in the Composition of 2 Corinthians,” *CBQ* 82 (2020) •••••; *idem*, “Ebenmaß im Epheserbrief: Stichometrische Kompositionsanalyse”, *NovT* 46 (2004): 143-163; *idem*, “Observations on the Disposition of Hebrews”, *NovT* 61 (2019) 176-196; *idem*, “Disposition und Zeilenzahl im 2. und 3. Johannesbrief” (2015).

graphical plan of the Markan *Vorlage*. The nine subsections of the three middle main sections (4:12–25:46) indicate the typical switches between sermons and narratives. In the last column the *stichoi* are listed, based on the rounded up *stichoi* numbers of the paragraphs. The numbers of paragraphs are added which are presupposed in the present stichometrical calculations. The tabular presentation makes transparent the concentric composition of Matthew's book that has resulted by introducing a main caesura at 19:1.

Matthew Chapters	Parts Contents	<i>stichoi</i> Paragr.	
<b>1:1–4:11</b>	<b>1. Beginnings: Jesus' descent, birth and baptism</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>5</b>
1,1-17	1.1 Genealogy: From Abraham and David to Joseph	43	
1,18-25	1.2 Birth: Mary's pregnancy and Joseph's dream	23	
2,1-23	1.3 Childhood: Magi in Bethlehem, flight to Egypt, Nazareth	67	
3,1-17	1.4 John the Baptist: Baptizing Jesus in the Jordan	48	
4,1-11	1.5 Temptation: Jesus disputing with Satan	27	
<b>4:12–9:34</b>	<b>2. First appearance in Galilee: Jesus preaching and healing</b>	<b>481</b>	<b>14</b>
4:12-25	2.0 Summary: Move to Capernaum, calling the first disciples	39	3
5:1–7:29	2.1 <i>SERMON 1: Sermon on the Mount on doing the will of God</i>	272	6
5,1-16	2.11 Encouragement: Beatitudes, salt and light	32	
5,17-48	2.12 Requirement: Validity of the Law, six antitheses	81	
6,1-18	2.13 Piety: On almsgiving, praying (Lord's prayer), fasting	46	
6,19–7,12	2.14 Radical requirements: On treasures, worries, judging	69	
7,13-27	2.15 Serious exhortation: Gate, tree, house building images	40	
7,28-29	2.16 Conclusion: Reaction of the people	4	
8:1–9:34	2.2 <i>JOURNEY 1: Healing and teaching at the Sea of Galilee</i>	170	5
8,1-17	2.21 Capernaum: Healing leper, Centurion's servant, many others	43	
8,18-27	2.22 Crossing the lake: Would-be followers, stilling the storm	23	
8,28-34	2.23 Region of Gadara: Healing of two possessed by demons	19	
9,1-17	2.24 Capernaum: On forgiveness of sins, tax collectors, fasting	47	
9,18-34	2.25 On the way: Two women, a blind and a mute man healed	38	
<b>9:35–18:35</b>	<b>3. Galilee: Extended mission in word and action</b>	<b>884</b>	<b>40</b>
9:35–10:4	3.0 Summary: Compassion with the crowds, call of the Twelve	22	1
10:5-42	3.1 <i>SERMON 2: Commissioning the Twelve</i>	93	3
10,5-15	3.11 Instruction: Preaching and healing, only in Israel, their living	26	
10,16-25	3.12 Risk: Persecutions	27	
10,26-42	3.13 Encouragement: Not fear, but trust in God	40	
11:1–12:50	3.2 <i>JOURNEY 2: Questions of Jesus' identity caused by miracles</i>	204	12
11,1-24	3.21 On the way: John's question and Jesus' answer	59	3
11,25-30	3.22 Monologue: Praising the Father, invitation to the weary	16	1
12,1-14	3.23 Sabbath: Dispute on picking grain, healing, Pharisees' plans	32	2
12,15-21	3.24 Reflection: Jesus as the Servant of God (Isaiah 42)	14	1
12,22-50	3.25 Opponents: On authority over demons, true kindred	83	5

13:1-52	3.3	<i>SERMON 3: Parables about the kingdom of heaven</i>	136	4
13,1-2	3.30	Introduction: Jesus preaching from the boat	5	
13,3-23	3.31	People and disciples: Parable of the sower	52	
13,24-35	3.32	More parables: Tares, mustard seed, leaven	36	
13,36-52	3.33	Disciples: Interpretation of the tares, more parables	43	
13:53–17:27	3.4	<i>JOURNEY 3: Answers to Jesus' identity through epiphanies</i>	336	17
13,53–14,12	3.41	Opinions about Jesus: In Nazareth, of Herod	40	3
14,13-36	3.42	Trip by boat: Feeding of the 5000, walking on the water	56	1
15,1-20	3.43	Opponents from Jerusalem: Debate on purity and defilement	42	1
15,21–16,12	3.44	Tyrus and Sidon: Healings, feeding of the 4000, on Pharisees	78	5
16,13-28	3.45	Caesarea Philippi: Peter's confession, sufferings foretold	48	3
17,1-13	3.46	On the mountain: Transfiguration	33	1
17,14-27	3.47	Galilee: Healing of a boy, death foretold, temple tax	39	3
18:1-35	3.5	<i>SERMON 4: On discipleship and forgiveness among brothers</i>	93	3
18,1-10	3.51	Principle: On true greatness among the disciples	29	
18,12-20	3.52	Conflict resolution: Lost sheep, procedure among brothers	27	
18,21-35	3.53	Example: Forgiveness among brothers, with parable	37	
<b>19:1–25:46</b>	<b>4.</b>	<b>Via Perea to Jerusalem: Culmination of the conflict</b>	<b>702</b>	<b>38</b>
19:1–23:39	4.1	<i>JOURNEY 4: The way to Jerusalem and conflicts in the temple</i>	481	33
19,1-15	4.11	Perea: Dispute on divorce, blessing of the children	39	3
19,16–20,16	4.12	On the way: On entrance into heaven (rich young man)	75	3
20,17-34	4.13	Through Jericho: Suffering foretold, Zebedee's sons, healing	45	3
21,1-17	4.14	Jerusalem: Triumphant entry, cleansing of the temple	47	5
21,18-46	4.15	Next day: Disputes in the temple district	83	5
22,1-46	4.16	More debates: On tax to Caesar, resurrection, commandments	93	5
23,1-39	4.17	Disputes continued: Woe to scribes and Pharisees	99	9
24:1–25:46	4.2	<i>SERMON 5: Eschatological discourse on the Mount of Olives</i>	221	5
24,1–3	4.21	Disciples: Question of time and signs of the Parousia	10	
24,4–35	4.22	Concerning signs: Beginnings, tribulations, signs in heaven	69	
24,36–25,13	4.23	Concerning time: Exhortation to watchfulness, parables	60	
25,14–30	4.24	Parable on time: The ten virgins	41	
25,31–46	4.25	Parable on Parousia: Judgment of the nations	41	
<b>26:1–28:15</b>	<b>5.</b>	<b>Last Passover: Jesus' passion, death and resurrection</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>7</b>
26,1-16	5.1	Preparation: Death sentence, anointment, Judas' betrayal	32	
26,17-29	5.2	Passover: Preparation, betrayal announced, last supper	32	
26,30-56	5.3	Mount of Olives: Denial predicted, Gethsemane, arrest	68	
26,57–27,10	5.4	Sanhedrin: Jesus sentenced, Peter's denial, Judas' death	68	
27,11-31	5.5	Pilate's palace: Jesus indicted, damned, mocked	50	
27,32-61	5.6	Golgotha: Jesus crucified and derided, his death and burial	65	
27,62–28,15	5.7	Easter morning: At the tomb, appearance of the risen Jesus	50	
<b>28:16-20</b>	<b>6.</b>	<b>Epilogue: The Risen One commissioning the disciples</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1:1–28:20</b>	<b>1.–6.</b>	<b>Matthew: Jesus' teachings as fundament of the church</b>	<b>2652</b>	<b>105</b>

### **Summary**

Passages in Matthew matching in size have long been noticed, thus far based on the numbers of print lines, words or letters. Used here for the first time is the *stichos*, the ancient standard line for measuring prose texts with the length of 15 syllables. On this basis the whole gospel is analyzed. Interesting proportions are discovered among the five great sermons, even ratios based on numbers of the so-called Fibonacci series. The passage 9:35–18:35 is seen as the gospel's middle main section of precisely one third of the book. The author has elaborated the composition very carefully even under this formal aspect.

### **Keywords**

Matthew, concentric composition, stichometry, Fibonacci series