Matthew is everywhere concerned with the identity and mission of the church: indeed, his is the only gospel to use the word *ekklesia* (16:18; 18:17). As Edward Massaux has shown, Matthew's was the most-often quoted gospel among the Fathers before St. Irenaeus, who seem to have recognised its special relevance to a newly-fledged institutional Christianity. It is still referred to as the 'first gospel' and is printed that way in most bibles, even though there is now a wide consensus that the honour of precedence should go to Mark.

I cite Matthew's concern for ecclesiology because it has an immediate effect on his writing. He wants especially to provide an ordered discourse on which the church at large could draw to identify its duties and teaching on a number of subjects. At the same time, he is constrained by the traditional narratives about Jesus, which he undertakes to recount faithfully. He therefore tells the broad story as we have come to know it, but arranges the elements in large, clearly-identifiable blocks. He collects the miracles into one section, the parables into another, the missionary discourse into another, and the spiritual sayings into what has become known as the Sermon on the Mount. It has long been recognised that his narrative falls into five main parts, each marked off by a transitional formula, and that these perhaps are meant to recall the five books of Moses. The five sections deal with the sermon on the mount (5:1–7:27), the missionary discourse (10:5–42), the parables (13:1–52), the rules for the community (18:1–35), and the 'little apocalypse' (24:3–25:46). Each concludes with a formulaic phrase, such as 'when Jesus finished these sayings' (7:28), as we find at 11:1, 13:53, 19:1, and 26:1. Implicit in such an arrangement is Matthew's favourite idea that Jesus as messiah 'fulfils' the Mosaic law (to cite Matthew's favourite word), bringing out its essence, as it were, and extending it to the gentiles. In all this, the author as literary craftsman balances the narrative facts against his design to instruct.

Matthew's intent is observable in numerous details, and one way to confirm it is to observe how he alters Mark's miracles. St. Augustine,
who thought Matthew wrote first, argued that Mark's much shorter gospel was a botched abridgement of Matthew's prototype. But had Augustine looked more closely, he would have seen that in most passages where they overlap — and this is especially true of the miracle stories — Mark gives us all the interesting detail and local colour. Matthew cuts it out. The modern opinion of Johannes Weiss, that it is among 'the greatest riddles of gospel criticism how Matthew could deny himself the use of these living details' is perhaps overstated, but it shows how far some modern assumptions are from Augustine's, and it raises a real critical point. 

For our present purpose it is not crucial to have Matthew derive from Mark (though I assume that this is the case), because the contrasts between the stories as they stand are themselves instructive. An example is the healing of Jairus' daughter (Matt. 9:18–26; Mark 5:21–43). Even a brief glimpse shows how much longer and more detailed is Mark's account. Matthew's is sufficiently compact to quote in full:

While he was thus speaking to them, behold, a ruler came in and knelt before him, saying, "My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live." And Jesus rose, and followed him, with his disciples. And behold, a woman who had suffered from a hemorrhage for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment; for she said to herself, "If I only touch his garment, I shall be made well." Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And instantly the woman was made well. And when Jesus came to the ruler's house, and saw the flute players, and the crowd making a tumult, he said, "Depart; for the girl is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. And the report of this went through all that district.

Clearly, this is the same story as Mark's. It is unusual in being the only miracle within a miracle in the gospels, and many duplications in language make the interdependency plain. And yet Mark gives us about three times as much as Matthew, and the differences are largely in detail. For instance, Matthew's account of the ruler is quite straightforward: the daughter is dead, and if Jesus touches her she will live. By contrast, Mark connects the ruler with the synagogue, gives him the name Jairus, and has him say that his daughter is 'at the point of