

THE DISCLOSURE FORMULA IN  
THE EPISTOLARY POPYRI AND IN THE NEW TESTAMENT:  
DEVELOPMENT, FORM, FUNCTION, AND SYNTAX

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Although the disclosure formula (an epistolary convention expressing the author's desire that the audience know something) has abundant currency in the Greco-Roman and New Testament epistolary tradition, it has received surprisingly little attention from New Testament scholars.<sup>1</sup> The small portion of previous research that has been done has not provided an adequately nuanced definition for the formula—past definitions have been either too stringent or too broad—or criteria for its identification, and has overemphasized its transitional values. We provide a corrective to this through an analysis of the form, function, and syntax of the formula. We argue that a proper understanding of the disclosure formula has significant implications for our understanding of theme, letter structure, transitions, and prepositional modification in New Testament letters.

1. DEVELOPMENT AND FORMAL EXPRESSION

In his treatment of the disclosure formula in the New Testament, Terrance Mullins proposes four essential formal elements:  $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omega$ , a noetic verb in the infinitive, the person addressed, and information.<sup>2</sup> This formulation is too narrowly construed, however, in that it cannot account for developments of the formula within the Hellenistic period.<sup>3</sup> This is perhaps because all of Mullins' examples come from after 100 CE, that is, within the later Roman

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter directly utilizes and expands upon Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts, "τοῦτο τρῶτον γινώσκοντες ὅτι in 2 Peter 1:20 and Hellenistic Epistolary Convention," *JBL* 127 (2008): 165–171. This previous article discusses 2 Pet 1:20 in more detail.

<sup>2</sup> T.Y. Mullins, "Disclosure, A Literary Form in the New Testament," *NovT* 7 (1964): 46. He is followed by Peter T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 82; Peter T. O'Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings in the Letters of Paul* (NovTSup 49; Leiden: Brill, 1977), 201–202.

<sup>3</sup> On development of the formula, cf. John L. White, *Light From Ancient Letters* (FF; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 207–208. See also MM, 127, on the full formula.

period.<sup>4</sup> One does not necessarily gather this from reading his article, as he does not provide dates for the papyri he cites. What Mullins refers to as a disclosure formula is really a full, fixed version of a literary formula that had begun to develop much earlier in an imperatival and participial form during the Ptolemaic period.<sup>5</sup> That it was an established epistolary convention before it reached its fuller expression with a verb for desire, a “verb of knowing” in the infinitive, and a pronominalized referent is clear from two factors: the consistency with which it occurs in more abbreviated forms in the body-opening and body-closing in a large number of letters from between one to three hundred years before the turn of the millennia, and the persistence of these expressions thereafter.<sup>6</sup> We list some of these examples here.

### *Body-Opening*

P.Hib. I 40 (261–260 BCE): ἵνα γένηται ὡς ἐπέσταλακας

P.Mich. I 10 (257 BCE): ὑπογέγραφα σοι τῆς παρὰ Σωσιπάτρου ἔλθουσῆς μοι ἐπιστολῆς τὸ ἀντίγραφον, ὅπως εἰδῶς ...

P.Mich. I 32 (185/161 BCE): γνῶριξε ἡμᾶς παραγεγενημένους ...

<sup>4</sup> Mullins, “Disclosure,” 47–48. Mullins includes the following examples (we have added dates): P.Oxy. 937 (3rd c. CE), P.Oxy. 1155 (104 CE), P.Oxy. 1185 (about 200 CE), P.Oxy. 1481 (early 2nd c. CE), P.Oxy. 1493 (late 3rd or early 4th c. CE), P.Oxy. 1670 (3rd c. CE), P.Oxy. 1683 (4th c. CE), P.Oxy. 1770 (late 3rd c. CE), P.Oxy. 1773 (3rd c. CE), P.Giss. 11 (118 CE), P.Giss. 13 (112–116 CE), P.Lond. 411 (259 CE [?]), P.Lond. 414 (259 CE [?]), P.Lond. 417 (259 CE [?]) and P.Lond. 973 (3rd c. CE [?]). For dates on Oxyrhynchus papyri, see B. Grenfell and A. Hunt, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1898–1948); for dates on the Giessen papyri, see O. Eger, E. Koremann and P.M. Meyer, *Griechische Papyri im Museum des Oberhessischen Geschichtsvereins zu Giessen* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1910–1912); for dates on London Papyri, see F.G. Kenyon and H.I. Bell, *Greek Papyri in the British Museum: Catalogue with Texts* (repr., Milan: Cisalpino-Gollardica, 1973; 1893–1917).

<sup>5</sup> Jeffrey Reed attributes the morphological and literary differences in the formula to politeness and variation between letter types. According to Reed, the full forms are preferred in business letters and the shorter imperative forms are used in personal letters. Jeffrey T. Reed, *A Discourse Analysis of Philippians: Method and Rhetoric in the Debate over Literary Integrity* (SNTG 3; JSNTSup 136; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 212; cf. also John L. White, “Introductory Formulae in the Body of the Pauline Letter,” *JBL* 90 (1971): 93. While this may be the case (there are more full formula in business letters than in private), the most important factor contributing to variation between the imperative and the full formula seems to be developmental and chronological rather than literary and contextual. Distribution of various expressions according to letter type has to be seen as a phenomenon in the Hellenistic period.

<sup>6</sup> For additional examples, see John L. White, *The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter: A Study of the Letter-Body in Non-Literary Papyri and in Paul the Apostle* (SBLDS 2; Missoula, MT: SBL, 1972), 11–15.

- UPZ I 68 (152 BCE): γίνωσκέ με πεπορευῆσθαι εἰς Ἡρακλέους ...  
 P.Paris 47 (152 BCE): γίνωσκε ὅτι πιράσεται ...  
 P.Tebt. I 56 (late 2nd c. BCE): γείνωσκε δὲ περὶ τοῦ κατακεκλῦσθαι ...  
 P.Tebt. I 37 (73 BCE): γίνωσκε Κεφαλᾶν καὶ Πετεσοῦξον καὶ τοὺς μετόξους ...  
 P.Oxy. IV 744 (1 BCE): γίνωσκε ὡς ἔτι καὶ νῦν ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ ἔσμεν·  
 P.Tebt. II 408 (3 CE): ἐπιστάμενος πῶς σε τίθεμαι κέ φιλῶ, παρακαλῶ σε ...  
 P.Oxy. II 295 (35 CE): γίνωσκε ὅτι Σελεύκος ἐλθὼν ὧδε πέφευγε.  
 P.Oxy. XII 1482 (2nd c. CE): γράφω σοι ἴν' ἰδῆς ὅτι ...

### *Body-Closing*

- P.Cair.Zen. V 59804 (258 BCE): γέγραφα οὖν σοι ὅπως ἂν εἰδῆς.  
 P.Col. III 6 (257 BCE): γίνωσκε δὲ, ὡς ἂν ...  
 P.Mich. I 10 (257 BCE): γέγραφα οὖν σοι ὅπως εἰδῆς.  
 CPJud. I 4 (257 BCE): ὑπογεγράφαμεν δὲ σοι καὶ τὰς εἰκόνας αὐτῶν παιδαριῶν ἴνα εἰδῆς.  
 CPJud. I 5 (257 BCE): ... τῷ βασιλεῖ, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τάντίγραφα αὐτῆς ὅπως εἰδῆς.  
 P.Yale I 36 (232 BCE): γινώσκων ὅτι ...  
 SelPap I 98 (160 BCE): εἰ δὲ δι' ἄλλο τι οὐκ ὀπτάνεται μοι, γίνωσκε σαφῶς ὅτι ...  
 SelPap I 99 (154 BCE): γέγραφα ἴμεῖν ἴνα εἰδῆται.  
 P.Tebt. IV 1099 (114 BCE): καλῶς ἔχειν οὖν ὑπέλαβον προσανενέαι ὅπως εἰδῆς.  
 P.Oxy. II 299 (late 1st c. CE): καὶ Διονυσίῳ προστάτη Νεμερῶν κέκρηκα δραχμὰς ἡ καὶ ταύτας οὐκ ἔπεμψε, ἴνα εἰδῆς.  
 P.Fay. 129 (3rd c. CE): ἴν' οὖν ἰδῆς ἀναφέρω σοι.

Whereas the subjunctive in the body-closing remained consistent throughout the Hellenistic period, the second person imperative was more typical in the body-opening prior to the development of a fuller form that incorporated a verb for desire as well as an optional noun of “address” (a vocative or nominative used for direct address). These fuller expressions do not find much currency in earlier letters. They begin to appear from the turn of the millennium onward, suggesting a conventional development within the epistolary tradition. A notable increase can be seen in the full formula starting around 100 CE, which accounts for the relative scarcity of the full formula in the New Testament.<sup>7</sup> Examples include the following.

<sup>7</sup> Moulton and Milligan (MM, 127) use similar logic to account for the diversity in Paul's use of the formula compared to its fixed configuration in the later Greco-Roman papyri. It is perhaps a little surprising that we find as many instances of the full formula as we do in the New Testament letters, mostly occurring at the body-opening. An examination of Greco-Roman papyri from around the first century yields mostly imperatival versions of the formula at the body openings and, as we find in the New Testament, participial and perfect indicative expressions throughout the body-middle.

P.Giss. 11 (118 CE): γινώσκειν σε θέλω ὅτι ...

P.Bon. 44 (2nd c. CE): γεινώσκειν σε θέλω ὅτι ...

BGU III 846 (2nd c. CE): γεινώσκειν σαι θέλω ὅτι ...

P.Oxy. XIV 1680 (3rd or 4th c. CE): καὶ τοῦτό γε βούλομαι σοι γνῶναι ὅτι ...

Although the fuller form began to predominate in the body-openings of later letters, the shorter versions of the formula persisted, especially being used in the body-middle.

These developments highlight several shortcomings in Mullins' formulation. First, the features he posits only pick out a very limited range of forms and cannot account for the development of the formula throughout the Hellenistic period. The consistent occurrence of a "verb of knowing" that discloses important information is apparently used by the author for one or more purposes in the body-opening: to set the agenda for the rest of the letter or to reveal the purpose for writing. The use of the disclosure formula in body-closings in a wide range of letters appears to be an established convention prior to the solidification of the full formula later in the epistolary tradition.<sup>8</sup> Instances like 2 Thess 2:1 are indicative of this, where all of the elements of Mullins' disclosure formula are present—as well as the optional feature of 'address'—except for use of θέλω. Second, Mullins' portrayal of the semantic fields of the relevant verbs seems to be confused. Noetic verbs would include a wide range of verbs of cognition that would not necessarily denote the disclosure of information. Similarly, requiring use of θέλω is too strict a criterion, even for the detection of the full formula, since we find in some papyri all the necessary elements for the full formula with verbs for desire other than θέλω (e.g. βούλομαι, P.Oxy. XIV 1680.12–13—see above; P.Köln V 238.2–3; P.Stras. I 35.2–3; cf. also Phil 1:12 for a New Testament example). It seems better, therefore, to describe this component of the full formula in terms of words from the semantic field for desire instead of restricting it to θέλω. Third, Mullins requires explicit pronominal reference or a full noun phrase (in the form of address, for example) for the addressee, which is not required in, say, imperatival expressions of the formula where the addressee is assumed. J.T. Sanders and David Aune<sup>9</sup> provide definitions

<sup>8</sup> It must be kept in mind here, as White points out, that "The body is less stereotyped than either the opening or closing elements, since it is the message part of the letter. The less homogeneous nature of the body has been, therefore, one of the greatest hindrances to formal analysis." White, "Introductory Formulae," 91. Nonetheless, formalized expressions within these sections of a letter provide some basis for making literary generalizations for the body-middle.

<sup>9</sup> J.T. Sanders, "Transition from Opening Epistolary Transition to Body in the Letters of the

similar to Mullins', but Sanders' scope is limited to transitions between the thanksgiving and body-opening in the Pauline corpus, so perhaps he has more justification than those who make broader claims that they contend are applicable to the entire Hellenistic letter tradition.<sup>10</sup>

John White's analysis of the disclosure formula is more convincing than Mullins', but still perhaps too broad. His formulation builds around "verbs of knowing" and the various formal features typically associated with them in letters. He lists five discrete forms of the formula:<sup>11</sup>

- (1) the full disclosure formula: γινώσκειν σε θέλω ὅτι
- (2) the imperative form: γίνωσκε ὡς or γίνωσκε ὅτι ...
- (3) the motivation for writing: γέγραφα (οὖν) σοι ὅπως ἂν (or ἵνα) εἰδῆς.
- (4) 'know' in the perfect indicative: οἶδες ὅτι ... or οἶδα ὅτι ...
- (5) the verb for 'know' in the participial form (usually the perfect participle): εἰδὼς (or εἰδότες) ὅτι ...

For White, his forms of the formula are based upon a mix of morphological and literary criteria. The advantage of this analysis is that it takes lexical

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Pauline Corpus," *JBL* (1962): 348–362; David E. Aune, *The New Testament in its Literary Environment* (LEC 8; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 188. Sanders' analysis is really an extension of Paul Schubert's work, who established formal criteria for identifying the termination of the thanksgiving (Paul Schubert, *The Form and Function of the Pauline Thanksgivings* [BZNTW 20; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1939]). Sanders attempts to move beyond this by identifying formulas which mark the body-openings.

<sup>10</sup> However, as White suggests, Sanders' analysis conflates request and disclosure formulas into one. White, "Introductory Formulae," 91.

<sup>11</sup> White, *Form*, 11; White, "Introductory Formulae," 93; cf. also White, *Light*, 204–205; 207–208. Reed follows White's analysis, emphasizing the full formula, the purpose for writing formula and the imperatival formula. Reed, *Philippians*, 211–212. Reidar Aasgaard seems to have taken the formula and construed it even more narrowly: "(1) a particle, indicating a contrast to or a consequence of the preceding: γάρ or δε, (2) often a verb denoting will (sometimes stated negatively: οὐ), (3) those addressed: you, ὑμεῖς, (4) an address in the vocative, always ἀδελφοί [sic] (5) what is disclosed: introduced by ὅτι, περί, or the like." Reidar Aasgaard, *My Beloved Brothers and Sisters!: Christian Siblingship in Paul* (JSNTSup 265; ECC; London: T&T Clark, 2004), 278; cf. also Reidar Aasgaard, "Brotherly Advice: Christian Siblingship and New Testament Paraenesis," in J. Starr and T. Engberg-Pedersen, eds., *Early Christian Paraenesis in Context* (BZNTW 125; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 248–249. Aasgaard's analysis is problematic, since most scholars now agree that the feature of address is optional (cf. White, "Introductory Formulae," 93; Mullins, "Disclosure," 46; Aune, *New Testament*, 188). See Col 2:1, where all elements of the full formula are present, except the element of address. Multiple similar examples from the papyri can be accumulated. It should also be noted that numerous examples in the papyri use word forms other than ἀδελφοί in the address, but Aasgaard seems concerned exclusively with New Testament instances of the formula. Cf. also Klaus Schafer, *Gemeinde als 'Bruderschaft': Ein Beitrag zum Kirchenverständnis des Paulus* (EH 23:333; Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1989), 322–323.

content as the basis for the formula and therefore exhibits sensitivity to its development and flexibility. Nevertheless, there are also some evident problems with his full formulation. Given the morphological orientation of his formulaic analysis, the use of the subjunctive form of the verb should be accounted for, as it often occurs in the motivation for writing clause, although it is found in other formulas as well. The motivation for writing clause may also be expressed without the use of *γράφω* as in: P.Oxy. I 299 (late 1st c. CE): ... ἵνα εἰδῆς. Similarly, however, the full formula may also occur with *γράφω* as in P.Fay. 123 (110–111 CE): καὶ ἐκθέεις σοὶ ἔγραψα διὰ Μάρδωνος τοῦ σοῦ γυνῶνάί σε θέλων ὅτι ...

Although the formulation suggested by White accounts for more data than Mullins' criteria,<sup>12</sup> his analysis is probably too broad in that it seems to include statements that do not disclose information to the audience or that do not embody the dialogic nature of communication in an epistolary context. Two of his examples seem to establish this point:<sup>13</sup>

P.Mich. I 28 (256 BCE): οὐκ εἶδοτες γὰρ διότι χρεῖαν ἔξεις

P.Tebt. II 409 (5 CE): εἰδῶς ὅτι ἐξουσίαν αὐτῶν ἔχει καὶ Λυσίμαχος καὶ σύ.

While the line from P.Mich. I 28, occurring in the body-middle portion of the letter, does contain a participial form of a “verb of knowing,” it does not seem to disclose information to the audience. It merely states a first-person awareness regarding a state of affairs already familiar to the audience.<sup>14</sup> This also lessens the dialogic impact. In the second example, from P.Tebt. II 409, we have a participial “verb of knowing,” but again the statement does not directly disclose information to the audience—it merely states a belief of the author that the audience may or may not adhere to. Since we will address this in more detail below, it is sufficient for now to note that

<sup>12</sup> Mullins and White engaged in a dispute over the variants on the formula. Mullins claimed that White's assertion that there is a commonly found two-component version of the formula (White, “Introductory Formulae,” 93) is inaccurate since White does not provide examples from the papyri (T.Y. Mullins, “Formulae in New Testament Epistles,” *JBL* 91 [1972]: 382–383). Mullins insisted instead that his four/five-component formulation accounted for the only legitimate instances of the formula. White, however, did provide several examples of all five expressions of the formula he proposes in a later publication (see White, *Form*, 11–15). In our analysis here, we add several examples to this list that further disconfirm Mullins' account.

<sup>13</sup> White, *Form*, 14.

<sup>14</sup> We assume the understanding of the semantics of the Greek tense-forms (aspects) found in Stanley E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament with Reference to Tense and Mood* (SBG 1; New York: Lang, 1989).

epistolary formulas assume a dialogic relationship between the writer and the addressee(s). When this relationship is circumvented, we should not expect to find an epistolary formula. The disclosure formula expresses the author's desire for the audience to know something, commands the audience to know something, or informs the audience of something in support of a statement or argument. Third- and first-person singular discourse (as we have in the examples above), therefore, will typically fall outside of this communicative framework.

## 2. FORM

Lexical content is the most essential, enduring element of the disclosure formula. A "verb of knowing" is always present. The second feature is morphological. The "verb of knowing" has typical morphological expressions, depending on the type of formula that is used. A third essential element involves the information content itself. This may be an anaphoric reference to the entire letter in the body-closing or may be the content directly following a subordinating conjunction. The final element is semantic and contextual and intends to capture literary-communicative elements present in epistolary formulas in general: dialogic communication at the clause level. We have mentioned this briefly above. This dialogic feature is present when the author acts as an Agent (informer) and the addressees function as a Benefactive (recipients of knowledge) within the clause.<sup>15</sup> These four elements, then, make up the formal and semantic criteria for the disclosure formula in Hellenistic letters: (1) lexical content, (2) morphology and literary form, (3) information content, and (4) dialogic communication.

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<sup>15</sup> Agent and Benefactive (usually capitalized to distinguish semantic descriptions from formal ones [e.g. present tense forms]) are borrowed from a linguistic model known as Semantic Case Theory, which attempts to provide semantic classifications for the various roles in a clause or sentence. An Agent is the initiator of the action and a Benefactive is the one who benefits from the action. In our description, the author acts as the Agent by informing the audience and the audience benefits from the author's communication. For an introduction to Case Theory and its application to the New Testament (including detailed definitions), see Paul L. Danove, *Linguistics and Exegesis in the Gospel of Mark: Applications of a Case Frame Analysis and Lexicon* (JSNTSup 218; SNTG 10; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001).

### 2.1. *Lexical Content*

The most fundamental element of the disclosure formula is a verb from the semantic domain for knowing. This set of verbs is treated by Louw and Nida under domain 28 (*Know*).<sup>16</sup> The verbs within this domain that are particularly relevant to the study of the disclosure formula come from subdomain A (*Know*).<sup>17</sup> Five verbs within this domain are used in New Testament expressions of the formula: οἶδα, γινώσκω, ἀγνοέω, ἐπιγινώσκω and γνωρίζω. Two additional verbs occur in disclosure formulas in the epistolary papyri: ἐπίσταμαι and μανθάνω. Particular verbs tend to attract specific formulaic expressions, and their function and position in the letter structure tends to attract particular morphological expressions. For example, in the papyri, perfect tense-form indicatives and participial forms are infrequent in the body-opening, but occur often within the body-middle.<sup>18</sup> The body closing often has the subjunctive with the purpose-for-writing disclosure formula.

1. οἶδα. Although the most common verb used in New Testament disclosure formulas is οἶδα, in the epistolary papyri γινώσκω is the most frequent. In the body closings, however, οἶδα in the subjunctive mood form (usually the purpose for writing disclosure formula) is more common than any other lexeme in both corpora. Outside of its frequent use in the body-closing, οἶδα is part of the least formulaic usage in that it often lacks non-essential supporting elements (e.g. θέλω, γράφω) and is often used within the epistolary body. It occurs independently and with ὅτι, ἵνα and ὅπως. Whereas in the New Testament it occurs most often with ὅτι, in the papyri its use with ἵνα and ὅτι is more closely matched. οἶδα-disclosure formulas take a variety of mood forms, including perfect indicatives (Phil 4:15) and participles (P.Mich. I 28.7) (often in the body-middle), infinitives (P.S.I. IX 1080.8), and subjunctives (Eph 6:21).

2. γινώσκω. γινώσκω is also very frequent in New Testament disclosure formulas, and is the most frequently used verb in the papyri in these formu-

<sup>16</sup> LN, 333–343.

<sup>17</sup> Other sub-domains include B. Known (the content of knowledge); C. Well Known/Clearly Revealed; D. Able to be Known; and E. Not Able to be Known. The majority of the words from these domains are nouns and do not qualify on this basis alone. Others, especially those from subdomain B, are more appropriate for other types of informational formulas. See White, *Light*, 207–208.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. White, *Form*, 15.

las.<sup>19</sup> In the New Testament, these formulas tend to occur with the demonstrative pronoun οὗτος (around 33%), used cataphorically, in conjunction with a preposition as an adjunct (for example, several times in 1 John) or independently as a predicate complement and only occasionally with verbs for desire (ἐλπίζω, βούλομαι, θέλω). In the New Testament, γινώσκω-formulas always use a conjunction. In the later Greco-Roman papyri, however, γινώσκω-formulas with the demonstrative are not as common, and the full formula typically uses γινώσκω<sup>20</sup> in the infinitive—and, to a much lesser degree, οἶδα. In the body-middle, γινώσκω usually occurs in the present indicative or participial form.

3. ἀγνοέω. Due to its semantic content, ἀγνοέω is the most formulaically used verb within the New Testament disclosure formula, consistently occurring with οὐ θέλω and ἀδελφοί in the full formula.<sup>22</sup> It also has a tendency to take the (present tense-form) infinitive since it is typically used with verbs for desire, although it takes participial, indicative, and imperatival forms as well.

4. ἐπιγινώσκω. Of its four occurrences in New Testament disclosure formulas, ἐπιγινώσκω occurs with ἐλπίζω (2 Cor 1:13) and with γράφω once (1 Cor 14:37) and is found only with ὅτι—and therefore not in the subjunctive mood. It is infrequent in the papyri (but see P.Oxy. XIV 1672.14–15).

5. γνωρίζω. In 1 Cor 12:1–3, γνωρίζω occurs alongside two other disclosure formulas, helping to support the argument of the author while allowing

<sup>19</sup> BDAG (200) seems *at first* to acknowledge the formula by its citation of P.Giss. 11.4: γινώσκειν σε θέλω ὅτι. The formalized nature of the language, however, lessens the semantic impact, which seems to go unnoticed in BDAG's classification of this use of γινώσκω with various other instances under the semantic heading "to acquire information through some means, *learn (of), ascertain, find out.*" Further, under the same formal heading (γινώσκω with ὅτι), references to Esdras, Ruth, and Acts are made, which seems to indicate a lack of awareness (or at least comment) concerning the formulaic function of γινώσκω in P.Giss. 11.4 and other epistolary papyri.

<sup>20</sup> On the use of γινώσκω in the full formula see MM, 127.

<sup>21</sup> For morphological variations, see Basil G. Mandilaras, *The Verb in the Greek Non-Literary Papyri* (Athens: Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sciences, 1973), 317. On the development of this form in the papyri, see Francis T. Gignac, *A Grammar of the Greek Papyri of the Roman and Byzantine Periods, Volume II: Morphology* (Testi E Documenti per lo Studio Dell' Antichità LV–2; Milan: Istituto Editoriale Cisalpino–La Goliardica, 1981), 393.

<sup>22</sup> BDAG (12) notes regarding this formula that it is a "favorite of Paul's." However, BDAG still does not seem to understand it in its literary and epistolary contexts, citing Philo and Josephus as parallel instances along with P.Tebt. II 314.4.

for stylistic variation, and illustrating the author's acquaintance with the formula and the variations that it may take. It also occurs at a significant transition in Galatians (1:11).<sup>23</sup> In the New Testament, this verb only occurs with ὅτι and, at times, with no conjunction at all (1 Cor 16:1; 2 Cor 8:1). It is not frequent in the papyri (but see P.Mich. I 32.2–3).

6. ἐπίσταμαι and μανθάνω. As mentioned earlier, ἐπίσταμαι and μανθάνω only occur in the papyri.<sup>24</sup> ἐπίσταμαι is far more common than μανθάνω, but neither is extremely frequent. An example of ἐπίσταμαι is found in P.Tebt. II 408 (3 CE) where it is used in the body-opening as a ground for the subsequent exhortative material introduced by παρακαλῶ. μανθάνω occurs in the body-middle of P.Oxy. VII 1067 (3rd c. CE) in the imperative, commanding the audience to have knowledge concerning a relative of a strange woman. Neither occurs with enough frequency to confidently make significant generalizations.

### 2.2. Morphology, Literary Form, and Epistolary Parts

While White mixes literary formulations with strictly morphological versions of the formula, it is probably best to understand these as separate levels of expression. The formula used mainly for transitioning into the body of the letter in the Ptolemaic period was the imperative; in the Roman period the full disclosure formula began to be used more frequently in this position, which is expressed through an infinitive form. The purpose-for-writing formula usually takes the subjunctive, and the perfect/present indicative and participial forms are usually employed within the body.

### 2.3. Subordinating Conjunctions and Information Content

Although not entirely indispensable, disclosure formulas are typically accompanied by a subordinating conjunction, usually ὅτι, ὅπως or ἵνα. Disclosure formulas that employ ὅτι<sup>25</sup> or ὅπως typically do so in order to introduce

<sup>23</sup> See Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (WBC; Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 22; MM, 129.

<sup>24</sup> On the use and complementation of ἐπίσταμαι and μανθάνω in the papyri, see Patrick James, "Participial Complementation in Roman and Byzantine Documentary Papyri: ἐπίσταμαι, μανθάνω, εὐρίσκω," *JGRChJ* 2 (2001–2005): 153–158.

<sup>25</sup> James notes that with the use of verbs for cognition (as we have in the epistolary disclosure formulas) "the papyri illustrates the spread of the ὅτι conjunction. The three constructions, the participle, the infinitive and the ὅτι clauses are all attested, but tend to be associated with particular types of document. So, the accusative and infinitive is found rarely

the content of the knowledge. ἵνα is used when it is necessary for the “verb of knowing” to take the subjunctive and/or when the author wants to state the addressees’ knowledge of something as the purpose for writing or for some other action (often ‘sending’ or ‘appending’ in epistolary closings). Although the conjunction is expendable in these contexts, the information content is not. Disclosure formulas always reveal something to the audience or state the purpose for revealing what has already been disclosed. When the conjunction is lacking, this affects the syntax, since the information content is not typically represented in a subordinate clause without the conjunction. In these cases, the information content usually occurs in the verbal complement of the predicator in the disclosure formula (e.g. 1Thess 2:1).

#### 2.4. *Dialogic Communication and Informational Disclosure*

Another essential feature of the disclosure formula is dialogic communication. Like other epistolary conventions, disclosure formulas establish a direct connection between the author and the addressee by expressing the desire of the author that the audience know something.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, the clause must realize a dialogic dimension in order to qualify as a disclosure formula. For example, in Eph 3:10 ἵνα γνωρισθῆι occurs in the context of exposition and is a reference to God’s purpose to make known his manifold wisdom. Although there is a subordinating conjunction with a knowing verb, this statement does not project onto the dialogic level of the discourse and therefore does not qualify as a legitimate instance of the formula.

This level of communication can be detected by the fulfillment of two semantic conditions: (1) the author as the Agent (informer) and (2) the addressee as the Patient or Benefactor (recipient of knowledge). The agentive role may be realized in different ways, depending on the formal properties of the disclosure statement. In the full disclosure formula, the author functions as the Agent who wills for the audience to know something; in the perfect/present indicative, participial and imperative forms, the author

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and principally seems to have been a feature of the language of edicts (e.g. *P.Oxy.* XII 1405 [3rd CE], XXXIV 2704 [3rd CE]) and of petitions (e.g. *P.Oxy.* VII 1032 [2nd CE]). The participle construction occurs very occasionally in petitions and correspondence (*P.Oxy.* XXXIII 2672 [3rd CE]; XII 1587 [late 3rd CE], XVIII 2200 [early 2nd CE]). However, clauses introduced by ἵνα, by far the most common, are found mainly in business and personal letters throughout the period.” James, “Participial Complementation,” 156; cf. Mandilaras, *Verb*, 361–362.

<sup>26</sup> cf. White, *Form*, 11; Aasgaard, ‘*My Beloved Brothers and Sisters*’, 278.

directly informs the audience; in the subjunctive, the author states knowing as his purpose for some other activity—writing, appending, sending, etc.

In each case information is disclosed to the audience by the author. This acts as a final criterion in identifying disclosure formulas in Hellenistic letters. Information must be revealed or affirmed to the audience by the author who functions as an Agent in the clause. When an author speaks of personal (e.g. “I know that ...”) or impersonal knowledge (“they understand that ...”), that author is not informing the audience as much as is making a statement about their own or someone else’s awareness of a given state of affairs. Whether or not the audience shares this knowledge is often ambiguous. At other times, the formula may function to disclose information in order to reaffirm some aspect of the audience’s knowledge (e.g. 1 Thess 2:1).

### 3. FUNCTION

White insists that disclosure formulas are “employed generally for transitional purposes.”<sup>27</sup> However, their function seems to be relative to their syntactic role, their position in the letter structure, and the type of formula in use. Participial forms, for example, typically occurring in the body-middle, use an embedded verb in their predicator and offer expansion/support for an argument already stated in the text, which is by no means a transitional function. This is seen, for example, in the following: ... γινώσκων ὅτι ἐὰν ... (P.Yale I 36.5; cf. Rom 2:4, 5:3; 2 Cor 4:14; Gal 2:16; Eph 6:8; Jas 1:3). When the full and imperative formulas occur in the body-middle, they do, however, seem to help support transitions. Syntactically these are usually found in primary (independent) clauses and mark development in the discourse (see P.Col. III 6.13; P.Tebt. II 315.7; BGU I 27.3–4; 1 Tim 3:1; Col 2:1). But even fuller expressions of the formula can be used for support or expansion. For

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<sup>27</sup> White, *Form*, 11; cf. White, “Introductory Formulae,” 93–94; White, “Ancient Greek Letters,” in David E. Aune, ed., *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament: Selected Forms and Genres* (SBL Sources for Biblical Study 21; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 95. For this view, see also Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians* (rev. and exp. Ralph P. Martin; WBC 43; Dallas: Word, 2004), 42; J.H. Roberts, “Pauline Transitions to the Letter Body,” in A. Vanhoye, ed., *L’Apôtre Paul. Personnalité, style et conception du ministère* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, Peeters, 1986), 98; J.H. Roberts, “Transitional Techniques to the Letter Body in the *Corpus Paulinum*,” in J.H. Petzer and Patrick J. Hartin, eds., *A South African Perspective on the New Testament: Essays by South African New Testament Scholars Presented to Bruce Manning Metzger during His Visit to South Africa in 1985* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 187–201.

example, in 1Thess 2:1 *αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἴδατε, ἀδελφοί ...* is a secondary (dependent) clause that functions in a series of *γὰρ*-clauses that give support to the primary clause in 1:8, placing emphasis on the witness of believers in Macedonia, Achaia, and various outside regions.<sup>28</sup> Despite the chapter division, there is not a clear transition in theme until 3:1.

The syntactic function and position of various formulas in the letter structure also allow for communication to take place at different levels of the discourse. Disclosure formulas can function at the discourse, paragraph, or clause level. When they occur in letter openings or closings or in body-openings or closings, they function at the discourse or global level of communication, marking information that will be or was thematic within a unit or throughout the letter (i.e. across paragraph boundaries).<sup>29</sup> Since even fuller expressions of the formula may be used for support (as in 1Thess 2:1 above), it is important to notice the contribution of other linguistic features in establishing a shift from one unit to another within the body-middle. When other semantic and literary features move the text toward a transition

<sup>28</sup> On the formula here, see F.F. Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians* (WBC 45; Dallas: Word, 1982), 24. On this formula and its surrounding context, especially the thanksgiving, see O'Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings*, 141–166; Schubert, *Form and Function*, 24–27. Malherbe sees the formula (though he does not seem to recognize it as an epistolary formula) here and other occurrences of *οἴδατε* in the context as a reflection of Paul's incorporation of the moral philosophical tradition, especially remembrance motifs employed by Seneca in his exposition of advice as a medium of exhortation (*Epistle* 94:25–26; cf. Isocrates, *To Nicocles* 40). See, for example, Abraham J. Malherbe, "Hellenistic Moralists and the New Testament," in *ANRW* II.26.1, 289–291; "Exhortation in 1 Thessalonians," *NovT* 25 (1983): 240–241. See also Gregory E. Sterling, "Hellenistic Philosophy and the New Testament," in Stanley E. Porter, ed., *A Handbook to the Exegesis of the New Testament* (NTTS 25; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 323–324; Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 91. This formula (as well many of the instances of *οἴδατε* in the surrounding context), however, meets all of the formal criteria discussed above for identifying a disclosure formula. Even on a more stringent interpretation of the components of the formula, the opening phrase in 2:1 seems to qualify as a legitimate instance of a disclosure formula (cf. White, "Introductory Formulae," 94). It seems, therefore, that an epistolary rather than a philosophical context best explains the use of this form.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Jeffery T. Reed, "Identifying Theme in the New Testament: Insights from Discourse Analysis," in Stanley E. Porter and D.A. Carson, eds., *Discourse Analysis and Other Topics in Biblical Greek* (JSNTSup 113; SNTG 2; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 90. He points out that "One of the best ways for determining prominence at the discourse level (i.e. determining thematic units of discourse) is to analyse the genre of that discourse. 'Once upon a time' and 'They lived happily ever after' are well known generic features that mark off the boundaries of a text. 'Have you heard the one about ...' is another example of a marker originating from a genre of discourse. The epistolary formula 'I wish for you to know ...' (Phil. 1.12), for example, signals the beginning of a thematic unit. One must first establish the relative genre of a New Testament discourse and then analyse other works of the for formulaic elements and their functions."

in topic, a disclosure formula can be used at the paragraph level to help support this shift. For example, the formula in P.Mich. XIII 466 (γινώσκιν δέ σε θέλω ὅτι) is used in conjunction with δέ and the introduction of a new participant, Domitios the *armi custos*. The disclosure formula helps confirm and support this transition into a new thematic unit. Embedded structures are used at the clause level to offer support to higher level components (primary and some secondary clauses). These formulas function within the clause (or in a collection [i.e. complex] of clauses) to provide support, rationale, or expansion. Disclosure formulas using the indicative mood can also function at the clause level, perhaps marking subtle development but not transitions within the paragraph. In 1 Corinthians 6, the οἶδα-formula is employed six times in the present indicative (ἢ οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι ...) without a major topical transition. Far from signaling shifts within this unit, these instances of the disclosure formula seem to support patterns of textual continuity. So disclosure formulas can be used at a variety of discourse levels and entail multiple functions depending on their syntactic configuration and position in the letter structure. But what do they indicate, if not transitions?

Disclosure formulas can be clearly used at significant transition points (e.g. body-openings) and are one solid indicator of points of transition (esp. a full formula using address, see below), as we have seen. This is not their most defining feature, however, since they can be used to support and develop arguments as well. The most fundamental function of the formula is to mark important or thematic information. When disclosure statements operate at the discourse level, they mark information that will be important or thematic throughout a section or the letter; at the paragraph level, they support a transition and set the tone for the new unit; in the clause, they mark subtle developments (in primary and some secondary clauses) or introduce critical supporting material that often provides a motivation or reason for belief, exhortation, instruction, or advice (in embedded and some secondary clauses). When the syntactic feature ‘address’ (ἀδελφοί in the New Testament) is added to the formula, it adds a layer of direction and emphasis to the statement.<sup>30</sup> These formulas place more prominence on the information content of the clause they introduce than formulas that do not use the feature of address.<sup>31</sup> This makes these formulas, in particular, suitable for supporting significant transitions (usually occurring in the form of a full

<sup>30</sup> Cf. J.P. Louw, “Linguistic Theory and the Greek Case System,” *Acta Classica* 9 (1966): 80.

<sup>31</sup> Aasgaard notes that formulas using address have “several features in common with the request formula, and sibling address also here forms a fixed part of it. But here, too, the rela-

formula),<sup>32</sup> especially the transition into the letter body.<sup>33</sup> This can be illustrated using several Pauline letters<sup>34</sup> and a selection of epistolary papyri.

*Body Opening*<sup>35</sup>

Romans 1:13  
2 Corinthians 1:8  
Galatians 1:11  
Philippians 1:12

*Disclosure Formulas using Address*

οὐ θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι ...  
οὐ γὰρ θέλομεν ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, ... ὅτι ...  
γνωρίζω γὰρ ὑμῖν, ἀδελφοί, ...  
γινώσκειν δὲ ὑμᾶς βούλομαι, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι ...

tion between the formula with its sibling address and the individual letter contexts appears weak. On a more general level, however, this use of address attests to a link between siblingship and knowledge. The almost obligatory address in these formulae serves to create confidence, to impart a sense of closeness, and to convey a feeling of a common knowledge, which is hidden from outsiders: as siblings they share a secret landscape together ...” Aasgaard, *My Beloved Brothers and Sisters!*, 278–279.

<sup>32</sup> But Rom 11:25 is an example where the full formula is used with address, but where the transition is fairly subtle: οὐ γὰρ θέλω ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, ...

<sup>33</sup> Cf. White, “Introductory Formulae,” 94.

<sup>34</sup> The variation of the recognition among commentators of New Testament disclosure formulas at the body-openings is interesting. One would at least expect acknowledgment of these fuller, very formalized expressions of the formula at significant transition points, but this is not always the case. It seems to vary from commentator to commentator. Most of the significant commentaries and monographs on Philippians, for example, have something to say about the formula. See, for example, Reed, *Philippians*, 211–212; Hawthorne-Martin, *Philippians*, 42; O’Brien, *Philippians*, 84–86, 89; Moisés Silva, *Philippians* (2nd ed.; BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 65; Gordon D. Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 106. But no awareness of the emphatic and transitional nature of the formula in 2 Cor 1:8 is shown, for example, in one of the more recent commentaries on 2 Corinthians (in a series aimed at focusing directly on the Greek text), Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 152. See also Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 16–17. Similarly, Dunn’s comments on Rom 1:13 suggest that the expression there is a Pauline formula, failing both to recognize the transitional function of the formula and to situate it within its broader epistolary context, as does BDAG (12) upon whom Dunn depends. James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8* (WBC 38; Dallas: Word, 1988), 31.

<sup>35</sup> Depending on the extent to which one sees the thanksgiving reaching (for various options on the termination of the thanksgiving, see James D.G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text* [NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], 53), Col 2:1 may be another instance of a full disclosure formula at a body opening, but without address. Silva (*Philippians*, 65) faults Hawthorne for claiming that the particular formula in Phil 1:12 does not occur elsewhere at a transition, since it also occurs at the body opening in Gal 1:1 and 2 Cor 1:8. However, Hawthorne is correct that this specific expression of the full formula, γινώσκω + βούλομαι, does not occur elsewhere, and Silva fails to note Rom 1:13 (and perhaps Col 2:1 as well). It is debatable whether 1 Thess 2:1 (αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἶδατε, ἀδελφοί, ...) should be included in the chart above. White (“Introductory Formulae,” 94) sees 1 Thess 2:1 as the body-opening. However, it may be the case that the thanksgiving runs through 3:11, as O’Brien (*Introductory Thanksgivings*, 141–166) and Schubert (*Form and Function*, 24–27) suggest. Relations of dependency seem to support this.

*Body Opening**Disclosure Formulas using Address*

P.Mich. VIII 491 (2nd c. CE)	γινώσκειν σε θέλω, <u>μήτηρ</u> , ὅτι ...
J.E.A. XIII p. 61 (293 CE?)	γινώσκειν σε οὖν θέλω, <u>ἀδελφή</u> , ὅτι ...
P.Lond. 417 (346 CE?)	γινώσκιν σε θέλω, <u>κύριε</u> , ...
P.Mich. VIII 476 (2nd c. CE)	γινώσκειν σε θέλω, <u>πατήρ</u> , ...
P.Bour. 25 (4th c. CE)	γείνωσκε δέ, <u>κυρία μου</u> , ὅτι ...

## 4. SYNTAX

Disclosure formulas take a variety of syntactic combinations. The most frequent configuration occurs in the abbreviated or shorter disclosure formulas that only use a Predicator.<sup>36</sup> The subject is rarely realized within the formula and negative particles often occur in the Adjunct. There is a notable amount of consistency, however, in how elements are typically realized within the clause, especially compared to the various configurations that occur in the clause that the disclosure formula introduces. The patterns of Predicator, Predicator-Complement and Predicator-Adjunct (with a negative particle in the Adjunct)<sup>37</sup> are the standard syntactic configurations in the New Testament formulas. These combinations are what we would expect to find in the New Testament, which was written around the time that the full formula was just beginning to be widely used. The Predicator-Complement combination is also fairly frequent.<sup>38</sup>

*Structure of Disclosure Formulas*

	P	SP	PC	PA	SPA	PCA	SPC
γινώσκω	6		10	5		3	
ἐπιγινώσκω			1	1		1	
ἀγνοέω	2						
γνωρίζω			1				
οἶδα	46	3	8	13	1	1	2
<i>Totals:</i>	54	3	20	19	1	4	2

<sup>36</sup> The syntactic terminology we use here departs from the traditional subject-verb-object-indirect object terminology, but it is relatively straightforward. Subject (S) is the grammatical subject of the finite verb, Predicator (P) the verbal element of the clause, Complement (C) the word or group of words that complement the Predicator (e.g. most accusatives), Adjunct (A) the word or group of words that modify the Predicator by indicating the circumstances associated with the process (e.g. prepositional phrases, most datives), and address (ad) the component that directs attention to a particular participant(s).

<sup>37</sup> These configurations refer to the components present in the clause, not to their order.

<sup>38</sup> The four criteria developed above for identifying disclosure formulas provide the basis for our selection and analysis here.

*Structure of the Clause it Introduces*

	S	P	C	SP	PC	SC	SPC	SCA	PCA	SPCA	PA	SPA	SA
γινώσκω	1			2	3		2		1	4	5	3	
ἐπιγινώσκω			1		1								1
ἀγνοέω					1					1	1	1	
γνωρίζω				1									
οἶδα	1	3	4	7	10	2	13	1	6	8	9	2	
<i>Totals:</i>	2	3	5	9	15	2	15	1	7	13	15	6	1

The same combinations also occur with the added element of address, usually ἀδελφοί. However, in some instances the addressees as a whole (Phil 4:15) or a particular group within the discourse audience (Jas 4:4) can be addressed.

*Structure of Disclosure Formulae*

	Pad	PCad	PAad	SPCad	SPad	SPAad	PCAad
γινώσκω	1						
ἀγνοέω	2	1				1	1
γνωρίζω	1		1				
οἶδα	2	1	1	1	2		
<i>Totals:</i>	4	4	2	1	2	1	1

*Structure of the Clause it Introduces*

	PC	PA	SPC	SPA	PCA	C
γινώσκω				1		
ἀγνοέω	1	1		1	2	
γνωρίζω		1				
οἶδα		2	2			2
<i>Totals:</i>	1	4	2	2	2	2

While the most common Adjunct is a negative particle, other items also appear as the Adjunct, including demonstrative pronouns and, on occasion, prepositions.

Knowing Verb	Adjunct	Text
γινώσκω (6×)	πρώτον ἐν τούτῳ	2 Pet 1:20, 2 Pet 3:3 1 John 3:16, 3:24, 4:13, 5:2
ἐπιγινώσκω (2×)	ἕως τέλους οὐκ	1 Cor 1:13–14 2 Cor 13:5

Knowing Verb	Adjunct	Text
ἀγνοέω (6×)	οὐ περὶ	Rom 1:13, 11:25, 1 Cor 10:1, 2 Cor 1:8, 1 Thess 4:13 1 Cor 12:1
οἶδα (15×)	οὐκ  περὶ	Rom 6:16, 11:2; 1 Cor 3:16, 5:6, 6:1–19 (6×), 9:13, 9:24; Jas 4:4 1 Cor 8:1, 8:4

It is interesting to note, however, that when a disclosure formula does have a prepositional phrase in its Adjunct, the preposition never modifies the “verb of knowing” directly. In the series of ἐν τούτῳ phrases in John, ἐν modifies τούτῳ and τούτῳ is cataphoric, referring to the following clause. Similarly, in 1 Corinthians 8, περὶ serves as a prelude to the knowledge that the statement introduces, not as a direct qualification of οἶδα. There are no uncontested instances of a disclosure statement in the New Testament where there is a preposition in the Adjunct modifying the knowing verb.

In the papyri, the syntactic configurations are a bit more rigid. There is the standard Predicator and Predicator-Complement configurations, but very few formulas take an Adjunct and, like the formulas in the New Testament, they do not seem to take prepositions in the adjunct modifying the “verb of knowing.” The abundance of the full formula in later papyri causes the Predicator-Complement structure to dominate. As in the New Testament, some formulas use a negative particle in the Adjunct (e.g. P.Oxy. IV 745.6) and others use περὶ as a prelude to the information content that is being introduced by the statement, but these are not frequent.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

We have suggested that the disclosure formula in the Greco-Roman and New Testament epistolary tradition is versatile in some ways, but fixed in others. It may take a variety of morphological expressions, but it uses relatively fewer syntactic configurations. While disclosure formulas often take an Adjunct, they do not grammaticalize a prepositional phrase that modifies the “verb of knowing.” Disclosure formulas function at the discourse, paragraph, and clause levels depending upon their position in the clausal structure of the text and their place in the structure of the letter itself. The implications for understanding this formula are significant, especially with respect to emphasis, structure, and prepositional modification.