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## CONCERNING ΠΕΡΙ ΔΕ IN 1 CORINTHIANS

by

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It is a unanimous conclusion in scholarship on 1 Corinthians that the phrase *περὶ δέ* (“and concerning ...”) in 1 Cor. 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12 provides in some way the key to the structure and composition of the letter.<sup>1</sup> Despite this agreement in principle, the interpretation of the *περὶ δέ* formula has proceeded from unquestioned assumptions about the function, meaning and usage of the formula which have had almost consensus status among scholars.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of this essay is fourfold: to examine the role which observations about the *περὶ δέ* formula have played in the recent history of exegesis of 1 Corinthians; to uncover the assumptions behind that scholarship; to present and document a thesis about the correct nature of the formula *περὶ δέ* on the basis of its use in ancient Greek literary and epistolary texts; and, in conclusion, to indicate some implications of a proper understanding of *περὶ δέ* for the investigation of the composition of 1 Corinthians.

### I

Many scholars have concluded that the *περὶ δέ* formulae in 1 Corinthians introduce successive parts of a single excerpted letter, the

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<sup>1</sup> For a list of scholars who “call attention to the significance of this repeated phrase” see J. C. Hurd, *The Origin of 1 Corinthians* (reprinted, Macon, GA: Mercer Univ. Press, 1983), p. 64 n. 1. Hurd’s list is current to 1965. Since then see, e.g., C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NY and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 154; F. F. Bruce, *I and II Corinthians*, New Century Bible (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), pp. 24, 66; P. Vielhauer, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975), p. 132; G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 267; G. Sellin, “Hauptprobleme des Ersten Korintherbriefes,” *ANRW* II, 25.4, 2940-3044, pp. 2941-42.

<sup>2</sup> On the modern “consensus” see, e.g., V. L. Wimbush, *Paul the Worldly Ascetic* (Macon, GA: Mercer Univ. Press, 1987), pp. 11-13; for both ancient and modern views, see E.-B. Allo, *Saint Paul. Première Épître aux Corinthiens* (Paris: LeCoffre, 1956), p. 196.

so-called *Antwortbrief*,<sup>3</sup> by which Paul responds, point by point, to the Corinthians' letter to him which he mentions in 7:1 (περὶ δὲ ὧν ἐγράφατε).<sup>4</sup> The περὶ δὲ formula is thus a central component of almost all partition theories of 1 Corinthians.<sup>5</sup> The classic formulation of this argument remains that of W. Schmithals in his *Die Gnosis in Korinth*:

Nun ist die Beobachtung wichtig, dass Pls von I 7, 1 an bis zum Ende des Briefes verschiedentlich Bezug nimmt auf schriftliche Anfragen der Korinther an ihn. Die mit περὶ δὲ eingeleiteten Abschnitte gehören zweifellos demselben Paulusbrief an (7, 1.25; 8, 1; 12, 1; 16, 1; 16, 12), und zwar handelt es sich um den Brief B, zu dem ja 16, 1-12 mit Sicherheit zählt. Es ist zu erwarten,<sup>6</sup> dass Pls die Beantwortung des Briefes ohne grössere Abschweifungen durchführt. Dass er das im Sinne hatte, geht aus dem περὶ δὲ ὧν ἐγράφατε 7,1 hervor, das nicht nur die bis 7,24 folgenden Ausführungen überschreibt, sondern anders als die späteren Überschriften περὶ δὲ ... auf sämtliche Anfragen des Gemeindebriefes blickt.<sup>7</sup>

For these reasons Schmithals concluded that 1 Cor. 1:1-6:1; 7:1-9:23; 10:23-11:1; 12:1-14:40 (with chapters 13 and 14 reversed); and 16:1-12 constitutes a single Pauline letter in response to the Corinthians' letter.<sup>8</sup> For Schmithals and the other exegetes who

<sup>3</sup> This term seems first to have been used as a title by W. Schenk, "Der 1. Korintherbrief als Briefsammlung," *ZNW* 60 (1969) 219-43; p. 241, and has been taken up in subsequent partition theories (see Sellin, pp. 2965-68 for a list).

<sup>4</sup> For the various partition theories of 1 Corinthians with complete bibliography, see H. Merklein, "Die Einheitlichkeit des ersten Korintherbriefes," *ZNW* 75 (1984) 153-83; pp. 154-56 (see especially p. 153 n. 1) and Sellin, pp. 2965-68; now out of date but with helpful charts of the earlier theories is Hurd, pp. 43-47.

<sup>5</sup> See the summary statement on the role of περὶ δὲ in partition theories by Merklein, p. 162: "In dieser Hinsicht gibt es denn auch kaum einen Dissens unter den Teilungshypothesen." He notes that among the partition theorists it is only J. Héring (*La Première Épître de Saint Paul aux Corinthiens*, CNT 7 [Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1949]) and E. Dinkler ("Korintherbriefe," *RGK* IV, 1960, cols. 17-24) who do not put all sections beginning with περὶ δὲ in the same letter. Dinkler's theory (in dependence upon Bultmann) does not keep these sections together despite the fact that he points to the significance of the repetition of the formula in 1 Corinthians (col. 19).

<sup>6</sup> See Schenk's transformation of Schmithals' bold assumption into fact: "Es ist nicht nur 'zu erwarten' sondern auch zu beobachten" (p. 224).

<sup>7</sup> *Die Gnosis in Korinth*, FRLANT n.s. 48 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969<sup>3</sup>), p. 85.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p. 95 (see n. 23 on the inversion of chapters 13 and 14). Even in Schmithals' later variations on his partition theory ("Die Korintherbriefe als Briefsammlung," *ZNW* 64 (1973) 263-88; *Die Briefe des Paulus in ihrer ursprünglichen Form* [Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1984], pp. 19-85), this piece of logic has remained (but see the hesitation on oral and written questions in *Die Briefe*, p. 34).

divide 1 Corinthians into a collection of letters, the formula *περὶ δέ* has been an important key to making those divisions.<sup>9</sup>

Yet the *περὶ δέ* formula has not only been constitutive of partition theories of 1 Corinthians. J. C. Hurd's *The Origin of 1 Corinthians*, so far the only sustained defense of the unity of the letter,<sup>10</sup> is also based on assumptions about the *περὶ δέ* formula. Hurd argues that 1 Corinthians is one single letter, despite its apparent inconsistency in tone and expression, on the grounds that variations in the letter are due to the different types of information Paul received, that is, from oral and written sources. Thus when Paul responds to oral information, Hurd concludes, his tone is "aroused, even angry," but when he replies to written information (the Corinthians' letter), his tone is "calm and balanced."<sup>11</sup> Hurd reconstructs the Corin-

<sup>9</sup> So also Schenk, pp. 224-25; A. Suhl, *Paulus und seine Briefe* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1975), pp. 204-5; R. Jewett, "The Redaction of 1 Corinthians and the Trajectory of the Pauline School," *JAAAR* 46/4 Suppl. (1978) 398-444; pp. 396-98; H.-J. Klauck, *Herrenmahl und hellenistischer Kult*, NTAbh n. s. 15 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1982), p. 241 and *passim*; R. Pesch, *Paulus ringt um die Lebensform der Kirche. Vier Briefe an die Gemeinde Gottes in Korinth*, Herderbücherei 1291 (Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder, 1986), pp. 88-97; 191-246; cf the remarks of J. Weiss which have been influential for these scholars (*Der erste Korintherbrief*, KEK 7, 9th ed. [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910], pp. xlii and 169). C. Senft acknowledges the weakness of the argument by appeal to the form *περὶ δέ* (*La Première Épître de Saint-Paul aux Corinthiens*, CNT deuxième série 7 [Neuchâtel/Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1979]: "Indice formel qui à lui seul ne serait pas très significatif ..." (p. 19). Yet on the further grounds of "le style théologique" Senft assigns all the sections beginning with *περὶ δέ* to his letter C, "réponses", anyway.

<sup>10</sup> Since the advent of partition theories of 1 Corinthians (the first to gain serious attention were the suggestions of Weiss, pp. xl-xliii), the partition theories themselves have been debated, e.g., by Kümmel, but the unity of 1 Corinthians has more often been conceded (Conzelmann, Barrett) or assumed (Bornkamm), than defended in a systematic treatment. Two recent studies have argued for the unity of the letter: Merklein's "Die Einheitlichkeit des ersten Korintherbriefes" and D. Lührmann, "Freundschaftsbrief trotz Spannungen: Zu Gattung und Aufbau des Ersten Korintherbriefes," in *Studien zum Text und zur Ethik des Neuen Testaments*, FS H. Greeven, BZNW 47, ed. W. Schrage (Berlin & NY: de Gruyter, 1986), pp. 298-314. Merklein defends the unity of 1 Corinthians by demonstrating that the sections not introduced with *περὶ δέ* have pragmatic and semantic coherence with the *περὶ δέ* sections (pp. 162-79). He does not question the formal assumptions about *περὶ δέ* which underlie the partition theories with which he contends.

<sup>11</sup> pp. 61-94 (the quotations are from pages 82 and 74 respectively). Hurd's assumption that there should be a correlation between the tone of Paul's response and the way in which he received the information can, I think, also be challenged, but in this paper I am focussing on his assumptions about the *περὶ δέ* formula. This study will, however, challenge Hurd's assumption that a rigid separation can be made between oral and written information received by an epistolary author.

thians' letter referred to in 7:1 (and correspondingly Paul's responses to their letter) from the sections beginning with *περὶ δέ*.

As we shall see, each of the passages thus introduced in 1 Corinthians appears to consist of an answer to a question or questions asked Paul by the Corinthians. It is reasonable to suppose, therefore, that Paul's list of answers corresponds more or less closely to a list of questions from the Corinthian Church.<sup>12</sup>

H. Conzelmann, who also considers 1 Corinthians to be a single letter,<sup>13</sup> is perhaps even more adamant than Hurd about the information to be gleaned from Paul's repeated use of the *περὶ δέ* formula:

Dort [Kap. 5] war nicht sicher festzustellen, ob es sich um mündliche oder schriftliche Nachrichten handelt. Von 7,1 an stehen wir eine Strecke weit auf sicherem Boden: Paulus antwortet direkt auf schriftlich gestellte Fragen. Diese bilden offenbar den Leitfaden durch den hier beginnenden Briefteil. Die Antwort wird jeweils mit *περὶ κτλ.* eingeleitet: v. 25; 8,1; 12,1; vgl. auch 16,1.12.<sup>14</sup>

## II

We have seen that both scholars who argue for the division of 1 Corinthians and those who argue for its unity appeal to the same observation<sup>15</sup> of the repeated *περὶ δέ* formula. What is especially surprising is that both sides of this debate proceed from the same assumptions about the formula. In particular, three assumptions are operative in the work of the scholars we have considered, despite their different compositional conclusions:

1. the assumption that each *περὶ δέ* in 7:25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12 refers back to 7:1, and thus *must* introduce a topic contained in the Corinthians' letter.<sup>16</sup>

2. the inverse assumption that Paul would *only* introduce a topic

<sup>12</sup> p. 64.

<sup>13</sup> Although Conzelmann more allows the unity of 1 Corinthians than argues for it (*Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, KEK vol. 5, 12th ed. [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981<sup>2</sup>], pp. 15-17 and *passim*).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>15</sup> See H. D. Betz's remark on 2 Corinthians: "Proponents of hypotheses of partition and of unity unconsciously employ the same types of arguments, turning them first to one purpose, then to another" (*2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, Hermeneia [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985], p. 26).

<sup>16</sup> 1 Cor 7:1 clearly does refer to a written inquiry. The question is if the other uses of *περὶ δέ* in 1 Corinthians undeniably refer to topics contained in that same letter.

broached by the Corinthians in their letter to him with *περὶ δέ*.<sup>17</sup>

3. the further assumption that Paul responds with *περὶ δέ* point by point, in its order, to the Corinthians' letter.<sup>18</sup>

It is the purpose of this paper to challenge the absolute validity of these assumptions. This inquiry proceeds from two questions. What is the nature of the formula *περὶ δέ* that we can be so sure what it means as an organizational and compositional element of 1 Corinthians? And, granting that the repetition of the formula *περὶ δέ* tells us something about the composition of 1 Corinthians, what and how much information can it tell us? These questions can only be answered by studying the formula *περὶ δέ* in other ancient Greek texts as well as in the New Testament to ascertain its nature and function.<sup>19</sup> In so doing we shall see that the three assumptions about *περὶ δέ* delineated above, which have had great influence upon scholarship on 1 Corinthians, are questionable, and perhaps even untenable. A comparative analysis of the use and function of *περὶ δέ* in ancient Greek literary and documentary texts suggests a different understanding of the formula.

### III

The thesis I shall propose is that the formula *περὶ δέ*, as found in a wide variety of ancient Greek texts (with particular emphasis on

<sup>17</sup> e.g., Conzelmann, p. 221: "Es besteht eine gewisse Spannung zwischen äusserer und innerer Disposition der Kap. 11-14: Ein neues Thema wird erst 12, 1 angegeben, wieder mit *περὶ*, also offenbar wieder durch eine Anfrage aus Korinth angestossen." On this assumption Hurd becomes puzzled at 11:2 because "This allusion immediately suggests that Paul is still dealing with the Corinthians' letter although the introductory *περὶ δέ* is absent" (p. 90). For the partition theorists, this assumption demands that all material in chapters 7-16 not under *περὶ δέ* must belong to another letter (Schmithals, *Gnosis*, pp. 85-89; Schenk, p. 225; Suhl, p. 206; Pesch, pp. 89-90).

<sup>18</sup> Conzelmann, p. 21: "Offenbar folgt er einfach der Reihenfolge des korinthischen Briefs." Of many others, see also Hurd, p. 64 and his partial list of scholars who hold this view on p. 65 n.1. This assumption is challenged by Lührmann, p. 305 and Fee, p. 267, but they do not question the first two assumptions.

<sup>19</sup> The only specific study of the *περὶ δέ* formula in the New Testament of which I am aware is that of C. E. Faw, ("On the Writing of First Thessalonians," *JBL* 71 [1952] 217-25, pp. 220-222). This study suffers from the same presuppositions we have seen above. On these grounds Faw and others have postulated a letter to Paul from the Thessalonians which is indicated nowhere else in 1 Thessalonians (for a list of scholars who hold this view, see Hurd, p. 64 n. 2; and the discussion below). Faw deals only with the NT uses of *περὶ δέ*, which is one of the problems with his analysis (his conclusions will be debated below).

letters), is simply a topic marker, a shorthand way of introducing the next subject of discussion.<sup>20</sup> Although this formula *can* be used in response to information received by letter, it is surely *not restricted* to this use, even in letters which mention a previous letter.<sup>21</sup> By the formula *περὶ δέ* an author introduces a new topic *the only requirement of which is that it is readily known to both author and reader*. In itself the formula *περὶ δέ* gives no information about how the author or reader became informed of the topic, nor does it give information about the order of presentation of topics. In addition, *περὶ δέ* is one of a number of such topic-changing formulae which an ancient author writing in Greek could and did use. There is then no reason to assume that it is the only way an author could introduce a new topic in a letter or a discourse, regardless of how the topic has come to be known.

Before a comparative analysis of *περὶ δέ* in ancient literature can be done, the formula requires definition. *περὶ* is itself a preposition which takes the genitive or the accusative case, meaning “concerning” or “with reference to”.<sup>22</sup> In the Koine period *περὶ* is often synonymous with *ὑπέρ* with the genitive.<sup>23</sup> However, it is not solely the

<sup>20</sup> The function of *περὶ δέ* as an introductory formula has been previously noted, for example, by J. L. White: “*περὶ* with the genitive is often shorthand in private conversation for: ‘to a subject mentioned in previous communication’ ” (*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: Society of Biblical Literature, 1972], p. 31). See also White’s *Light From Ancient Letters* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), p. 208; J. T. Sanders, “The Transition from Opening Epistolary Thanksgiving to Body in the Letters of the Pauline Corpus,” *JBL* 81 (1962) 348-62; p. 350 n. 3; and Betz, p. 90 in regard to literary letters: “In ancient letters, it was customary to introduce the subject matter by means of the preposition *περὶ* (‘regarding the matter of ...’).”

<sup>21</sup> See K. Berger’s analysis: “Typisch ... ist die Rede von Senden und Empfangen und die Bezugnahme auf andere Korrespondenz; dabei ist *περὶ* + Genitiv auf Dinge bezogen, die in früherer Korrespondenz erwähnt wurden” (“Hellenistische Gattungen im Neuen Testament” *ANRW* II, 25.2, 1031-1432; p. 1331). Berger’s comment advances the discussion because he opens the realm of reference by *περὶ* to any earlier correspondence, and not merely the most recent letter, but he still limits its sphere of reference to epistolary communications.

<sup>22</sup> BAGD, *s.v.* *περὶ*. More often it is *περὶ* with the genitive which means “with reference to,” but it can mean “with regard to” with the accusative case also (BAGD *s.v.* *περὶ* 2.d; cf H. W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920, 1980], para. 1693, 3c; LSJ *s.v.* *περὶ*).

<sup>23</sup> J. H. Moulton and W. F. Howard, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1929), vol. 2, p. 321; J. H. Moulton-G. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources* (London: Hodder, 1930), p. 504; Smyth, para. 1693.



lexical meaning of the word *περί* which constitutes the form found throughout 1 Corinthians. The primary characteristic of this formula is syntactical and stylistic—the *περί* phrase is pulled to the front of the sentence for emphasis.<sup>24</sup> *περί* with the genitive pulled to the front of the sentence is found in both absolute and grammatically connected constructions.<sup>25</sup> Even where a verb could construe with the *περί* phrase (*i.e.*, in 1 Cor. 12:1 *περί δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν, ἀδελφοί, οὐ θέλω ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν*), the *περί δὲ* formula stands off at the front as a topic marker, and retains a flavor of the absolute usage.

The final element in the formula is the conjunction *δέ*.<sup>26</sup> One question revolves around whether the *δέ* is copulative or adverbative.<sup>27</sup> If the *δέ* is merely copulative, then *καὶ περὶ...*, for example, would be an identical form.<sup>28</sup> Most scholars seem to regard the *δέ* as in some way constitutive of the form, as 1 Cor. 8:4 (*περὶ τῆς βρώσεως οὖν*) is rarely included in the list of verses using the formula.<sup>29</sup> We have noted that the chief characteristic of the formula is the emphatic word order with the *περί* phrase pulled to the front

<sup>24</sup> As noted in the lexica. See Moulton and Milligan, p. 504; BAGD, *s.v.* *περί* 1.h; H. Riesenfeld, *TDNT* 6.53.

<sup>25</sup> BAGD *s.v.* *περί* 1.h, citing 1 Cor. 7:1; 8:1; 16:1, 12 as absolute and 7:25; 8:4; 12:1 (1 Thess. 4:9; 5:1) as instances where the phrase construes with a verb (cf also the *v.l.* at 16:12). It should be noted that *περί* is found with a wide variety of verbs of both oral and written communication (see the list in BAGD *s.v.* 1.a.). On the absolute usage cf C. F. G. Heinrici, *Das erste Sendschreiben des Apostel Paulus an die Korinther* (Berlin: W. Hertz, 1880), p. 60 n. 2.

<sup>26</sup> Robertson and Plummer see two distinct functions for the *περί* and the *δέ* (*First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, ICC [NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925], p. 259; cf p. 132).

<sup>27</sup> BAGD *s.v.* *δέ*, cites 1 Cor. 7:1; 8:1; 12:1 and 16:1 under the description “in lists of similar things, to bring about a clearer separation betw. the things listed” (1.c). Since 7:25 and 16:12 are not listed there (the *δέ* in 16:12 is called “a transitional particle pure and simple, without any contrast intended;” 2) one must conclude that the function of *δέ* in the formula is, in their view, variable from case to case. Robertson and Plummer regard the “antithetical” sense of *δέ* in the formula less possible (p. 259). Faw’s contention that *δέ* in 7:8; 11:2 and 15:1 is an abbreviation for *περὶ δὲ* (p. 221) is highly questionable.

<sup>28</sup> The problematic formula *περὶ μὲν γὰρ* in 2 Cor. 9:1 will be left out of this discussion, as it is generally (and correctly) understood to be a different formula (on which see Betz, p. 90; V. P. Furnish, *II Corinthians*, AB 32A [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984], pp. 425-26 and the works listed by them).

<sup>29</sup> For example, Fee puts it in brackets [cf 8:4], (p. 267). Sellin refers to the form as *περὶ* (*δέ*), but curiously, even with this reserve about the *δέ*, he does not include 8:4 in his list of references (p. 2943).



of the sentence, and thus in most Greek sentences near some conjunction.

The formula<sup>30</sup> in 1 Cor. 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12 therefore consists of three<sup>31</sup> elements: 1. the preposition *περί* with an object in the genitive; 2. the prepositional phrase is pulled to the front of the sentence (*περί* is the first word); 3. the postpositive conjunction *δέ* (in second position in all those instances). In our comparative analysis we shall focus in particular upon uses where all three elements are in place, but we shall also look at some instances where the different conjunction *καί* is found, or none at all.<sup>32</sup>

What follows is an examination of the use of the formula *περί δέ* in 1: Literary and Rhetorical Works; 2. Literary Letters; 3. Private Documentary Letters; and 4. the New Testament, in order to demonstrate the validity of the thesis that the *περί δέ* formula is nothing more or less than a way of introducing a topic the only requirement of which is that it be readily known to both writer and reader.

The formula *περί δέ* at the beginning of a sentence is common in a wide range of Greek literature. For example, in the *Politics* Aristotle uses *περί δέ* as a topic marker no less than thirteen times.<sup>33</sup> The topics which are the object of the preposition *περί* may or may not

<sup>30</sup> One might ask if *περί δέ* is indeed a "formula" as Hurd and others have called it (p. 74; cf Bruce, p. 66; Sanders, p. 350 n. 3). Conzelmann refers to it as a "style" of answering questions ("im Stil der Antwort auf Anfragen" p. 248), Sellin "der Stichwort-referierenden Wendung" (p. 2943), and Barrett more generally "a similar *form of words*" (p. 154). White has differentiated "formulae" and "non-formulaic transitional devices" under which he classes *περί* with the genitive (*The Body of the Greek Letter*, p. 31 and *passim*). While White has retained these categories in subsequent work (see the different terms and subcategories under which *περί* (*δέ*) is classed in *Light from Ancient Letters*, p. 203, 207, 208, 211), the exact definitions and differences between these categories have not been spelled out. I will use the term "formula" for the introductory phrase which has the three elements here defined.

<sup>31</sup> To which we can add a fourth, negative criterion: the *περί δέ* does not answer a preceding *περί μέν*.

<sup>32</sup> But priority will be given to occurrences of the exact formula *περί δέ*.

<sup>33</sup> *περί δέ τῆς Λακεδαιμονίων πολιτείας καὶ τῆς Κρητικῆς* (2.6.1); *περί δέ βασιλείας* (2.6.20); *περί δέ τὸν πολίτην* (3.3.1, with acc.); *περί δέ τοῦ βασιλέως τοῦ κατὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ βούλησιν πάντα πράττοντος* (3.11.1); *περί δέ τῆς παμβασιλείας καλουμένης* (3.11.2); *περί δέ τυραννίδος*, (4.8.1); *περί δέ σωτηρίας* (5.7.1); *περί δέ τῆς πρὸς τὴν θάλατταν κοινωνίας* (7.5.3); *περί δέ τόπων τῶν ἐρμυνῶν* (7.10.4); *περί δέ τειχῶν* (7.10.5); *περί δέ ἀποθέσεως καὶ τροφῆς τῶν γιγνομένων* (7.14.10); *περί δέ τῆς [ὀμιλίας] πρὸς ἄλλην ἢ πρὸς ἄλλον* (7.14.12); *περί δέ μουσικῆς* (8.4.3); *περί δέ τῆς ἐπιτιμῆσεως* (8.6.3). (Text cited according to the LCL edition, ed. H. Rackham.) The frequency of use of *περί* (*δέ*) in the *Politics* was noted by F. Susemihl (*Aristotelis Politicorum Libri Octo* [Leipzig: Teubner, 1872], p. 631).

have been mentioned previously in the work, but all are common, well-known political and social topics, which the reader should immediately recognize (see the list in n. 33). For example, “fortified places” are not mentioned previously in the work, but are introduced at 7.10.4 with *περι δέ* because the topic is readily understood. Other comparable formulae beside *περι δέ* are also used to move the work forward.<sup>34</sup>

In a different genre, a rhetorical *τέχνη*,<sup>35</sup> *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, *περι δέ* is also used to introduce new topics.<sup>36</sup> As with the *Politics*, it is not the only formula so used in the work.<sup>37</sup> Again here in the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* the object of the preposition, the topic being introduced, is a common subject which the readership should know (e.g., laws, oligarchy, peace).

A third literary example of the use of *περι δέ* is provided by Diogenes Laertius’ *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, where *περι δέ* is one formula used to move on to a new topic about the person under consideration (their death, their age, etc.).<sup>38</sup>

*περι δέ* is also commonly used in speeches to introduce the next topic of discussion, and thus functions as a rhetorical formula as well.<sup>39</sup> To cite a conspicuous example, in Ps-Demosthenes Or. 7, the formula *περι δέ* six times introduces the next subject of

<sup>34</sup> Such as *δῆλον δέ*, *ἐπεὶ δέ*, *πρῶτον μὲν οὖν* (cf 1 Cor 11:18), *σχεδὸν δέ*, *λοιπὸν δέ* (cf 1 Cor 11:34), and the common summarizing formulae *τὰ μὲν οὖν* and *ὅτι μὲν οὖν*.

<sup>35</sup> The work is set up with an epistolary opening, but this is probably a literary fiction to promote its attribution to Aristotle (see C. Robert, “Anaximenes,” *PW* II, cols. 2086-98; especially 2090-91). For another instance of *περί* to mark a “subhead” in a rhetorical treatise, see POxy. 3708 (*περί πιστευτικῶν*...).

<sup>36</sup> *περι δέ νόμων* (2.1424A); *περι δέ τὰς ὀλιγαρχίας* (2.1424A; with acc.); *περι εἰρήνης δέ* (2.1425A); *περι δέ ἀντιθέτων καὶ παρισώσεων καὶ ὁμοιοτήτων* (26.1435B); *περι δέ πόρου χρημάτων* (38.1446B); *περι πολιτείας δέ* (38.1446B). (Text LCL edition, ed. H. Rackham.)

<sup>37</sup> See, e.g., *πρῶτον μὲν οὖν* in 6.1427B; 23.1434B; 24.1435A; 25.1435A; 35.1441B; 36.1441B; 38.1445B. See also the summary formula *περι μὲν οὖν* (2.1423A [2 ×]; 2.1424B; 6.1428A; 12.1434B; 28.1436A).

<sup>38</sup> *περι δέ τοῦ θανάτου* (8.67); *περι δέ τῶν ἐτῶν* (8.74); *περι δέ τῶν τραγωδιῶν* (8.77); *περι δέ τοῦ μουσικοῦ* (8.82); *περι δέ τῶν μετεώρων* (10.83); *περι δέ τῶν βιωτικῶν* (10.117). (Text LCL edition, ed. R. D. Hicks.)

<sup>39</sup> See, e.g., Antiphon *First Tetr.* 9; *Herodes* 5.7; *Andocides Myst.* 34 (cf 33); *Ag. Alcib.* 42 (cf *Peace* 24); *Isocrates* 3.17; 5.30, 105; 8.18 (cf 8:26); 12.35 (cf 12:70, 93, 105, 110, 126 for uses without *δέ*); 15.139 (cf 15.259, 281); *Lysias* 24.10 (cf 13.32); *Demosth.* 49.55, 62 (cf 49.48); *D. H. Ant. Rom.* 4.34.1; 8.35.1; 11.6.6; 11.15.5 (in speeches); *Dio Chrys.* 7.132.

discourse.<sup>40</sup> Thus *περὶ δέ* is also used in rhetorical texts as one (among many) means by which to move on to the next subject. This ‘shorthand’ use of *περὶ* + the genitive is well attested in its use as one of the most common title or subtitle formulae<sup>41</sup> for ancient Greek letters, speeches and treatises as, for example, Demosthenes’ Ep. 1 *περὶ τῆς ὁμοιοίας*, or Aristotle’s *περὶ ψυχῆς*.

Therefore, the phrase *περὶ δέ* is found in Greek literary texts of varied genre<sup>42</sup> and date<sup>43</sup> to introduce the reader, in a shorthand way, to the next topic of discussion. In such works *περὶ δέ* is clearly not restricted to answering written questions. No conclusions can or should be drawn from the use of the formula alone about: 1. the source of the topic; 2. the chosen or determined order of presentation of topics; or 3. the literary integrity of the work.<sup>44</sup> *περὶ δέ* is one of a variety of forms used to proceed to a new subject.

With the use of *περὶ δέ* in literary texts as a background, we turn to the use of the form in ancient letters as especially pertinent to our

<sup>40</sup> 7.14, 18, 30, 33, 36, 39. The concentration of use of this one formula is one argument (of many) for doubting that the work was composed by the stylist Demosthenes (it is attributed to Hegesippus). See F. Blass’s comment: ‘Um eine engere Verbindung der Abschnitte kümmert sich dieser Redner nicht; die meisten fangen einförmig mit *περὶ δέ* an’ (*Die attische Beredsamkeit* [Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1962], vol. III, pt. 2, p. 144 cf already D. H. Dem. 13). This speech takes up topics known from a letter and from oral reports, using *περὶ δέ* to introduce either (and subjects mentioned in both).

<sup>41</sup> This is easily confirmed by glancing at the list of works Diogenes Laertius gives for each philosopher (e.g., Aristotle in 5.22-27; Theophrastus in 5.42-50 and throughout the work, where *περὶ*, begins a title more frequently than any other term). *περὶ* is also used for subtitles, as in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. T. Holtz has pointed to this usage in Test XII as parallel to Paul’s *περὶ δέ* in 1 Thess 4:9 (*Der erste Brief an die Thessalonicher*, EKK [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1986], p. 172 n. 146).

<sup>42</sup> See also the mysteries inscription from Andania (Ditt. *Syll.*<sup>3</sup> 736 lines 1 [reconstructed], 45, 78, 84 [with accusative]). This text is cited as a parallel to *περὶ δέ* in 1 Corinthians by Moulton-Milligan, p. 504; BAGD s.v. *περὶ* 1.h. The formula is also found in a will recorded by D.L. (*περὶ δέ τῶν θεραπεύοντων ἑμαυτόν...*; 5.72). These are both more documentary than literary examples. In historical works, see, e.g., D.H. *Ant. Rom.* 1.63.1; 11.6.6; the texts from Xenophon and Diodorus Siculus cited by Heinrici, p. 60, n. 2.

<sup>43</sup> Since Diogenes Laertius’ *Lives* dates to the 3rd century, the examples from it and from Aristotle’s *Politics* show the range in which the formula was used, thus placing Paul well within this chronological spectrum of use.

<sup>44</sup> The compositional integrity of the *Politics* has long been questioned (see W. R. Newman, *The Politics of Aristotle* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1887-1902], vol. I Appendix C; Vol. II pp. xxi-xl and *passim*), mostly on the basis of inconsistencies in content, repetitiveness and hard transitions. The use of *περὶ δέ* in the work has not, however, been an issue in the deliberations.

investigation of 1 Corinthians. The questions we shall ask of these letters to challenge the scholarly assumptions delineated above are: 1. is the *περὶ δέ* formula in letters *always* used to answer a question from a previous letter (and is it even possible to determine this?);<sup>45</sup> and 2. is there evidence that by *περὶ δέ* an epistolary author answers a previous letter *in its order*? We shall treat literary letters first and then private documentary letters.<sup>46</sup>

The Platonic Epistles,<sup>47</sup> in particular Ep. 2, 12 and 13, provide very important parallels to the use of *περὶ δέ* in 1 Corinthians. In Platonic Epistle 2<sup>48</sup> Plato writes to Dionysius of Syracuse. The letter begins with a record of an oral report (“Ἦκουσα Ἀρχεδέμου ‘I heard from Archedemus’”; 310B),<sup>49</sup> but later in the letter reference

<sup>45</sup> White rightly concludes somewhat more reservedly than the scholars we considered above, but even his view may overstate the case: “*περὶ* (ὕπερ) with the genitive case *often* signals a reply to something which the recipient has written. On occasion, the letter writer uses the construction to refer to something which he himself had previously written” (*Light from Ancient Letters*, p. 208; *emph.*). cf p. 211: “This phrase (*περὶ δέ*) ... *usually* indicates that the letter writer is replying to some inquiry of the recipient” (*emph.*). In fact in many letters it is not possible for us to determine the source of the topic, as we shall see below.

<sup>46</sup> The history of scholarship on ancient epistolary classification is vast and divided. This work follows the broad categories of “Private or Documentary Letters” and “Literary Letters” as set out by D. E. Aune, *The New Testament in its Literary Environment*, Library of Early Christianity, vol. 8 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), pp. 158-72 (bibliography pp. 180-82). For summaries of the debate and bibliography see, in addition to Aune, Vielhauer, pp. 58-66; S. K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, Library of Early Christianity, vol. 5 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986); White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, pp. 221-24.

<sup>47</sup> The Greek text here followed is *Plato. Epistulae*, ed. J. Moore-Blunt (Leipzig: Teubner, 1985). The translations are my own.

<sup>48</sup> This work is of doubtful authenticity (see L. Edelstein, *Plato's Seventh Letter* [Leiden: Brill, 1966], pp. 134-38 and the works cited there), but that should not affect the work's formal characteristics. If inauthentic, the letter dates later than the historical Plato and thus closer to the first century C.E. (The author of these letters will be referred to here as Plato for the sake of clarity.)

<sup>49</sup> cf 312D. It becomes clear from the letter that Archedemus has been sent as an envoy to inquire of Plato in regard to specific matters (ὕπερ οὐ σὺ πέπομας ἀπορούμενος; 312D; cf 313D). Archedemus will in turn be sent back to Dionysius from Plato and will inform him of Plato's response (δηλώσει δέ σοι Ἀρχέδημος; 312D; cf 313D) and presumably also carry this letter (see 313D-E). The same vocabulary for information received by an envoy (ἀκούω, δηλώω) is found in 1 Corinthians (1:11; 11:18; cf 5:1; see Berger, p. 1332, especially n. 361). In 1 Corinthians, as here, it is impossible to differentiate information received by letter and by oral report, unless it is stated explicitly (as in the verses above and in 7:1). The reason this is so difficult is, as we shall see, that the letter and the envoy's report are part of the same communicative act (see, e.g., Sb 6799, 10: τὰ δὲ ἄλλα ὁ φέρων σοι τὴν ἐπιστολὴν ἔρει; cf Col. 4:7-9; Eph. 6:21-22; Cic. *Ep. ad Fam.* 3.1; 1 Cor. 4:17?).

is made to some past letters as well.<sup>50</sup> Thus, like 1 Corinthians, Platonic Ep. 2 is (or purports to be) in response to both oral and written information.

The formula *περὶ δέ* is used by this author at 314C: *περὶ δὲ Πολυξένου ἐθαύμασας ὅτι πέμψαιμί σοι* “and concerning Polyxenus, you were surprised that I sent (him) to you.” It is not possible to determine if this is in response to oral or written information. Either is possible; in this context it is as likely (or even more likely) in response to the oral information communicated by Archdemus. The use of the formula *περὶ δέ* *in itself* tells us nothing about the source of this information. It tells us merely that the topic (Polyxenus) was known to both writer and recipient.

A similar formula is used at 315A, again with a proper name as the object of the preposition<sup>51</sup>: *καὶ περὶ Λυσικλείδου ...* “and concerning Lysicleides ....” In both of these cases the prepositional phrase serves to introduce a topic which is readily recognized by both writer and recipient—the proper name of a person whom they both know. In 311E Plato begins *περὶ γὰρ φιλοσοφίαν φημί ἐγώ* “For concerning philosophy I say ....” Philosophy is of course a topic readily known to both Plato and Dionysius. Plato introduces the topic of philosophy here to make his case for the necessity of the reconciliation between himself and Dionysius. It is not a response to Dionysius’ question, written or oral.<sup>52</sup>

Platonic Ep. 2 displays for us the problem of too readily assigning *περὶ δέ* references to topics which arose from inquiries in a previous letter. Any epistolary situation contains within it many contexts of

<sup>50</sup> 313C and 314E.

<sup>51</sup> cf. 1 Cor. 16:12. The formula is common with proper names also in the papyri (see below). The reason is that the persons so named are known to both parties and can be referred to in shorthand. There is no reason to suppose these instances are in response to a direct inquiry about these persons by Dionysius (but even if they were, one cannot infer that that inquiry came in the form of a letter). For another example, see Julian Ep. 4.384D: *περὶ δὲ τοῦ μαροῦ ἀνδρογύνου...*, “as for that abominable eunuch” (text and tr. from W. C. Wright, LCL). This is not in response to an inquiry (there is no mention of a previous letter from Oribasius), but is instead a call for information, as Julian goes on to say *δήλωσον οὖν ἡμῖν ὅ, τι ἂν οἶός τε ἦς* (“so tell me whatever you can about this”). Scholars argue over to whom the epithet refers, but clearly Julian and his recipient Oribasius knew!

<sup>52</sup> For we know what Dionysius’ question was: *ὁ σὺ ἔρωτᾶς, πῶς χρῆ ἔχειν ἐμὲ καὶ σὲ πρὸς ἀλλήλους* (312B; cf 313C). It is not clear if this question was addressed orally or in written form (or both).

shared experiences and contacts between sender and recipient.<sup>53</sup> With *περὶ δέ* an author can call, in shorthand, upon any topic or person readily known to the recipient from their common experience. It is not restricted to the answering of written questions.

Platonic Ep. 12 affords a good case for testing assumptions about *περὶ δέ* because this letter is repeated by Diogenes Laertius in his life of Archytas (D.L. 8.4), along with Archytas' letter which purportedly prompted Plato's response (Ep. 12).<sup>54</sup> Even if both letters are fictitious,<sup>55</sup> seen together they give us some sense of the epistolary protocol which some later writer followed. Archytas' letter to Plato first reports the receipt of a letter from Plato and an oral report by the envoy Lamiscus, both telling of Plato's recovery from an illness (D.L. 8.4.80). The very next line of the letter begins *περὶ δὲ τῶν ὑπομνημάτων* ("and concerning the memoranda ...").<sup>56</sup> Again, there is no way to tell if the topic of the *ὑπομνήματα* was contained in Plato's previous letter,<sup>57</sup> Lamiscus' report, or both, or is introduced by Archytas. The letter does not tell us.

In Plato's reply to Archytas' letter (Pl. Ep. 12 = D.L. 8.4.81), he refers explicitly to that letter by using a similar formula to that found in 1 Cor 7:1 (*τὰ δὲ παρ' ἐμοὶ ὑπομνήματα, περὶ ὧν ἐπέστειλας...* "and with respect to the memoranda before me, concerning which

<sup>53</sup> In this instance, oral news from Archedemus, who represents Dionysius, letters from some point in the past, and even some conversation in the past ("but you yourself were saying this to me in the garden ..." [313A]). Because the modern scholar is an outsider to the epistolary conversation, and the on-going life conversation of which it is a part, one must be cautious about claiming to know more than one can. What we can determine from the use of *περὶ δέ* in his letter is that the author thinks he can count on *his recipient* to know the people and things to which he refers, out of any number of common contexts which they share. [The situation becomes somewhat more complicated in the case of pseudepigraphical literary letters, which function at the level of the understanding of the readers, and not merely an epistolary addressee.]

<sup>54</sup> There are minor variations between the two texts (mostly in word order) but none affects the *περὶ δέ* references.

<sup>55</sup> It is quite possible that Archytas' letter was a later composition occasioned by the extant (itself probably pseudepigraphical) Pl. Ep. 12 (see F. Novotny, *Platonis Epistulae. Commentariis Illustratae* [Brno: Opera Facultatis Philosophicae Universitatis Masarykianae Brunensis, 1930], p. 281). For a summary of the arguments concerning the authorship of these two letters and bibliography, see Edelstein, p. 127, n. 14.

<sup>56</sup> D.L. 8.4.80 (text LCL edition ed. R. D. Hicks, translations mine).

<sup>57</sup> If Platonic Ep. 9 is understood by Diogenes to be that previous letter (he knows of two such letters; see 8.4.79), it does not mention the *ὑπομνήματα*.



you wrote ...’).<sup>58</sup> Here we are on sure footing; where this extended formula is used there is no doubt that the reference is to a previous epistolary communication (as in 1 Cor. 7:1). Indeed, this corresponds with Archytas’ letter, which, as we have seen, is about the *ὑπομνήματα*. Two lines later, in the last line of his letter, Plato uses the *περὶ δέ* formula: *περὶ δέ τῆς φυλακῆς ...*, ‘and concerning the custody ...’ (of the memoranda).<sup>59</sup> This topic was not mentioned in Archytas’ letter to which this letter responds—but it is a topic known to the recipient *from some other context*, as the rest of the sentence shows: *περὶ δέ τῆς φυλακῆς ἀμφοτέροι συμφωνοῦμεν, ὥστ’ οὐδὲν δεῖ παρακελεύεσθαι* ‘and concerning the custody we both agree, so it is by no means necessary to give instructions’.<sup>60</sup>

From the juxtaposition of both of these letters we can say with certainty that *περὶ δέ τῆς φυλακῆς* does not refer to the previous letter. The context from which this topic is so readily known to both author and recipient cannot be definitely reconstructed. The use of the *περὶ δέ* formula does not resolve the question of the source of the topic. Indeed in this case, the formula introduces a topic which the second letter writer wishes to discuss—independent of any request from his recipient. One can only conclude by the introduction of the subject of custody with the *περὶ δέ* formula that it was so understood (from previous discussion, epistolary or oral) as to be readily called to mind. Since the *περὶ δέ* does not refer to the previous letter, Plato is obviously not confined to its order in arranging the topics of his epistolary response. In his letter the organization of topics is logical—first he mentions his purpose in writing, to send the memoranda on to Archytas (359D), and then he discusses what Archytas is to do with the memoranda once they have arrived.

In Platonic Ep. 13, Plato writes again to Dionysius of Syracuse, as in Ep. 2. It is a complicated letter, filled with a variety of topics—the transporting of philosophical works, the introduction of the teacher Helicon, the sending of general merchandise, and a

<sup>58</sup> Pl. Ep. 359D = D.L. 8.4.81.

<sup>59</sup> 359E = D.L. 8.4.81.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., cf 1 Thess. 4.9: *περὶ δέ τῆς φιλαδελφίας οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχετε γράφειν ὑμῖν ...* (*sic*) These both would be nonsensical sentences if they were in response to inquiries for information. cf Julian, Ep. 29.411B: *περὶ δέ τῶν πρὸς Λαυρίκιον οὐθὲν οἶμαι δεῖν ἐπιστέλλειν σοι, πλὴν τοσοῦτον παραινῶ...* (‘Concerning the affair of Lauricius, I do not think I need write to you any instructions; but I give you just this word of advice ...’) (text and tr. Wright, LCL).



discussion of the financial affairs of both Plato and Dionysius.<sup>61</sup> The epistolary context includes several previous communications between the two: a letter (or letters)<sup>62</sup> from Dionysius referred to by the specific formula we saw in Ep. 12 (περὶ δὲ ὧν ἐπέστελλές μοι ἀποπέμπειν σοι ... “and concerning what you were writing to me to send off to you ...”),<sup>63</sup> oral communication from the envoy Leptines (361B), prior conversations,<sup>64</sup> and even future letters.<sup>65</sup> The formula περὶ δέ is used three times in this letter: περὶ δὲ ὧν ἐπέστελλές μοι ... “and concerning what you were writing to me ...” (361A); περὶ δὲ φυτῶν ... “and concerning (the) plants ...” (361B); περὶ δὲ δὴ τοῦ ξυμβόλου τοῦ περὶ τὰς ἐπιστολάς ... “and now concerning the sign which refers to the letters ...” (363B). In the first instance it is clear that the topic comes from the previous letter(s), as we have seen. It is possible that the second instance also refers to a previous letter, as the plants could logically be among the things Dionysius requested Plato to send, but one cannot tell. The Apollo (361A), along with the figs and myrtle-berries Plato regrets he cannot send (361B), could be the extent of Dionysius’ shopping list. But Plato also sends other things not requested (361A). The plants may or may not have been mentioned in one of Dionysius’ letters to Plato.<sup>66</sup> In regard to the third instance of περὶ δέ in this letter, it is clear that this topic is brought up by Plato, *not* in response to a question from Dionysius: “And now concerning the sign which refers to the letters, as to which ones I write in earnest and which not, I suppose on the one hand that you remember (it), but nevertheless,

<sup>61</sup> Edelstein argues for the inauthenticity of this epistle as well, on the grounds that it is inconsistent with the genuine Ep. 7 (pp. 131-33). The pedestrian nature of the concerns which occupy Plato in this letter has also been used as an argument against its genuineness (see Edelstein, p. 133 n. 23; J. Souilhé, *Platon. Oeuvres Complètes*, Vol. 13, pt. 1 [Paris: Société d’Edition, 1926], pp. lxxi-lxxv).

<sup>62</sup> Note the Imperfect tense of ἐπέστελλές in 361A.

<sup>63</sup> 361A; cf 1 Cor. 7:1 and the same formula in Julian Ep. 29.411B.

<sup>64</sup> See ὡσπερ ἔφη in 362E. ἐκέλευε in 362B could refer to oral or written commands. Terms we might identify with oral conversation can also be used to refer to information conveyed by letter (see the command ἄκουε in 361C).

<sup>65</sup> τὰ μὲν ἀλλ’ οὕτω ἔχω λέγειν, πρὶν ἂν παρὰ σοῦ ἔλθωσιν αἱ ἐπιστολαί (362E).

<sup>66</sup> Notice that Plato’s response is to refer the matter to the envoy (περὶ δὲ φυτῶν Λεπτίνης σοι ἐρεῖ; 361B; cf 363C). It is equally likely that the matter arose from an oral report of Leptines to Plato (or, again, from both his oral report and the letter). It could also have been a shopping matter left over from previous letters! The important point is that the presence of the formula περὶ δέ does not resolve the question.

have (it) in mind and turn your thoughts (to it).'<sup>67</sup> The epistolary author introduces the issue of the epistle's authenticity here and at the beginning of the letter (360A) to maintain the literary fiction that the letter is by Plato (cf 363E).<sup>68</sup>

Thus within the same letter, Platonic Ep. 13, *περὶ δέ* is used to refer to topics broached from various sources, oral and written, and even by the author himself. Once again we have seen the inter-relatedness of oral and written reports, and noted the methodological difficulties in distinguishing between them. The order of topics in this letter is determined by the epistolary author's purpose, with references to the sign of authenticity at beginning and end. In the middle of the letter topics are arranged by the author's choice.<sup>69</sup>

We have seen that the formula *περὶ δέ* in literary letters<sup>70</sup> introduces the next topic for consideration, which may have been mentioned in a prior correspondence but need not have been. The formula may also refer to information conveyed orally, or to a topic which the letter writer chooses to bring up. *περὶ δέ* is not restricted to the answering of epistolary questions in literary letters.

We now turn to private letters which provide important parallels to Paul's epistolary conventions and style.<sup>71</sup> The *περὶ δέ* formula is found throughout these texts.<sup>72</sup>

First we shall look at parallels to 1 Cor. 7:1, *περὶ δὲ ὧν ἐγράψατε*

<sup>67</sup> *περὶ δὲ δὴ τοῦ ἑμβόλου τοῦ περὶ τὰς ἐπιστολάς, ὅσας τε ἂν ἐπιστέλλω σπουδῇ καὶ ὄσας ἂν μὴ, οἶμαι μὲν σε μεμνησθαι, ὅμως δ' ἐννόει καὶ πάνυ πρόσεχε τὸν νοῦν, 363B.*

<sup>68</sup> As with 2 Thessalonians, this emphasis on authenticity in the letter itself is taken as an indication that it is spurious (see Souilhé, p. lxxiv).

<sup>69</sup> Uses of *περὶ* are frequent in this letter to introduce a new topic, sometimes in combination with another introductory formula (see 361C; 362A, C, and E).

<sup>70</sup> For other examples, see D.H. *Ep. ad Ammaeum* 1.730; *ad Pompeium* 766; Apoll. of Tyana Ep. 14; Socrat. Ep. 7.3 (cf 7.1); 27.5 (*περὶ φιλοσοφίας δὲ οὐδὲν μοι γέγραφας...*); Ps-Demetr. *Epist. Types* 9; Julian Ep. 4.384D; 29.411B. See also the letter of Souron in Eupolemos fragment 2 (= Euseb. *P.E.* 34.2, 3). Note also Betz's reference (p. 90 n. 7) to the parallel use of *de* in Latin letters (citing Cic. *Ep. ad Fam.* 1.8; *Ep. ad Quint.* 3.9.1; *Ep. ad Brut.* 21.1).

<sup>71</sup> As long noted by scholars (see n. 46 above for the literature). All references to papyri in this article follow the abbreviations used in BAGD; translations are my own.

<sup>72</sup> Moulton-Milligan cites PLeoph. 13, 4f., BGu 1097, 3; 246, 13 as parallels to the *περὶ δέ* formulae in 1 Corinthians (p. 504; picked up by BAGD *s.v.* *περὶ* 1.h., adding BGu 1095, 9). See below for an analysis of these and other texts which have not been cited before.

... .<sup>73</sup> This extended formula is a specific way to refer to topics broached in a prior letter (as we have seen above), as in BGU 417, 2: *περὶ ὧν ἔγραψας* ... .<sup>74</sup> It is also used to refer to the writer's own past letter: *καὶ περὶ ὧν σοι πρότερον ἔγραψα* ... "and concerning what I wrote to you before ...."<sup>75</sup> This introductory formula is not used solely with the verb *γράφειν*, but is also used to refer to topics arising from oral communiques, as in Sb 9017, 17: *περὶ ὧν εἰρήκατε ἡμεῖν* ... "concerning what you have said to us ...."<sup>76</sup> A similar construction is found in inquiry formulae: *περὶ οὗ σοι χρεῖα ἐστὶν ἐπίστελλέ μοι* "concerning of what you have need, write to me".<sup>77</sup> The fact that *περὶ* + genitive (in these instances, as in 1 Cor 7:1, with a relative pronoun) is found with a variety of verbs of both oral and written expression, indicates that the word *περὶ* in itself gives no information about how the topic arose.<sup>78</sup>

The formula *περὶ δέ* is commonly used in papyrus letters which make no mention of a previous letter,<sup>79</sup> so it is clearly not always an "answering formula." For example, in BGU 1097, which dates c. 50 C.E., the formula *περὶ δέ* occurs twice, each time with a proper name: *περὶ δέ Σαραπάτος τοῦ υἱοῦ* ... (line 5) and *περὶ δέ Ἐπαφροδίτου* ... (line 11). In this letter the author (reconstructed as ἡ δεῖνα Δημητρίου) writes to her father to remonstrate him for encouraging his son Sarapas to join the army, and to inform him that Sarapas has gone to the camp. This letter does not answer a

<sup>73</sup> Commentators have long noted the rhetorical figure brachylogy here (see Weiss, p. 169, who cited PLond. 43, 4f. and PPetr. 16, 5 as parallels [p. 169 n. 2]).

<sup>74</sup> cf POsl. 1475, 3; BGU 1208, 12 (reconstructed) and 20. See the combination with the disclosure formula in Sb 9120 (*θέλω σε γε[ι]νῶσκειν ὅτι περὶ οὗ μοι ἔγραψας*...), a parallel to 1 Cor. 12:1 (cf 1 Thess. 4:13).

<sup>75</sup> Sb 6734, 3 (= Zen.-P. 28); cf Sb 1045, 2; POxy. 113, 19. In the text cited, because of the *πρότερον* it may or may not have been the last letter to which the author makes reference.

<sup>76</sup> See also, e.g., Sb 11020, 2 (*περὶ τοῦ ἐντολικοῦ οὗ σοι ἐντελάμην*...); PPetr. 16, 5 (*[περ]ὶ ὧν συνέτ[αξ]ας*...); Sb 9017, 15 (*καὶ περὶ οὗ ἠρω[τησ]ῆ σε*...); and the more general *περὶ ὧν παραγέγονεν*... (PGoodspeed 4.11).

<sup>77</sup> Sb 11584, 10. Of many other examples, see Sb 10451, 2; BGU 892, 23; POxy. 1.113, 30; 9.1218.

<sup>78</sup> An accompanying verb (as in these examples and in 1 Cor. 7:1) may answer that question, but that leaves the other instances of *περὶ* without such a specific phrase ambiguous in this regard (see below).

<sup>79</sup> As we have seen above, a very specific and formulaic acknowledgement of receipt of a prior letter is found throughout private letters where such is the case.

previous letter, as none is mentioned.<sup>80</sup> *περὶ δέ* here serves to introduce the next topic of conversation, a person readily known to the addressee (he is father to at least one of the two).<sup>81</sup> The same use is made of the formula in BGU 246: *περὶ δὲ Νείλου ...* (line 13) and *καὶ περὶ Ἑρμιόνης ...* (line 17). In the reconstructed papyrus there is no mention of a previous letter which this answers, and there is no need to postulate one.<sup>82</sup> The phrase *καὶ περὶ Ἑρμιόνης ...* does not refer to a written inquiry, but instead introduces a new topic about which the author has heard: *καὶ περὶ Ἑρμιόνης μελησάτω ὑμῖν, πῶς ἄλλυπος ἦν ... ἤκουσα γὰρ ὅ[τ]ι λυπεῖται* “and concerning Hermione, let it be a concern to you, how she might be without grief ... for I heard that she was grieved.”

At Oxyrhynchus a letter was preserved from Isidorus to his brother Aurelius, containing instructions on a variety of agricultural matters. No prior letter from Aurelius is mentioned. Instead, Isidorus refers to past oral conversation (*καθὼς εἶπά σοι περὶ [= περὶ] τῶν ἀκάνθων ...* “just as I said to you concerning the prickly plants ...”).<sup>83</sup> At line 14 the letter continues *περὶ [= περὶ] τῶν ταύρων ...* “concerning the bulls ...” The bulls are a topic readily known to both brothers<sup>84</sup> and thus can be introduced with the shorthand *περὶ + genitive*.

In Sb 12086 a certain Alexandra writes to her father Eutropius with assorted business news. Her letter does not answer a letter from him. She writes to tell him that she has carried out his instructions, which were apparently oral (see *καθὼς μοι ἴπας [= εἶπας]* in line 7). In line 11 she begins: *περὶ δὲ τῆς ἀποθήκης ...*, and proceeds to tell her father of the attempts she and her brother Theopompus

<sup>80</sup> In the text as we have it some lines are, however, missing, yet the common explanation formula *διὸ γράφω σοί, ἵν' εἰδῆς* appears in line 1 (cf P. Amh. 2.133, 5-6).

<sup>81</sup> We have seen (above) the formula *περὶ δέ* with proper names in literary letters (cf 1 Cor. 16:12). For other instances of *περὶ δέ* (or *καὶ περὶ* or *περὶ*) with a proper name in papyrus letters see, e.g., BGU 417, 15; 1206, 6; 1207, 7; Sb 2, 33; 6794 (= Zen.-P. 88), 1; 7180, 1; 12694, 15; PMich. 8.475, 12; cf also PYale 42, 32; POxy. 294, 24 (discussed below); 531, 4-5 (*περὶ οὗ μοι παλλάκεις γράφεις ἀνθρώπου...*), for instances where a person is referred to with this formula, but not by their proper name.

<sup>82</sup> Surely one can refer to an individual in a letter without having been asked about them first!

<sup>83</sup> POxy. 113, 3; cf BGU 450, 17: *περὶ τῶν λίνων, ὧν χρεῖαν ἔλεγεσ ἔχειν*.

<sup>84</sup> cf Sb 12183, 5: *καὶ περὶ τῆς βοῦ ἑσοῦ (= βοδὸς σοῦ)*. This papyrus is very fragmentary. No words of writing or letters are present (but see *ἤκουσα* in line 3).

have made to open the grain storehouse. The topic of the storehouse is known to her father, so she can introduce it with the formula *περὶ δέ*. In Sb 9654B, the formula (without a conjunction) is used to introduce a topic indisputably not from a previous letter. Heracleides writes to Tourbon, chiding him for not having written (line 5). At line 13 he introduces the topic of goosefeed in a familiar fashion: *περὶ τοῦ χηνοβοσκοῦ* .... The complete sentence (lines 13-18) reads: *περὶ τοῦ χηνοβοσκοῦ σήμερον ἔμαθον καὶ μέχρι τούτου οὐκ ἀνῆλθε, σὺ δὲ ἡμέλησας, μὴ γράφας μοι περὶ [του]του* (“concerning the goosefeed, I learned today, and until now it has not come up, but you didn’t care, as you didn’t write to me about this!”).

In several letters the *περὶ* (*δέ*) formula introduces the main epistolary subject,<sup>85</sup> as in Zen.-P. 12, which reads: Ἀττίνας Ζηνῶνι χαίρειν. *περὶ τοῦ γινομε[νου ὀφωνίου Ἑρμίππωι* ... “Attinas to Zenon, greetings. Concerning the wages which are for Hermippus ...” Hermippus’ wages, and all the circumstances surrounding them, are presumably known to Zenon so that they can be introduced with the *περὶ* formula. There is no mention of prior correspondence in this brief letter.<sup>86</sup> The topic is known to author and recipient from their common experience as employer and laborer (one need not postulate a previous letter to account for this use of the formula). The same formula is used, again directly after the epistolary salutation and greeting, in P.-Zen. 99 (= Sb 6814), 1: *περὶ τῶν [ἀ]μπελώνων τῶν ἀμφιζητουμέν[ων]* “concerning the disputed vineyards ...” The correspondents presumably know which vineyards are meant.

Two final examples demonstrate yet again that in private letters *περὶ δέ* is not restricted to the answering of epistolary questions. Nechthosiris writes to Leon his brother, first complaining that he has received no letters from him.<sup>87</sup> Nechthosiris then reports that

<sup>85</sup> One should also note the use of *περὶ* to summarize the contents of a letter for its docketing and filing, as a use similar to the titles and subtitles of literary works (see P.-Zen. 7 verso, 9 verso, 15, 17, 34, 49; P.Cairo.Zen. 59202 = M. David and B. A. van Groningen, *Papyrological Primer* [Leiden: Brill, 1965], #61). For this practice, see White, *Light From Ancient Letters*, pp. 216-17. In some cases, on the letter itself, *περὶ* is found to introduce comments, presumably afterthoughts, in the margins, as in PMich. 292 and Sb 10724.

<sup>86</sup> cf Zen.-P. 78 (= Sb 6784), 6: [καὶ] *περὶ τοῦ ὀφωνίου ὄλως οὐκ εἰλήφαμεν ἀλλ’ ἢ ἄπαξ καὶ τούτου, ὃ σὺ τοῖς Δημητηρίοις ἀπέστειλας δοῦναι ἡμῖν* (here the topic arose from other correspondence).

<sup>87</sup> Sb 9259 = PYale 42, line 5: *ἐμοῦ σοι γεγραφότος πλέονας ἐπιστολάς καὶ οὐθέμ μοι παρὰ σοῦ τι μοι προσπεφώνηται.*

he has received oral news from Protolaus about Leon's affairs (τὰ κατὰ σε; line 11). Twice in his letter, which then clearly responds only to oral news, Nechthosiris uses the formula: *περὶ δὲ τῶν κατ' ἐμέ ...* "and concerning my affairs ..." (line 22) and *περὶ δὲ τοῦ σοῦ ἄδελφοῦ*<sup>88</sup> "and concerning your brother ..." (line 32). Neither can refer to a written inquiry, as we have seen. The topics either were raised with Nechthosiris by the envoy Protolaus, or are introduced by Nechthosiris himself. The formula *περὶ δέ* tells us only that Nechthosiris expects Leon to easily know to what he refers (what affairs, which brother). In POxy. 294, Sarapion writes home from Alexandria because he has heard that while he has been away his house was searched. He writes to confirm this oral report. Near the end of the letter is the enigmatic phrase: *περὶ δ[ἐ] τοῦ φαλακροῦ ...* ("and concerning the bald man ..."). Since there has been no prior letter, this cannot be a response to an inquiry, but instead is a subject which Sarapion brings up using the formula *περὶ δέ* to switch topics. Presumably the addressee knows which bald man is meant!<sup>89</sup> We may conclude from these examples<sup>90</sup> that in private documentary letters the formula *περὶ δέ* is not restricted to the answering of written questions.

Next we shall look at papyrus letters which (like 1 Corinthians) mention a previous letter from the recipient, to see if *περὶ δέ* in those letters always undeniably introduces a topic from that previous letter. In Sb 2 (from 117 C.E.), the author quotes a previous letter from the person he addresses (Paulus): *Γράφεις μ[οι] λέγων. ἐὰν δυναθῆς ἀνάπλευσον* "You wrote to me saying, 'if you are able, sail back!'" (line 6). In the lines which follow he details the misfortunes and miseries which have prevented him from sailing to Paulus. He also recounts that a certain Demetrius has arrived (line 29), and found him in tears. A new topic is introduced in line 33: *περὶ Πτολλαρίωνος ...*. There is nothing to indicate that Ptollarion was mentioned in the previous letter from Paulus. Since, as we have

<sup>88</sup> The reconstruction here following White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, p. 55.

<sup>89</sup> G. Milligan interprets this as "a facetious reference to certain friends" (*Selections from the Greek Papyri* [Cambridge: University Press, 1912], p. 34).

<sup>90</sup> Of many other examples, see P. Harr. 104, 10; 105, 6; BGU 93, 5; 601, 18; 822, 6; 884, 21; 885, 7; Sb 679, 1 and 5; 6720, 3; 7258, 9; 7562, 22; 7660, 14; 7743, 16; 8006, 14; 11148, 24; 11429, 14; 11622, 5 and 6; 11853, 3 and 5; 12084, 11; 12107, 26; 12202, 2; 12620, 2; PRyl. 2.229, 12; PAmh. 2.133, 4, 5 and 14; 135, 17.

seen, *περί* + genitive is commonly used in letters to refer to persons known to both parties, there is no reason to presume that Paulus' letter contained a request for information about Ptollarion. It is of course possible that it did, but that is certainly not necessary to account for the formula. The topic may have arisen from conversations with Demetrius, or (more likely) it is the author's special concern.<sup>91</sup> In several cases *περί* (δέ) refers to a topic raised by the letter writer him/herself.<sup>92</sup>

In Sb 6823 a certain Capito writes to Teres about the building (or rebuilding) of a house. In part he responds to a letter from Teres, as he says *καὶ ὑπὲρ ὧν ἐνετίλου μοι διὰ τῆς α* [= *προτέρας*] *ἐπιστολῆς, εὐρήσεις γεγονότα* "and concerning what you commanded me through the earlier letter, you will find it done" (line 13). Toward the end of the letter he introduces a new topic with our formula: *περὶ δὲ τοῦ ξυστοῦ*... "and concerning the terrace ...." Does the use of this formula prove that Capito is responding to an inquiry from one of Teres' letters? It appears not, since Capito writes: *περὶ δὲ τοῦ ξυστοῦ, [ὅτι σο]ι φαίνεται, γράφον μοι ... ὁ [γ]ὰρ τόπος ἀπαιτῷ* "and concerning the terrace, what it seems to you, write me ... for the place needs (one)" (lines 22-26). The topic of the terrace, known to both writer and addressee, is in this case introduced by the writer to give further information ("the place needs one"), and to request Teres' opinion. Thus even in a letter which refers to previous letters, *περὶ* δέ need not necessarily refer to a topic from one of those letters.<sup>93</sup>

A final example is provided by BGU 417, a letter from Dioskorus to his son. After the salutation Dioskorus begins: *περὶ ὧν ἔγραψας* ... "concerning what you wrote ...." In the rest of the letter, *περὶ*

<sup>91</sup> He brings Ptollarion up to complain about his behavior (see line 34 and following).

<sup>92</sup> e.g., Sb 12694, 15: *περὶ τοῦ Νεῖλου δηλόσις τί θέλι*. In this letter the author has announced the arrival of Satrius with the 24 drachmas (lines 1 and 9) but mentions no letter. This formula in line 15 is not a response to an inquiry, but is itself a request for information. See also POxy. 133, which refers to a letter from the recipient (line 9), and a previous one from the sender (line 19 *περὶ ὧν κτλ.*) and concludes: *περὶ δὲ καὶ σὺ ὧν θέλεις δήλου μοι*.

<sup>93</sup> For further examples, see POxy. 1220, lines 9, 12 and 24, where the first two undeniably refer to a previous letter, but the third is ambiguous; P. Ryl. 2.229; and PEleph. 13, 5 and 6 (and the comment by S. Witkowski on the *περὶ* δέ formula in regard to this letter in his collection [*Epistulae Privatae Graecae* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1911<sup>2</sup>), p. 43].



+ genitive is used as an introductory formula four times.<sup>94</sup> One might assume that each topic under *περὶ* (*δέ*) was contained in the son's letter, but a closer look at the letter reveals that the father writes about *his* choice of topics in his responding letter. At the beginning Dioskorus refers to the son's letter, as we have seen, and says that he is mindful of the things about which he wrote, but continues: "but I ask you to put away all the lofty things ...."<sup>95</sup> He rebukes his son for neglecting the important things of their vineyard, which Dioskorus brings up one by one (the sweet grapes, a certain Heraklas, the sour grapes, and "all things"), repeatedly urging *μελησάτω σοι* ("let it be of concern to you!"). Dioskorus deliberately deals in his letter with the topics of his choice ("repeatedly I write to you *about the same things!*").<sup>96</sup> Even though the epistolary author mentions the receipt of a letter from his son, he crafts his own letter of response including his choice of topics, often introducing them with *περὶ*. Thus the list of things beginning with *περὶ* do not necessarily correspond to the son's letter (and in fact probably do not).

From this investigation of the use of *περὶ δέ* in private documentary letters<sup>97</sup> we may conclude: 1. that *περὶ δέ* is not solely an answering formula, because it is used to introduce topics in letters which make no mention of previous letters or explicitly state that there has been no letter; and 2. that even in letters where a previous letter is mentioned, topics introduced with *περὶ δέ* need not have come from that letter.

<sup>94</sup> *περὶ τῶν γλυκειδίων...* (line 8); *καὶ περὶ Ἡρακλάτος...* (line 15); *π[ε]ρὶ τῶν δξειδίων...* (line 22); and *περὶ πάντων...* (line 26). The preposition *περὶ* is used 8 more times in this one letter.

<sup>95</sup> *περὶ ὧν ἔγραψας, μελήσει μοι καὶ ἐγὼ δὲ σέ ἐρωτῶ πάντα τὰ μετέωρα ἀπαλλάξαι* (BGU 417, 2).

<sup>96</sup> BGU 417, 26; cf line 22.

<sup>97</sup> Edicts in letter form also contain the formula *περὶ δέ*. For example, Claudius' Letter to the Alexandrines, PLond. 1912, contains the formula in lines 52 and 66. These passages were cited as "an exact parallel" to Paul's use of *περὶ δέ* in 1 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians by T. W. Manson, *Studies in the Gospels and Epistles*, ed. M. Black (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), p. 275. Claudius' letter, it should be noted, is in response to both oral and written communication (lines 20-21). See also Marcus Aurelius' letter to the *Koinon* of Asia which states: *περὶ δὲ τῶν σεισμῶν τῶν γεγονότων καὶ γινομένων οὐκ ἄτοπον ὑμᾶς ὑπομῆσαι* (a topic which he brings up). (The text is from Euseb. *E.H.* 4.13, cited from LCL vol. on Marcus Aurelius ed. and tr. by C. R. Haines, "Note on Christians".) See also the Edict of Tiberius Julius Alexander (Sb 8444, 62 [cf lines 19, 29-30, 44]).

In the New Testament the formula *περὶ δέ* is not restricted to the Pauline corpus.<sup>98</sup> Only one study has been done on the *περὶ δέ* formula in the New Testament, that of C. E. Faw, who cited Mk. 12:26; 13:32<sup>99</sup>; Jn. 16:11 and Acts 21:25 as New Testament uses of the formula outside of the Pauline letters. He concluded on the basis of these texts:

(1) that *περὶ δέ* is a formula of reply to specific questions or problems, especially where there is a series of such; (2) in series of replies it is properly used to introduce those from the second point onward; (3) in Pauline usage it is confined to the answering of specific questions or problems brought up in letters from the churches to which he is writing.<sup>100</sup>

We shall begin by assessing Faw's first two conclusions which refer to all New Testament uses. As noted above, Faw's investigation suffers from a small sample as it is restricted to the New Testament. Our analysis of the formula in ancient texts has demonstrated that it is not restricted to replies to questions, casting serious doubt on his first conclusion. Nevertheless, even these New Testament texts do not unambiguously support Faw's contentions; all New Testament uses of the formula conform to my definition of *περὶ δέ* as a topic marker introducing a readily-known subject.

Jn. 16:11 must be disqualified from consideration because there the *περὶ δέ* answers the *περὶ μὲν* in 16:9,<sup>101</sup> and with it goes Faw's second conclusion.<sup>102</sup> In Acts 21:25 the phrase *περὶ δέ τῶν πεπιστευκότων ἔθνῶν* ... introduces a new topic after the speakers have focussed on the Jews who have believed (21:20). The formula does not signal a reply to any spoken or written question, and the order of topics results from the speakers' own rhetorical purposes.<sup>103</sup> Because the subject of Gentile Christians is readily understood by the audience, it can be introduced with *περὶ δέ*.

<sup>98</sup> This section will of necessity be brief, consisting mainly of a critique of Faw's conclusions. Space precludes a full analysis, but it should be noted that the formula *περὶ δέ* also occurs in Early Christian Literature (e.g., Did. 7:1; 9:1, 2, 3; 11:3; Ign. Eph. 2:11; Phil. 11:1).

<sup>99</sup> The Matthean parallels to the Markan texts retain the *περὶ δέ* (Mt. 22:31; 24:36).

<sup>100</sup> p. 221

<sup>101</sup> See note 31 above. By my definition (per above) Mt. 6:28; Acts 26:2; Tit. 3:8b; Heb. 5:11 and 9:5b are also instances of the formula.

<sup>102</sup> There is nothing in Mk 12:26 or 13:32 to substantiate the claim that *περὶ δέ* introduces a *second* response. One might bring 1 Cor. 7:1 and Acts 26:2 as counterexamples.

<sup>103</sup> In this case, more likely the author's rhetorical purposes. Conzelmann ascribes the verse to Lukan redaction (*Die Apostelgeschichte*, HNT vol. 7 [Tübingen:

Faw understands Mk. 12:26 (περὶ δὲ τῶν νεκρῶν...) and 13:32 (περὶ δὲ τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης ἢ τῆς ὥρας...) to be examples of περὶ δέ in response to questions, but in these cases his exegesis of the texts must be questioned. The controversy story in Mk. 12:18-27 is, true to form, occasioned by the Sadducees' question, but the part of Jesus's response which begins περὶ δὲ τῶν νεκρῶν ὅτι ἐγείρονται introduces the topic which *Jesus* introduces for the sake of his argument,<sup>104</sup> to be validated by a Scripture citation from Ex. 3:6. It is not a response to their question (characteristic of controversy stories), for that was different: τίνος αὐτῶν ἔσται γυνή; (12:23). Faw traces the περὶ δέ in Mk. 13:32 all the way back to the disciples' question in 13:4, in order to demonstrate that περὶ δέ is a formula of reply to a question. But this does not do justice to the complexity of the tradition-history and present structure of Mk. 13. The disciples' question in 13:4 (likely a redactional phrase to contextualize pre-existent apocalyptic material<sup>105</sup>) is a two-fold question: "when will these things be?" and "what is the sign?" Dieter Lührmann's analysis of the structure of Mk. 13 is grounded in these two questions; he considers vv. 5-23 to be the response to the first question, and vv. 24-27 as the response to the second.<sup>106</sup> His literary analysis of Mk. 13 would put 13:32 fully nine verses beyond the answer to the question "when will these things be?" thus contradicting Faw's conclusions. The question of the structure of the apocalyptic discourse in Mk. 13 and its relation to the questions of 13:4 is probably even more complicated and intertwined than Lührmann's analysis suggests,<sup>107</sup> but nevertheless Mk. 13:32 cannot be understood as "Jesus' second answer to the disciples regard-

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Mohr (Siebeck), 1972<sup>2</sup>], p. 131). It is Luke's way of adding a new topic (the decree of the Jerusalem Council) onto a different discussion.

<sup>104</sup> See R. Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, FRLANT n.s. 12 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1957<sup>3</sup>), pp. 39-56 (p. 42 on Mk 12:26). See also p. 25, where Bultmann argues that 12:26ff. is a later addition (a similarity with Acts 21:25). περὶ δέ can be used to make additions to a text because it appropriately signals a new topic.

<sup>105</sup> See W. Marxsen, *Der Evangelist Markus*, FRLANT n.s. 49 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959<sup>2</sup>), pp. 101-28, especially p. 109 where he attributes 13:1-5a to Mark. Differently, R. Pesch regards a question to be original to the pre-Markan tradition, but takes the doubling of the question ποτε ταῦτα ἔσται; to be Mark's addition (*Das Markusevangelium*, HTK [Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder, 1977], vol. II, pp. 273-77).

<sup>106</sup> *Das Markusevangelium*, HNT (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1987), p. 218.

<sup>107</sup> As Marxsen's work demonstrates (pp. 101-28).

ing the end of the age.”<sup>108</sup> The *περὶ δέ* formula in Mk 13:32 serves to introduce (or in its context, to re-emphasize<sup>109</sup>) the topic of discussion.<sup>110</sup> It does not signal a reply and surely it is not the second such reply.

Acts 26:2 (*περὶ πάντων ὧν ἐγκαλοῦμαι...*) is a good counter-example to Faw’s conclusions about the use of *περὶ [δέ]* in the New Testament. Here the formula *περὶ [δέ]* serves, by way of shorthand, to introduce the topic of Paul’s defense speech. It is not a reply to a question, and is the first point of consideration.<sup>111</sup> We conclude that the formula *περὶ δέ* in each New Testament occurrence is consistent with the definition of the formula which emerged from our analysis of the formula in Greek literary and epistolary texts. In disagreement with Faw’s first and second conclusions, it is not solely a “formula of reply” and is not confined to the second point in a discourse.

We now turn to Paul’s use of the formula *περὶ δέ*, and Faw’s third conclusion. In 1 Thessalonians Paul uses it in 4:9 (*περὶ δὲ τῆς φιλαδελφίας...*) and 5:1 (*περὶ δὲ τῶν χρόνων καὶ τῶν καιρῶν...*). Some scholars have concluded from the use of this formula that Paul must be responding to a Thessalonian letter which contained these inquiries,<sup>112</sup> but other scholars have correctly held out against that hypothesis.<sup>113</sup> From this study we are now in a position to say that

<sup>108</sup> Faw, p. 221.

<sup>109</sup> Perhaps similar to 1 Cor. 8:4 (and cf 1 Thess. 5:1).

<sup>110</sup> Bultmann argued that perhaps 13:30 and 32 comprise the end of an independent Jewish apocalypse (p. 130). Marxsen is unsure of the tradition-history of 13:32 (p. 109).

<sup>111</sup> cf the Zenon letters above where *περὶ* immediately introduces the topic of the letter.

<sup>112</sup> See above, note 19. Appeal is normally made to 1 Corinthians for this view (see, e.g., J. E. Frame, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Thessalonians*, ICC [NY: Scribner’s Sons, 1912], p. 157 and the scholars listed by Hurd, p. 64, n. 2). Schenk argued for the partition of 1 Thess. on the basis of the “Briefantwort-parallele” between 1 Thess. 1:1-2:12, 4:3-5:28 and his Corinthian Letter B (pp. 234-35).

<sup>113</sup> e.g., A. Plummer, *A Commentary on Paul’s First Epistle to the Thessalonians* (London: Roxburghe House, 1918), p. 64; B. Rigaux, *St. Paul. Les Épîtres aux Thessaloniens* (Paris: LeCoffre, 1956), pp. 55-56 and Holtz, p. 173 (see n. 154 for other scholars who doubt the existence of a “Thessalonian letter”). Rigaux argues correctly that “il est impossible de distinguer avec certitude ce qui est réponse à la lettre des Thessaloniens et réponse au mémoire oral de Timothée” (p. 56; the same impossibility exists for 1 Corinthians; see below). Despite their sound arguments and correct conclusions, it is interesting to note that both Rigaux and Holtz defend their position by arguing that the formula *περὶ δέ* is used differently

the use of *περὶ δέ* in 1 Thessalonians alone provides no evidence of a previous letter from the Thessalonians, as the formula is well-attested in letters which do not respond to other letters. It is merely one way to introduce a new topic of discussion, and in itself gives us no information about the source of that topic. The topics which Paul introduces with the formula in 1 Thessalonians are either in response to the oral information brought by Timothy (3:1-6), or are topics which Paul himself wishes to introduce, or some combination of the two.<sup>114</sup>

#### IV

At the outset of this inquiry we uncovered three assumptions in scholarship on 1 Corinthians about the role and function of the formula *περὶ δέ*: 1. that each time *περὶ δέ* is used it *must* refer to a topic contained in the Corinthians' letter of 7:1; 2. that Paul *only* introduces a topic from their letter with *περὶ δέ*; and 3. that Paul follows the order of topics of the Corinthian letter with the formula *περὶ δέ*. Our investigation of the use and meaning of *περὶ δέ* in other Greek literary and epistolary texts leads us to conclude that nothing in the formula itself substantiates these assumptions.

We shall conclude with four implications of these findings for the investigation of the composition of 1 Corinthians:

1. A central argument on which most partition theories of 1 Corinthians are based has been rebutted. The use of the formula *περὶ δέ* in itself gives one no reason to doubt the integrity of the letter or to divide the letter according to its use.

The partition theories presume that all of the sections in 1 Corinthians introduced with *περὶ δέ* should be part of a single letter, because Paul would not interrupt his answers to written questions with discussion of topics from oral reports (e.g., 11:17ff.). If all topics brought up with *περὶ δέ* can not be definitely proven to have come from the Corinthians' letter, then this argument loses ground.<sup>115</sup> More importantly, partition theorists expect or even

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in 1 Thessalonians than in 1 Corinthians. My thesis accounts for both Pauline letters through a single theory of the significance of the formula.

<sup>114</sup> This interpretation solves the problem of Paul mentioning their request and then refusing to answer it (this is correctly understood as the rhetorical figure *paraleipsis*, so Holtz, p. 172).

<sup>115</sup> Another presupposition behind these theories is that a letter should respond to one epistolary occasion (i.e., a letter, a visit, etc.), so these theories line up dif-

demand, without justification, that Paul respond in a wooden style using *only one introductory formula* to refer to epistolary topics.<sup>116</sup> But on formal grounds there is no reason to assume that other introductory formulae<sup>117</sup> in 1 Corinthians 7-16 (such as οὐ θέλω γὰρ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν ... in 10:1 and Γνωρίζω δὲ ὑμῖν... in 15:1) introduce sections from another letter.

2. Hurd's argument for the unity of 1 Corinthians depends upon assumptions about both the *περὶ δέ* formula and our ability to distinguish between oral and written epistolary topics which are untenable. As a result it is not fully convincing.

If *περὶ δέ* is not solely a formula for answering written questions, then Hurd's exegesis of 1 Corinthians, based as it is upon the separation of Paul's responses to topics broached orally and in written form, cannot hold. Our comparative analysis has demonstrated that the formula *περὶ δέ* cannot give the definite information which Hurd wants to derive from it—the source of the topic between the epistolary partners. We have also noted that often envoys who bring letters play a role in supplementing the contents of those letters. The receipt of a letter thus frequently entails a combination of oral and written communication—so inextricably linked that there may be no justification for insisting upon the radical separation of the two which Hurd makes. Hurd's theory also suffers weakness, in my opinion, because it does not allow for any points of contact (even topical!) between the two sets of information received from Corinth, a possibility which is highly unlikely.

3. An analysis of the composition of 1 Corinthians cannot proceed from these three assumptions about the formula *περὶ δέ*.

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ferent letter fragments with each of the possible epistolary occasions of 1 Cor. (1:11; 7:1; 16:17; see Schenk, p. 237: "die drie im I Cor genannten Informanden auch die Veranlassung für drei verschiedene Schreiben des Pl gewesen sind"). Our study of ancient letters casts doubt on this presupposition too; many letters respond to both oral and written information.

<sup>116</sup> It is interesting that scholars who remove 10:1-22 from the *Antwortbrief* because they separate out all sections not under *περὶ δέ* from that letter do not find the same variation of introductory formulae (*περὶ δέ*, οὐ θέλομεν δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, *περὶ δέ*) in 1 Thessalonians grounds for dividing that letter there (e.g., Schenk, pp. 242-43).

<sup>117</sup> Introductory formulae have been classified by scholars over the last few decades (see J. L. White, "Introductory Formulae in the Body of the Pauline Letter," *JBL* 90 [1971] 91-97; T. Y. Mullins, "Disclosure: A Literary Form in the New Testament," *NovT* [1964] 44-50; idem, "Formulas in New Testament Epistles," *JBL* 91 [1972] 380-90).

In 1 Cor 7:1, Paul undeniably refers to a letter from the Corinthians.<sup>118</sup> He refers to oral communication in 1:11 and 11:18 (cf 5:1; 16:17). The topics which he raises by means of the formula *περὶ δέ* (in 7:25ff.) may or may not have been mentioned by the Corinthians in their letter. Topics introduced in other ways also may or may not have been mentioned in the Corinthians' letter.<sup>119</sup> We cannot be more definite than this about the source of the topics in 1 Corinthians, as the use of particular formulae in itself cannot produce the certainty which scholars have sought in their exegesis of this letter. What we can say definitely is that each of the topics Paul introduces with the formula *περὶ δέ* (virgins, idol meat, spiritual people/things, the collection and Apollos<sup>120</sup>) is readily known to both the Corinthians and Paul *from some element of their shared experience*.

4. The composition, structure and arrangement of 1 Corinthians is determined by Paul's rhetorical purpose, and not by the Corinthians' letter.

*περὶ δέ* does provide a clue to the composition of 1 Corinthians in that it is one of the ways in which Paul introduces the topic of the next argument or sub-argument. Despite the fact that in itself *περὶ δέ* can tell us nothing of the source or order of these topics, it is our most important clue to understand how Paul, on his own terms, chose to respond to the multi-faceted situation at Corinth of which he had been informed. Although that may be considerably less information than scholars have presumed that they could glean from its use, this proper understanding of the formula *περὶ δέ* remains an important starting point for the investigation of the composition and rhetorical structure of the letter.

<sup>118</sup> The extent of that reference could be one verse: 7:1 or 7:1-24, or all of ch. 7. This interpretation receives striking confirmation from Chrysostom: "Ἐγραψαν μὲν οὖν αὐτῷ διὰ Φορτουνάτου καὶ Στεφανᾶ καὶ Ἀχαικοῦ ... οὐ μὴν περὶ πάντων, ἀλλὰ περὶ γάμου καὶ παρθενίας. διὸ καὶ ἔλεγε· Περὶ δὲ ὧν ἐγράφατέ μοι. Ἄυτὸς μέντοι, καὶ ὑπὲρ ὧν ἔγραψαν, καὶ ὑπὲρ ὧν οὐκ ἔγραψαν, ἐπιστέλλει (*Hom. in Epist. I ad Cor., Argumentum 2-3* [Migne, PG 61.12]).

<sup>119</sup> It is important to emphasize that this investigation does not prove that the topics under *περὶ δέ* were not mentioned in the Corinthian letter, but merely that they *need not* have been to have been so introduced.

<sup>120</sup> We have seen that the formula *περὶ δέ* is commonly used with proper names in literary and private letters, and when so used there is no cause for presuming a prior inquiry about that person. This is important in the case of Apollos. One cannot conclude by the formula *περὶ δέ* that the Corinthians had asked if Apollos would come (contra Weiss, p. 384; Robertson and Plummer, p. 392; Barrett, p. 321; Fee, p. 823). For the same usage in ECL see Ign. Eph. 2.1; Phil. 11.1; cf Did. 11.3.