

I

Barnabas 1.1–8

Greetings and Introduction

I.1 Greeting (Barn. 1.1)

THE MOST COMMON FORMULA for opening an ancient Greek letter involved three components: sender in the nominative, addressee in the dative, and greeting.¹ These three things are found, for example, in Acts 23:26: “Claudius Lysias, to his Excellency, the Governor Felix, greetings.”² Many early Christian letters attest to a willingness among their authors to follow this guide even while modifying it to suit their purposes. It was not unusual for early Christian authors to expand the epistolary inscription to include further descriptions of the sender, kinder words about the addressees, or more fulsome greetings.³ These greetings are given most often with an infinitive (χαίρειν) or a nominative phrase (e.g., χάρις καὶ εἰρήνη).

The Epistle of Barnabas opens somewhat differently. It starts with a greeting in the form of an imperative, does not mention the sender, and refers generally to the addressees in the vocative: “Greetings in peace, sons and daughters, in the name of the Lord who loved us” (χαίρετε, υἱοὶ καὶ θυγατέρες, ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντος ἡμᾶς ἐν εἰρήνῃ; Barn. 1.1). The difference in the form of the greeting along with other peculiarities in this letter have led some interpreters to question whether *Barnabas* is a genuine letter.⁴

1. Bauer, *Paulus und die kaiserzeitliche Epistolographie*, 45–46; Klauck, *Ancient Letters*, 17–18; Roller, *Formular*, 57–62; Trapp, *Greek and Latin Letters*, 34–35.

2. Κλαύδιος Λυσίας τῷ κρατίστῳ ἡγεμόνι Φήλικι χαίρειν (Acts 23:26).

3. E.g., Rom 1:1–7; 2 Cor 1:1; 1 Pet 1:1; 2 John 1; 1 Clem. 1.1; Ign. *Rom.* inscr.; Pol. *Phil.* inscr. See further Bauer, *Paulus und die kaiserzeitliche Epistolographie*, 79–83; Klauck, *Ancient Letters*, 20; Schnider and Stenger, *Studien*, 3–41; Tite, “How to Begin,” 98; White, “Ancient Greek Letters,” 98.

4. E.g., Barnard, “Epistle of Barnabas—A Paschal Homily?” 8–22; Vielhauer, *Geschichte*, 601–2; Wengst, *Didache*, 111–12; Wengst, *Tradition und Theologie*, 103–4;

However, comparison with other letters from the Roman period may shed some light on the admittedly unusual letter opening in Barn. 1.1.

Not all letters contain a reference to the sender.⁵ P.Oxy. 7.1063 contains a letter from a parent to their son, whose name is Amois. The letter opens, “Greetings my son, Amois.”⁶ Because there is a parent-child relationship between the sender and addressee, it appears that the parent felt no need to identify themselves explicitly. The Epistle of Barnabas likewise indicates a metaphorical parent-child relationship between the sender and addressees by referring to the audience as “sons and daughters” (Barn. 1.1).⁷ It was not always necessary to identify the sender by name. The intended reader in P.Fay. 129 is designated “most honored lord.” While the letter does not mention the name of the addressee in the dative alongside the greetings, the papyrus contains instructions on the opposite side to “deliver to Serenus.”⁸ The address thus comes on the other side of the main letter, and the letter would presumably have been folded and sealed for delivery in a way that allowed these instructions to remain visible.⁹

Whereas the infinitive χαίρειν might be more common in a letter,¹⁰ Barnabas’s χαίρετε would be appropriate in direct speech such as one might use when greeting someone on the street.¹¹ Yet papyri letters illustrate that

Windisch, *Barnabasbrief*, 411–12.

5. This was pointed out early in the twentieth century by E. J. Goodspeed (“The Salutation,” 162–65).

6. χαίροις, τέκνον Ἀμοί (P.Oxy. 7.1063). The *editio princeps* is found in Hunt, *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 7.217–18.

7. For further examples of the omission of the sender, see P. Rein 48 (second century; Reinach, *Papyrus grecs*, 149–50); P.Flor. 3.345 (third century; Vitelli, *Papiri Greco-Egizii*, 76); P.Fay. 129 (third century; Greenfell, Hunt, and Hogarth, *Fayum Towns*, 285–86). Like P.Fay. 129, both of these letters greet a master (κύριος), but the recipients’ names are included in these texts. See further Hvalvik, *Struggle for Scripture and Covenant*, 72–73; Roller, *Formular*, 428–30 n 240.

8. Σερίηνφ ἐπί[δος]. The last three letters of the instructions are in brackets in Grenfell, Hunt, and Hogarth, *Fayum Towns*, 286. They have been replicated here.

9. Additional examples of this phenomenon can be found in P.Oxy. 7.1061 (first century BCE; Hunt, *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 7.214–15); P.Oxy. 6.929 (second or third century CE; Grenfell and Hunt, *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 6.294–95); P.Oxy. 6.931 (second-century CE; Grenfell and Hunt, *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 6.296–97). The verso of P.Oxy. 8.1157 contains both the recipient and the sender’s names: “Give to Dionysia, from Pathermouthis” (ἀπόδος Διονυσίᾳ, παρὰ Παθερμούθιος; Hunt, *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 8.259–60). For further discussion, see Hvalvik, *Struggle for Scripture and Covenant*, 73–74.

10. E.g., 1 Esd 6.8; 8.9; 1 Macc 10.18, 25; 11.30, 32; 12.6, 20; 13.36; 14.20; 15.2, 16; 2 Macc 1.1, 10; 9.19; 11.16, 22, 27, 34; 3 Macc 3.12; 7.1; Acts 15.23; 23.26; Jas 1.1.

11. Roller, *Formular*, 449 n 267. See also Matt 26.49; 28.9; Luke 1.28; 2 John 10–11; Herm. Vis. 1.1.4 (1.4); 1.2.2 (2.2); 4.2.2 (23.2); Dio Cassius, *Hist.* 69.18.3.

χαίρω could be used to open letters in either the optative or imperative. P.Fay. 129 again provides a good example of this phenomenon. The first word in the letter is χαίρε. The singular imperative is employed because the addressee is singular.¹² The plural imperative is found in Barn. 1.1, since *Barnabas* is directed to a community of believers. When this recognition is combined with the observation that the sender's name is not found in some letters and that the addressee could be referred to briefly in some letters, there is good reason to accept Goodspeed's claim that the Epistle of Barnabas, despite its epistolary oddities, "is genuinely and demonstrably epistolary."¹³

While χαίρω is commonly used as a greeting both in oral and epistolary settings, it is worth noting that the verb means to be glad or to rejoice.¹⁴ The function of the word as a greeting takes clear priority in 1.1. However, the word contributes, at least aurally, to the expressions of joy in 1.2–3 (ὑπερευφραίνομαι; συγχαίρω). By doing this, Barnabas seeks to ingratiate himself with the audience, although this tactic does not exclude the possibility that the author feels real joy when reflecting on the audience. The greeting formula in 1.1 is completed by the adverbial phrase ἐν εἰρήνῃ. Although it may be possible to understand ἐν εἰρήνῃ with reference to the one who loved us (τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντος), it is better to interpret the prepositional phrase to modify χαίρετε because this resembles the Pauline greeting (e.g., 1 Thess 1:1) and because the author closes the letter by referring to the audience as children of love and peace (εἰρήνης; Barn. 21.9).¹⁵ Both the greeting and the farewell are given with reference to peace.¹⁶

12. The same greeting is found in a fourth-century Christian letter where Peter is greeted as a beloved brother with a greeting that is shorter than but similar to Barn. 1.1: "Greetings in the Lord" (χαίρε ἐν κυρίῳ; PSI 208). For the text of PSI 208, see Vitelli and Norsa, *Papiri greci e latini*, 3.69–70.

13. Goodspeed, "Salutation," 165. So also Hvalvik, *Struggle for Scripture and Covenant*, 75; Muilenburg, "Literary Relations," 48; Rhodes, "Two Ways Tradition," 804 n 18. See also the more cautious conclusions of Carleton Paget, *Epistle of Barnabas*, 44–45; Carleton Paget, "Epistle of Barnabas," 75–76.

14. E.g., Matt 18:13; Luke 6:23; John 3:29; Acts 5:41; Rom 12:12; Phil 4:4; 1 Pet 4:13; Rev 19:7; Herm. Vis. 3.3.2 (11.2); Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 3.1. See further BDAG, s.v; LSJ, s.v. I–II; PGL, s.v. 1.

15. On the similarities to the Pauline greeting formula in Barn. 1.1, see Hvalvik, *Struggle for Scripture and Covenant*, 75. When reflecting on the promise to restore Judah and Joseph (*Zach* 259), Didymus the Blind likewise refers to Barn. 1.1 alongside references to the audience as children in Paul's letters and in 1 Peter (1 Cor 4:15; Gal 4:19; 1 Pet 1:14). See further Berger, "Apostelbrief," 204; Carleton Paget, *Epistle of Barnabas*, 253; Prinzivalli and Simonetti, *Seguendo Gesù*, 2.506 n 1; Prostmeier, *Barnabasbrief*, 148–49.

16. Prostmeier adds an additional lens through which to consider the greeting when he writes, "The greeting χαίρετε in 1.1 is a medium ἐν εἰρήνῃ of messianic blessing and

The reference to the audience as “sons and daughters” further specifies the relationship that the author seeks to represent between himself and the audience. By calling the audience υἱοὶ καὶ θυγατέρες, Barnabas participates in the early Christian practice of employing family language with reference to other believers. There are both horizontal and vertical elements to the use of such language. If they are sons and daughters of the author, they are brothers and sisters of one another.¹⁷ “Sons and daughters” thus strengthens horizontal social bonds in 1.1. Yet Barnabas also legitimates his position of authority as a father-figure to his sons and daughters. The close relationship between the author and addressees may provide a reason why the author does not include his name in the greeting, but the paternal relation simultaneously creates an authoritative role that the author seeks to fill.

The author characterizes the greeting to the brothers and sisters not only in terms of peace but also “in the name of the Lord who loved us” (ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντος ἡμᾶς; 1.1).¹⁸ The word κύριος can be used to refer to both the Father and the Son, and the author gives no further specification about who is in view in 1.1.¹⁹ Nevertheless, there are at least two reasons to incline toward identifying Jesus as the Lord in 1.1. First, 16.6–8 repeats a similar prepositional phrase with reference to Jesus, indicating that the construction of God’s house takes place “in the name of the Lord” (ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι κυρίου; 16.6) and that construction occurs after believers have “placed their hope in the name” (ἐλπίσαντες ἐπὶ τὸ ὄνομα; 16.8).²⁰ The emphasis on the name (ὄνομα) of Jesus (Joshua) in 12.8–9

messianic proclamation” (Der Gruß χαίρετε in 1,1 ist also vermittels ἐν εἰρήνῃ messianischer Segen und messianische Proklamation; *Barnabasbrief*, 145).

17. In this way, the term may function similarly to the use of other fraternal and sororal language that is used in early Christian literature as a way of talking about believers (e.g., Rom 7:1; 12:1; 1 Cor 1:10; 10:1; 2 Cor 8:1; Gal 4:28; 1 Thess 4:10; 2 Thess 3:13; Heb 3:12; Jas 3:1; 2 Pet 3:10; 1 John 3:13; 1 Clem. 4.7; 13.1; 2 Clem. 1.1; 13.1; Ign. *Phld.* 3.3; Herm. Vis. 3.1.4 [9.4]). See further Aasgaard, “Brothers and Sisters,” 285–316; Harland, “Familial Dimensions,” 491–513; Horrell, “From ἀδελφοί to οἶκος θεοῦ,” 293–311; Horrell, *Making of Christian Morality*, 75–96; Punt, “He is Heavy,” 153–71; Trebilco, *Self-Designations*, 16–67; Venter, “Implicit Obligations,” 283–302.

18. While S and H both contain the first-person pronoun ἡμᾶς, L provides evidence for the second-person pronoun (uos; ὑμᾶς). S and H collectively provide the stronger manuscript evidence over against L. So also in Wengst, *Didache*, 138; Prostmeier and Lona, *Epistola Barnabae*, 72.

19. Indeed, Ménard (*Sancti Barnabae*, 1.81) appears to feel no need to discuss this identification but simply uses the term *Dominus* (Lord) and *Deus* (God) interchangeably at this point in his notes. On the ambiguity of κύριος in the Epistle of Barnabas, see Edwards, “Identifying the Lord,” 51; Hvalvik, *Struggle for Scripture and Covenant*, 110; Rhodes, *Epistle of Barnabas*, 8 n 18.

20. This prepositional phrase can be used with reference to Jesus elsewhere in early

provides additional support for understanding the name of the Lord with reference to Jesus in 1.1.²¹ Second, the Latin translation expands the Greek phrase “in the name of the Lord” (ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου) and reads “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (*in nomine domini nostri Iesu Christi*). Although the longer text is more likely to be a later expansion and should thus be rejected as the earliest reading for text-critical purposes, L shows how at least one early reader of Barn. 1.1 understood the word κύριος in 1.1.²² For the translator, the Lord is a reference to Jesus Christ.²³

The author thus establishes fictive kinship relations by greeting the audience warmly. Although there is an implicit power dynamic built into the familial language of 1.1,²⁴ the peaceful and joyous greeting suggests authority because it is given in a way that is reminiscent of other apostolic greetings. Authority is further established because Barnabas’s greeting is given in the name of the Lord. This christological reference authorizes everything that follows in the letter with the stamp of the Lord’s approval.

I.2 Commendation (Barn. 1.2–4)

As in many ancient letters, Barnabas seeks to endear himself to his readers following the greeting with a *captatio benevolentiae* in 1.2–4. The purpose of this section is to create an ethos of trust and credibility between author and audience. The author admires the audience and rejoices over what has been given to them (1.2). He finds joy and hope for salvation because of the Spirit that has been poured over them. For this reason, he longs to see them (1.3). The author also speaks of his authority and locates its origins in the Lord who has walked with him. He thus finds himself compelled to love because of the faith and love that indwell them (1.4).

Barnabas opens by stating the reason for his joy. The genitive absolute that opens 1.2 describes God’s requirements as great (μεγάλων) and rich

Christian literature. E.g., Acts 16:18; 1 Cor 5:4; Eph 5:20; Col 3:17; 2 Thess 3:6; 1 Pet 4:14. See similarly Edwards, “Identifying the Lord,” 52.

21. Edwards, “Identifying the Lord,” 52; Prinzivalli and Simonetti, *Seguendo Gesù*, 2.506n2.

22. It is difficult to explain how “Jesus Christ” would fall out of the textual tradition in S and H. However, Hilgenfeld (*Barnabae Epistula: Integram graece primum edidit*, 2) accepted L and incorporated this reading into the Greek text of his first edition (κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ). He accepted the shorter reading (κυρίου) when he revised the text eleven years later (Hilgenfeld, *Barnabae Epistula: Integram graece iterum edidit*, 3).

23. Edwards, “Identifying the Lord,” 52.

24. For more on the language that the author uses to address the audience and the sort of authority that the author claims, see Prostmeier, *Barnabasbrief*, 146–50.

(πλουσίων).²⁵ However, the word “requirements” (δικαιωμάτων) is the key word in this genitive absolute, and the author also employs the word in important ways throughout the letter. In 1.2, the origins of the requirements are found in God; the author refers to τῶν τοῦ θεοῦ δικαιωμάτων. These requirements provide a reason for Barnabas’s joy because God’s requirements are great and rich on behalf of the audience.

The author continues to express the reason for his joy at the end of 1.2. The object of the author’s joy is his audience, which Barnabas describes by referring to their “blessed and glorious spirits” (ἐπὶ τοῖς μακαρίοις καὶ ἐνδόξοις ὑμῶν πνεύμασιν; 1.2). Placed just after the greeting, this effusive description contributes to the *captatio benevolentiae* that runs throughout 1.2–4. The audience is linked with the Holy Spirit’s activity through this term. The connection is emphasized in the following clause when Barnabas notes that the audience has received “the implanted grace of the spiritual gift” (ἐμφυτον τῆς δωρεᾶς πνευματικῆς χάριν; 1.2).²⁶ The gift that the audience has received comes from the Spirit and is thus properly described as spiritual. The origins of grace lie outside of the audience, but Barnabas’s readers have received what the Spirit has given. By referring to the audience as “spirits” (πνεύματα), the author enhances the links between the audience and the Spirit.²⁷

The reason for Barnabas’s joy receives further attention in 1.3. While the reasons for the author’s joy are related to God’s actions toward the audience (1.2), this does not preclude his own benefit from God’s actions. The author rejoices while hoping to be saved (1.3). Although the grace that comes to the audience is given by the Spirit, one reason that the author hopes for salvation comes from experience with the readers. The author’s hope comes “because I truly see in you the Spirit that has been poured out on you from the wealth of the Lord’s spring” (1.3).²⁸ The Spirit is again the

25. I thus understand the genitive absolute (ὄντων . . . δικαιωμάτων) to be in a causal relationship to the main verb (ὑπερευφραίνομαι).

26. The author again refers to an implanted gift (ἡ ἐμφυτον δωρεά) in 9.9.

27. See further Prigent and Kraft, *Épître de Barnabé*, 33–34; Prinzivalli and Simonetti, *Seguendo Gesù*, 2.506n4.

28. The Greek text that has been followed in this translation is ὅτι ἀληθῶς βλέπω ἐν ὑμῖν ἐκκεχυμένον ἀπὸ τοῦ πλουσίου τῆς πηγῆς κυρίου πνεῦμα ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς. Apart from some slight spelling differences, this text is found in Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers*, 2.12; Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 380; Prigent and Kraft, *Épître de Barnabé*, 72–74; Lindemann and Paulsen, *Apostolischen Väter*, 26; Prinzivalli and Simonetti, *Seguendo Gesù*, 2.112; Prostmeier and Lona, *Epistola Barnabae*, 72. The earliest text of 1.3 to which textual critics can return is not, however, easy to reconstruct with certainty. Two variants are worth observing in this phrase, and both relate to “the Lord’s spring” (τῆς πηγῆς κυρίου). The first variant concerns the differences between L and the Greek manuscripts. Whereas S

one who comes to the audience in order to give richly. The Spirit has been poured out on to the audience and thus becomes available to them. Moreover, the Spirit is poured out of divine wealth (πλούσιος). As in the case of describing the audience as spirits, so also this divine wealth forms a connection with the audience, which was described in 1.2 as “rich” (πλούσιος). The wealth from which the Spirit is poured metaphorically flows from the Lord like a spring of water. It is not clear whether κύριος in 1.3 is a reference to the Father or the Son, but the Spirit’s divine origins are emphasized in either case.²⁹ Yet the author’s emphasis lies on his experience of this reality in the audience. The result of the experience of joy that the author has had with the audience is introduced with the word “thus” (οὕτω; 1.3),³⁰ and the consequence of all that the author has said so far leads him to feel overwhelmed by his desire to see his readers.³¹

Barnabas next turns to another important matter to establish early in a letter: the trustworthiness of the author (1.4). The author asserts that he can be trusted for two reasons. First, since the author knows the Lord travels with him and knows the audience well, one can expect that this letter comes from a source that speaks truly.³² Second, Barnabas is trustworthy because he is compelled to love the audience. This relationship is

and H both read ἀπὸ τοῦ πλουσίου so that the Spirit is poured “from the wealth” of the Lord’s spring, L reads *ab honesto fonte dei* (from the eminent spring of God). What is important in this variant is the change of case. L clearly indicates that *honesto* modifies *fonte* because both words are in the ablative case. Windisch (*Barnabasbrief*, 304) follows L or a modified version of L because he regards it as the simplest and most natural text. Yet since S and H agree in reading πλουσίου and since L may be understood as a clarification of a difficult Greek text, I have followed S and H at this point. A second variant that should be mentioned concerns whether the author speaks about the Lord’s spring (τῆς πηγῆς κυρίου) or the Lord’s love (τῆς ἀγάπης κυρίου). I have translated “the Lord’s spring” following H and L. However, S reads “the Lord’s love,” and this text is followed by Cunningham, *Dissertation*, 4; Wengst, *Didache*, 138. The difference between these manuscripts can be explained best if πηγῆς is assumed to be the earlier reading. The word then made its way into the manuscript tradition due to the similarity in the endings (πηγς), the influence of the language of Rom 5:5, or some combination of the two. On the text of 1.3, see further Prostmeier, *Barnabasbrief*, 136–37; Windisch, *Barnabasbrief*, 304.

29. For further discussion of this issue, see Edwards, “Identifying the Lord,” 52; Prinzivalli and Simonetti, *Seguendo Gesù*, 2.506n4.

30. Prostmeier (*Barnabasbrief*, 141) thus rightly notes that οὕτω(ς) is connected to the author’s statement of joy in 1.3 rather than to the addressees’ reception of the Spirit.

31. L omits this sentence. However, it is present with slight variations in S and H. I have here followed S along with Prostmeier and Lona, *Epistola Barnabae*, 72.

32. The word τοῦτο, translated this in the phrase “I have been convinced of this” (πεπεισμένος οὖν τοῦτο; 1.4), is best understood as pointing forward to the statements that follow in 1.4 rather than pointing backward to what has already been said in 1.2–3.

born out of the audience's experience with the faith, love, and hope of life that come from God.

A few additional matters should likewise be noted when examining 1.4. First, the author suggests that he is known in the community.³³ He claims that he has said many things (λαλήσας πολλά) to the audience, and his knowledge of the addressees is thus based in part on personal experience.³⁴ Second, 1.4 contains the first mention of the “way of righteousness” (ὁδος δικαιοσύνης). While the Two Ways Tradition in 18.1—20.2 shows remarkable similarities to other Two Ways Traditions in early Judaism and early Christianity and will be explored in further detail when looking at 18.1—20.2, this tradition is not slapped at the end of *Barnabas* in a hackneyed fashion. Rather, the reference both to a way and to righteousness will be repeated throughout the letter.³⁵ Although references to the ways of light and darkness come to a booming crescendo as *Barnabas* draws to a close, the pathways along which one can walk are a significant motif throughout the epistle.³⁶ Third, the author depicts himself as particularly devoted to the audience. He loves them more than his own soul (ὕπὲρ τὴν ψυχὴν μου; 1.4). *Barnabas* speaks here in terms that are reminiscent of declarations made by other speakers. Nevertheless, his expressions can be understood as genuine and are consistent with what he writes elsewhere in the letter.³⁷ Finally, a key reason for the author's love comes “because great faith and love indwell you in the hope of his life” (μεγάλη πίστις καὶ ἀγάπη ἐγκατοικεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν ἐλπίδι ζωῆς αὐτοῦ). As has already been noted briefly, the author provides verbal links throughout 1.2–8, and faith, love, and the hope of life will be mentioned again in 1.6. Since the statement in 1.6 gives more information about this list, full comment may await that portion of the commentary. Yet it is worth noting now that faith and love come from outside the community and now indwell the community. Moreover,

33. Prostmeier, *Barnabasbrief*, 143.

34. While the author's speech and experience among the addressees provides a reason for the author's confidence in 1.4, the translation has left the syntactic relationship open in order to imitate the more open ways in which people with shared experiences can recall memories. If 1.4 is meant to recall a remembered experience—whether real or fictive—a more open-ended way of speaking seems appropriate. See further Prostmeier, *Barnabasbrief*, 143; Windisch, *Barnabasbrief*, 304.

35. On the variations in vocabulary by which the Epistle of *Barnabas* can allude to these pathways, see Hvalvik, *Struggle for Scripture and Covenant*, 63–65; Rhodes, “Two Ways Tradition,” 803.

36. Hvalvik, *Struggle for Scripture and Covenant*, 63–65; Rhodes, “Two Ways Tradition,” 797–816; Smith, “*Epistle of Barnabas*,” 472–84.

37. The author similarly proclaims his love for the audience in 4.6. For further characterization of the author, see 1.8; 4.9; 6.5; 9.9.