

“GRACE TO YOU AND PEACE”: THE APOSTOLIC GREETING

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Lucian's satire *Pro Lapsu*, like so many of his others, vividly characterises the beliefs and conventions of the society of his time. In defence of an “unforgivable” breach of etiquette in greeting his host with the word “good health” (“ὕγιαίνειν”) instead of “greetings” (“χαίρειν”), he discusses the forms of greeting used by the ancients to show his transgression of convention had noble precedent.¹ Inevitably his examples come not only from verbal greetings but also from the accepted forms of greeting used in letters, for in the Greek epistolary tradition, as in the Semitic, the written expression clearly showed its descent from the oral greeting—in contrast to the English custom, where one would hardly commence a letter with the words “How do you do?” or “Hallo”. Lucian's work illustrates the rigidity of epistolary conventions which, as will be seen, were in force for at least the three centuries before and after the beginning of the Christian era, and, in doing so, he also highlights an enigma of early Christian literature.

The importance of the letter-form in the New Testament and in later Christian tradition needs no demonstration. With the Gospels a new literary genre was created; with the letters the Christians were adopting one of the oldest forms of written communication. However, as with so much else, they did not simply take over the existing form but moulded it to suit their own purposes, imposing on it distinctive characteristics not only in content but also in form. Some of these remained in Christian epistolography, others disappeared as the traditional conventions proved stronger than the innovations. Among the latter is the form of greeting used to open the letter—here we return to Lucian—for it is remarkable that in the New Testament only two Christian letters, the one in Acts 15:23-29 and the letter of James,

¹ Lucian, *Pro Lapsu*, ed. K. Kilburn.

use the standard Greek greeting “χαίρειν”,² although, after a period of flux in the Apostolic Fathers, this became normative in later Christian letters.

Here, at the very opening of the letters, we find a *caveat* against that line of New Testament scholarship which has stressed the parallel between the New Testament, and particularly the Pauline, letters and contemporary Greek letters as witnessed by Egyptian papyri. Adolf Deissmann, in reaction against the poor regard of Paul’s Greek by classical scholars and the tendency to see him as a systematic theologian, first drew attention to this similarity in order to argue that Paul’s letters should be treated as spontaneous, ephemeral pieces, differing only from the papyri in their authorship.³ Even where that judgement has been modified, the fundamental assumption of the parallel has been maintained, too often without a complementary awareness of the differences—the most obvious of which are the nature of content and argument, the length of the letter itself, and the terminology used in the opening and closing formulae.⁴ While each of these merits attention, it is with the opening formula, its background and its influence, that we are here concerned—Paul’s characteristic “Grace to you and peace”.

THE GREEK FORMULA

Paul wrote his letters in Greek, and it might therefore be expected that he would observe Greek epistolary conventions. Any collection of Egyptian papyri will illustrate the usual opening of a letter—“‘A’ to ‘B’ greeting (“χαίρειν”)”, which was then followed by a fairly stereotyped health wish or directly by the

² The letter of Claudias Lysias in Acts 23:26-30 uses the conventional greeting, as would be expected.

³ A. Deissmann, *Bible Studies* (ET by A. Grieve, Edinburgh, 1901), pp. 42-49; idem, *Light from the Ancient East* (ET by L. Strachan, London, 1927), pp. 227-42.

⁴ According to O. Roller, *Das Formular der paulinischen Briefe* (Stuttgart, 1933), p. 38, the average length of Paul’s letters is 2487 words compared with 331 for Cicero, 175 for Pliny (p. 360, n. 173); 2 and 3 John (245 and 185 words) alone in the New Testament compare favourably with papyri letters. On comparison of form see J. L. White, *The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter* (Montana, 1972); C.-H. Kim, *Form and Structure of the Familiar Greek Letter of Recommendation* (Montana, 1972).

body of the letter itself.⁵ This opening, which could be expanded adverbially or adjectivally,⁶ is found as early as the fourth century B. C. E. and is still described as the correct form of address in the fourth century C. E.⁷ It probably goes back to the oral message delivered by a third party, “‘A’ to ‘B’ says thus: rejoice”. As the oral element fell into the background, the imperative became an infinitive dependent on the verb of saying, and then the verb of saying was dropped leaving the distinctive use of the third persons and infinitive which later grammarians were puzzled to explain.⁸ Even if another verb is substituted, the infinitive structure is retained. Thus Plato opened his letters “do well” (“εὖ πράττειν”), on the grounds that pleasure, implied by the greeting “rejoice”, often breeds mischief; and in this he was followed by others.⁹ According to Lucian, Pythagoras used “good health” (“ὕγιαίνειν”), as did his school, and also Epicurus in his more serious letters; by way of parody Ps.-Diogenes opens one of his letters “lament” (“οἰμώζειν”).¹⁰ The papyri show less variety, but a clear example is given by a second century C. E. consolatory letter, “Irene to Taonnophris and Philon be comforted” (“εὐψυχεῖν”).¹¹ Thus, if there is a greeting word—and there are examples in papyri, and especially in the more literary letters, with no greeting word—it is almost invariably in the infinitive.¹² Therefore, Paul’s opening phrase can hardly be classed as essentially Greek; to any reader or hearer of the time it must have clearly fallen outside the limits of epistolary convention.

⁵ Other introductory phrases included assertions of the writer’s health or a statement that he prayed for his addressee before the gods. See F. X. J. Exler, *The Form of the Ancient Greek Letter* (Washington, 1923).

⁶ Adverbially as “many greetings” (“πλεῖστα or πολλά χαιρεῖν”), adjectivally by giving the recipient a title of respect, commonly “lord”, “lady” (“κύριος/κυρία”), of parents or associates.

⁷ In the fourth century B.C.E. the letter of Mnesiergos: “Μνησίεργος ἐπέστελε τοῖς οἴκοι χαιρεῖν καὶ ὑγιαίνειν” (Deissmann, *Light*, pp. 150-52). In the fourth century C.E. Ps.-Libanius, *Characteres epistolares* (ed. Weichert), p. 21, l. 11; “ἀλλ’ οὕτως ἀπάρχεσθαι ὁ δεῖνα τῷ δεῖνι χαιρεῖν”.

⁸ See G. Gerhard, “Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des griechischen Briefes I”, *Philologus*, xviii (1905), 27-65.

⁹ So Plato, *Letter 3*; Plutarch, *Consolatio ad uxorem*; Demosthenes, *Letter 5*.

¹⁰ Lucian, *Pro Lapsu*, 5-6; Diogenes, *Letter 28*, “Διογένης ὁ κύων τοῖς καλουμένοις Ἑλλησιν οἰμώζειν”.

¹¹ Deissmann, *Light*, p. 176.

¹² See Exler, *op. cit.* “χαίροις” and “χαῖρε” do occur in ‘familiar’ letters of the third century C. E. but are rare. Cf. “χαίρετε” in *Epistle of Barnabas* I. i.

THE SEMITIC FORMULA

For many early Christians the conclusion just reached would need no proving, as we see in Tertullian's discussion of the Pauline letters in opposition to Marcion:

The construction of the letter just dealt with led me on so that I did not discuss its prescript, for I was sure that it could be discussed elsewhere since the same one is found in all the letters. Yet why he did not preface the letters he wrote with 'greeting' ["salutem"] but with "grace and peace" I can not say. What had he, the destroyer of Judaism, to do with Jewish custom? For even today the Jews address each other in the name of peace, and earlier, in the Scriptures, they used to use that greeting. But I do understand that by his service he spoke to make known the Creator: "How perfect are the feet of those who proclaim good news, who proclaim peace". For he who proclaimed good news, that is the grace of God, knew the peace that is to be highly valued.¹³

For Tertullian the Semitic origin of Paul's greeting was obvious, although it needed explanation. The most common keyword in the Semitic formula of greeting and farewell, oral or written, is the root "šlm" ("שלם"), the noun usually being translated by "εἰρήνη" in Greek, although a wider range of meaning than the English "peace" may often be intended.

The precise picture of the development of epistolary conventions, possible with Greek letters, cannot be paralleled with Semitic ones. There survive a number of Hebrew letters chiefly from 630-587 B. C. E. and Aramaic ones from the fifth to fourth centuries B. C. E. from a wide geographical provenance, but then little until the beginning of the Christian era.¹⁴ The Biblical evidence provides a special aspect of the problem; the letters in the historical books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles give the purport without the epistolary framework, while the Aramaic letters included in Ezra only in part conform to the non-Biblical patterns

¹³ *Adv. Marcionem* (ed. Evans), V. 5. "Salutem" in Latin letters takes the place of the Greek "χαίρειν".

¹⁴ See D. Pardee et al., *Handbook of Ancient Hebrew Letters* (Chico, 1982), which gives a transliteration and translation as well as comment; J. A. Fitzmyer, "Some Notes on Aramaic Epistolography" in ed. J. L. White, *Studies in Ancient Letter Writing (Semeia 22)* (Chico, 1981), pp. 25-58 (revised from *J.B.L.*, xciii (1974), 201-25) gives a list of Aramaic letters. Original editions have been consulted wherever possible. cf. also P. S. Alexander, "Remarks on Aramaic Epistolography in the Persian Period", *Journal of Semitic Studies*, xxiii (1978), 155-70.

of the period.¹⁵ These latter seem to have set a pattern, probably encouraged by Hellenistic influence, for the inclusion of letters in the books of Maccabees, Daniel, the Greek additions to Esther, the 'Letter' of Aristeas and Josephus—and when in Greek these are of interest as purporting to be the letters of Jews. Over the range of Hebrew and Aramaic letters it is possible to see common forms and, perhaps, lines of continuity, but also many uncertainties and surprises.

Like their Greek counterparts, Semitic letters reflect their background in the oral message by the use of the third person in the opening phrase, and also sometimes have no specific word of greeting.¹⁶ There is a variety of patterns of address, "To B, A" (as in the example below), "To B from A", "From A to B", "To B", and, parallel to Paul and the common Greek pattern, "A to B", although this apparently is only found in the Aramaic bar Kochba letters and in Ezra 7:12 and Dan. 3:31.¹⁷ Again, it is the bar Kochba letters, this time both Hebrew and Aramaic, which express the greeting in its simplest form, "peace" ("שלום"), a form which is not common and is chiefly found on ostraca, where limitations of space may have enforced brevity.¹⁸ More commonly, an extended greeting is given in a separate clause, sometimes as a prayer that the gods may grant the recipient "peace", sometimes a more prosaic "I send you peace"; "peace" is regularly combined with some other benefit(s), "favour" ("רַחֵם"), "prosperity" ("שְׂרַחֵם"), or "life" ("חַיֵּי").¹⁹ An adverbial "much"

¹⁵ Eg. 2 Sam. 11:14 f.; 1 Kgs. 21:8 f.; 2 Kgs. 5:5 f.; 10:1-3, etc.; Ezra 4:11,17; 5:7; 7:12 (on these see below).

¹⁶ Fitzmyer, "Aramaic Epistolography", p. 33; Pardee, *Handbook*, p. 154. There is no greeting in several of the Hebrew Arad letters, in nos. IV, V, VI-XII in G. Driver, *Aramaic Documents of the Fifth Century B. C.* (Oxford, 1954), in some of the bar Kochba letters or in Ezra 4:11. Sometimes this reflects their official or commercial nature.

¹⁷ See Fitzmyer, "Aramaic Epistolography", pp. 31-33 and Alexander, "Remarks", pp. 161-162, with examples; Pardee, *Handbook*, pp. 153, 156-157. "A" sends greetings to "B" is also found. The Hebrew, but not the Aramaic, bar Kochba letters use the form 'From (א) — to (ב) —', which is characteristic of early Aramaic, but not of earlier Hebrew letters! See S. A. Birnbaum, "Bar Kokhba and Akiba", *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, lxxxvi (1954), 23-32.

¹⁸ For editions of the bar Kochba letters see below n. 25. So also the letter from Simon b. Gamaliel and Yohanan b. Zakkai in *Midr. Tannaim* on Dt. 26:1 (ed. Hoffmann). See also Ezra 4:17; 5:7b.

¹⁹ For a fuller account see Fitzmyer, "Aramaic Epistolography", pp. 34-35;

("sgy") is often found (translated "exceedingly" in the example below),²⁰ and the distinctive greeting of Dan. 3:31; 6:26 would appear to be a variant of this, "Peace be multiplied to you"—a greeting which is echoed in the New Testament and by the letters of Gamaliel.²¹ One, admittedly very full, example from the Aramaic Elephantini papyri may illustrate some of these points:

To our Lord Bigvai, governor of Judaea, your servants Yedoniah and his colleagues, the priests who are in Yeb the fortress. May the god of heaven seek after the health [שלם] of your lordship exceedingly [שגיא] at all times, and may he give you favour [רחמן] before Darius the King and the princes of the palace more than now a thousand times, and may he grant you long life [חן] and may you be happy and prosperous [שריר] at all times.²²

The Septuagint acknowledges the "šlm" greeting, translating it by "peace" ("εἰρήνη"), However, in those cases where there is no Hebrew original, as, for example, in I Maccabees, the conventional Greek "χαίρειν" is used, even for letters written by Jews.²³ The same is true of letters from Jews cited by the *Letter of Aristeas* and by Josephus.²⁴ Similarly, Greek papyri letters written by Jews in Egypt use the "χαίρειν" greeting in the same way as letters

Alexander, "Remarks", pp. 162-163; Pardee, *Handbook*, p. 154 with examples. 'שררת' is not a Biblical term and has variously been translated "prosperity" or "strength". See G. Driver, *Aramaic Documents*, p. 14. "Peace and prosperity" are regularly combined in the Arsames letters (ed. Driver, op. cit.) and in the Padua Papyri (see J. Fitzmyer, "The Padua Aramaic Papyrus Letters", *JNES*, xxi (1962), pp. 15-24).

²⁰ The adverbial "much" ("שגיא") is found in *Aramaic Papyri* 30 (below n. 22), in the Arsames letters (ed. cit., no. s. I, III, V, XII) and in the Padua Papyri (ed. cit., no. 1). There does not seem to be any equivalent in the Hebrew letters collected in Pardee, *Handbook*.

²¹ Dan. 3:31 (ET 4:1), "Nebuchadnezzar the King to all peoples May your peace be multiplied" ("שְׁלָמְךָ יִכְתָּן יְשָׁא"); so also 6:26. The letters of Gamaliel in b. San. 11b read "To our brethren May your peace be multiplied" ("שְׁלָמְךָ יִכְתָּן יְסָא"). The Greek rendering of the Daniel passage is "Εἰρήνη ὑμῖν πλεθυσθείη" (so also 6:26 Theodotion). See below p. 173.

²² A. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the 5th Century B. C.* (Oxford, 1923) pp. 108 ff., no. 30.

²³ In 2 Esdras 4:17 "peace" ("εἰρήνην") is dependent on the verb of sending at the beginning of the sentence, but in 5:7 is in the nominative; on Daniel see n. 21. The "χαίρειν" formula is used in the letters at 1 Macc. 10:18,25; 11:30; 12:6; 13:36; 14:20; 15:2,16; 2 Macc. 1:1 (but note the addition of 'εἰρήνην ἀγαθήν'), 10; 9:19; 11:16,22, 27,34; also 1 Esdras 6:7; 8:9; Esther 8:12a.

²⁴ *Letter of Aristeas*, 35; 41; Josephus, *Ant.*, xii. 45-56.

by non-Jews.²⁵ Most significantly, among the letters from bar Kochba's revolt are two written in Greek. The majority, which are in Aramaic or Hebrew, largely follow the Semitic pattern, but the Greek letters use the "χαίρειν" greeting.²⁶ In one letter an explanation is given as to why it is written in Greek, but unfortunately the state of the text leaves this obscure for us, although the implication may be that writing in Hebrew or Aramaic, although more in accordance with the nationalist cause, was less convenient.²⁷ Clearly then, when writing in Greek Greek conventions were used.

This conclusion should occasion little surprise; in recent years the existence of Hellenistic influence among the Jews of Palestine has been increasingly recognised. If it seems probable that many Jews were practically bilingual, then it must also be recognised that this implies the knowledge of two sets of conventions as well as two languages.

THE PAULINE EXPRESSION

Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes, to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 1:1-2)

If Lucian's hearers were amazed and embarrassed by his slip when greeting his host, what about Paul's? To both Greeks and Jews it must have sounded very distinctive. This is not to say that Paul had no contact with his Greek and Semitic predecessors in

²⁵ See V. Tcherikover and A. Fuks, *Corpus Papyrorum Iudicorum* (Cambridge, Mass., 1957-64).

²⁶ So. [A]ννανος Ἰωανθῆ τῶν ἀδελφῶν χαίρειν. See B. Lifshitz, "Papyrus grecs du desert de Juda", *Aegyptus*, xlii (1962), 240-56. On the Hebrew and Aramaic letters see above nn. 17 and 18; also P. Benoit et al., *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert*, ii, *Les Grottes de Murabba'at* (Oxford, 1960), pp. 155-169; Y. Yadin, "The Expedition to the Judaean Desert, 1960. Expedition D", *I.E.J.*, xi (1961), 36-52.

²⁷ The passage reads "Ἐγράφη / δ[ε] Ἑλληνιστὶ διὰ / τ[ο] ..μὲν μὴ εὐρη / θ[ῆ]ναι Ἐβραεστὶ / γ[ρ]άψασθαι" which has been interpreted as that either "opportunity" ("ὄρμαν") or "Hermas" ("Ἑρμαν") could not be found to write in Hebrew; see G. Howard and J. C. Shelton, "The Bar Kochba Letters and Palestinian Greek", *I.E.J.*, xxiii (1973), 101-102.

letter writing. Like them he observes the use of the third person in the opening phrase—although this does not prevent him from saying “our Lord Jesus Christ”. In placing the salutation in a separate clause and in the use of “peace” he does, as Tertullian recognised, recall Semitic convention; but this itself is noteworthy, not because he was “the destroyer of Judaism” but because writing in Greek and using Greek conventions would be expected to go together.

However, Paul does not simply echo the Semitic greeting, significant though this would be. A combination of “peace” with some other benefits would, as we have seen, have Aramaic or Hebrew precedent, but the specific use of “grace” (“χάρις”) as such a benefit cannot be paralleled. As has often been noted, “χάρις” is of little importance in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, although it does appear to have gained significance in the intertestamental period as a divine gift.²⁸ If one term, however, had to be chosen to combine with “peace” to give a ‘Scriptural’ feel of divine blessing, we would expect not “grace” but “mercy” (“ἔλεος”), which is used in blessings and which the Septuagint had used to translate “ḥesed”, God’s steadfast faithfulness towards Israel.²⁹

While it is true, therefore, that the phrase “Grace and peace” is not without any forbears, it would appear to be distinctively Christian. Can we go further than this and say it is a specifically Pauline creation? Arguments that the formula is earlier than Paul turn partly on doubts about Pauline influence in the other New Testament occurrences and partly on the liturgical “feel” of the balanced phrases of the greeting which, it is held, point to older Christian tradition:

“Grace to you and peace
From God our Father
And Lord Jesus Christ”

“χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη
ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν
καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ”

²⁸ Wisdom 3:9; 4:15 (χάρις καὶ ἔλεος); Apoc. Enoch 5:7. See K. Berger, “Gnade’ im frühen Christentum”, *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift*, xxvii (1973), 1-25.

²⁹ See Num. 6:24f.; Tobit 7:12 κ; Cf. the use of “rhm” in Semitic letters greetings. In the Syriac *Apocalypse of Baruch* the greeting is “Thus saith Baruch the son of Neriah to the brethren carried into captivity: Mercy and peace [ܡܠܚܘܬܐ ܘܥܡܘܬܐ]” (78:1), which reflects its Hebrew origins; one manuscript (c-Codex Ambrosianus), the only one to contain the whole Apocalypse, adds “be with you”, giving a parallel to Paul’s “ὑμῖν”.

The conjunction of God and Jesus Christ without the article, and the description of God as "our Father" are said not to be characteristic of Paul's style; indeed, Jesus Christ as Lord and God as our Father could be seen as fundamental tenets of early Christian thought which Paul inherited, and here, as elsewhere, so it is argued, style may point to earlier tradition.³⁰ Against this, and in favour of the Pauline origin of the formula, however, is the simple form of the greeting found in 1 Thess. 1:1, "Grace to you and peace"; the phrase "from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ", which is added to it in his other letters and on which the argument from style depends, is precisely what distinguishes the Pauline greeting in form both from its possible Semitic forbears and from those other New Testament greetings which have most claim to be independent. That its addition may be seen as a development in Paul's own writing suggests that whatever the origins of this part of the greeting, its epistolary use is Pauline.³¹

This leaves us with the question whether the basic "Grace to you and peace", both in the use of "grace" and in the more fundamental use of a 'Semitic' formula in a Greek letter, is pre-Pauline. Certainly, "grace" does have a distinctive role in Paul's theology, perhaps acquiring some of the weight that "hesed" has in the Old Testament, and thus taking the place of "mercy" ("ἔλεος"). Although Paul does know the Jewish "peace" formula (Gal. 6:16),³² he regularly closes his letters with a "grace" formula, again unparalleled in non-Christian letters, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ [be] with you all".³³ This suggests that in the opening greetings Paul took the Semitic formula and combined "peace" with his own distinctive "grace" to emphasis

³⁰ E. Lohmeyer, "Probleme paulinischer Theologie I: Briefliche Grussüberschriften", *Z.N.W.*, xxvi (1927), 158-173, argues for the pre-Pauline origin of the formula on these grounds. In fact God as our (your) Father is mainly found in Paul and the Gospels.

³¹ G. Friedrich, "Lohmeyer's These über 'Das paulinische Briefpräskript' kritisch beleuchtet", *Z.N.W.*, xlvi (1955), 272-274, sees the lack of the article as due to the anarthrous "Grace and peace" and defends the Pauline origin of the greeting.

³² Gal. 6:16 is paralleled by the closing greeting of one of the Bar Kochba letters, "May you have peace and all the house of Israel" (*Pap. Mur.* 42).

³³ The precise wording varies among the letters; the undisputed Paulines read "The grace of (our) Lord Jesus (Christ)" while the Pastorals, Colossians and Ephesians have simply "The grace". Elsewhere in the New Testament only Hebrews and Revelation close with a grace formula.

the religious content and give the greeting more than merely conventional force.

We shall see that the New Testament evidence makes it difficult to prove conclusively that the use of a Semitic-type greeting was a Pauline innovation, although the weight of the evidence does point to Pauline priority. Certainly we can say that Paul deliberately chose not to use the conventional Greek greeting with which to open his letters. Instead he used a form which would probably have something of a 'Scriptural' feel about it, but which would do more than this. Especially if the letters were read to the gathered congregation at worship, they would declare that Paul, as "apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God", willed for and proclaimed to that congregation the gifts of salvation made available by God through Jesus Christ.³⁴ Thus, the letters manifest in his absence the role Paul assumed when present;³⁵ they were no casual correspondence but vehicles of his apostolic work in relation to the churches, and, while they may invite a number of literary comparisons, literary analysis must be complemented by Paul's own understanding of his apostolic authority.³⁶

NEW TESTAMENT USAGE³⁷

Elsewhere in the New Testament the variations of the formula are both intriguing and revealing. Only James and 3 John (as well as Hebrews and 1 John, which are without obvious letter openings) fail to use the basic pattern, and of those remaining all, bar Jude, use "grace". Is this Pauline influence or a common, independent tradition?

The greetings of the Pastorals are part of their Pauline guise, but significant changes suggest the work of a later hand. "To you" is omitted after "grace" and God is no longer "our" Father—rather

³⁴ K. Berger, "Apostelbrief und apostolische Rede. Zum Formular frühchristlicher Briefe", *Z.N.W.*, lxx (1974), 190-231 argues that apostolic letters should be compared not with hellenistic letters but with literary, fixed addresses, Testaments, etc. But see next note.

³⁵ See 1 Cor. 5:3f. On the theme in letters that they represent the writer "as if present" see K. Thraede, *Grundzüge griechisch-römischer Brieftopik* (Zetemata 48. Munich, 1970).

³⁶ See J. L. White, "Saint Paul and the Apostolic Letter Tradition", *C.B.Q.*, xlv (1983), 433-44.

³⁷ For this and the following section see the table on p. 171.

EARLY CHRISTIAN LETTER GREETINGS

Paul (1 Cor.)	χάρις ὑμῖν			καὶ εἰρήνη
1, 2 Timothy	χάρις	X ἔλεος		X εἰρήνη
Titus	χάρις	X		καὶ εἰρήνη
1, 2 Peter	χάρις ὑμῖν			καὶ εἰρήνη
2 John	ἔσται μεθ' ἡμῶν	χάρις	X ἔλεος	X εἰρήνη
Jude		X	X ἔλεος ὑμῖν	καὶ εἰρήνη καὶ ἀγάπη
Revelation	χάρις ὑμῖν			καὶ εἰρήνη
1 Clement	χάρις ὑμῖν			καὶ εἰρήνη
Polycarp	X	X ἔλεος ὑμῖν		καὶ εἰρήνη
Mart. Polycarp	X	X ἔλεος		καὶ εἰρήνη καὶ ἀγάπη
Ep. V. and L.*	εἰρήνη	X		καὶ χάρις καὶ δόξα
Apos. Const.	χάρις ὑμῖν			καὶ εἰρήνη
Paul (1 Cor.)	ἀπὸ Θεοῦ Πατρὸς ἡμῶν	καὶ	Κυρίου	Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
1, 2 Timothy	ἀπὸ Θεοῦ Πατρὸς	X	καὶ	X Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ
Titus	ἀπὸ Θεοῦ Πατρὸς	X	καὶ	X Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ
1, 2 Peter	(N.B. the expansion in 2 Peter 1:2)			
2 John	παρὰ Θεοῦ Πατρὸς	X	καὶ παρὰ	X Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
Jude				
Revelation	ἀπὸ ὁ ὧν ----	καὶ ἀπὸ ...	ἑπτὰ πνευμάτων ...	καὶ ἀπὸ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
1 Clement	ἀπὸ παντοκράτορος Θεοῦ	διὰ	X	Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
Polycarp	παρὰ Θεοῦ παντοκράτορος	καὶ	X	Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
Mart. Polycarp	X Θεοῦ Πατρὸς	X	καὶ	Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
Ep. V. and L.*	ἀπὸ Θεοῦ Πατρὸς	X	καὶ	X Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ
Apost. Const.	ἀπὸ τοῦ παντοκράτορος Θεοῦ	διὰ	τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν	Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
Paul (1 Cor.)				
1, 2 Timothy	τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν			
Titus	τοῦ Σωτῆρος ἡμῶν			
1, 2 Peter		πληθυνθεῖη	(ἐν ἐπιγνώσει----	
2 John	τοῦ Υἱοῦ τοῦ Πατρὸς		ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἀγάπῃ	
Jude		πληθυνθεῖη		
Revelation	ὁ μάρτυς ----			
1 Clement		πληθυνθεῖη		
Polycarp	τοῦ Σωτῆρος ἡμῶν	πληθυνθεῖη		
Mart. Polycarp		πληθυνθεῖη		
Ep. V. and L.*	τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν			
Apos. Const.		πληθυνθεῖη	ἐν ἐπιγνώσει αὐτοῦ	

* The letter of the churches of Vienne and Lyons in Eusebius, *H. E.*, V. 1.3ff.

it is Jesus who is “our” Lord or Saviour. Further, 1 and 2 Timothy add “mercy” to the “Grace and peace” (“Grace, mercy, peace”), while Titus describes “Christ Jesus” (so also 1 and 2 Timothy against the Pauline “Jesus Christ”) as “Saviour” instead of as “Lord”. The growing use of “mercy” (“ἔλεος”) and the descrip-

tion of Jesus as Saviour would appear to be characteristic of the post-Pauline period and, in the case of the former, shows the growing influence of 'Scriptural' language.³⁸

One would not naturally think of Pauline influence in the Johannine writings, but it must surely explain the greeting of 2 John, "There will be with us grace, mercy, peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Son of the Father in truth and love". Neither "grace" or "mercy" are Johannine words, and so point to the adoption of a formula from elsewhere;³⁹ if its ancestry is Pauline, then the use of "mercy" and the omission of "to you" after "grace" suggest a closer relationship with the Pastorals than with the genuine Pauline letters. However, Johannine touches are also evident, as in the description of Jesus as "the Son of the Father" and in the addition "in truth and love". Moreover, the indicative "will be with us" has gone beyond the wish implied by the Pauline greeting and has become an assured promise, again in a characteristically Johannine fashion.

In Revelation 1:4 the basic "Grace to you and peace" has the same form as that of Paul, although as the author goes on to say "from the one who is—" he uses titles for God and Jesus which are part of his own theology. It is significant that the greeting heads the collection of seven letters, for it stands in contrast to the form-critical background of the individual letters with their opening "Thus says—", which reflects a different origin.⁴⁰ Brought together under a single greeting, the letters are given a common purpose and close inter-relationship. The choice of seven letters recalls the Pauline corpus of letters to seven churches, although uncertainties of dating make it a disputable point as to the side on which dependence lies. The Pauline "grace" formula at the close

³⁸ Of twenty-five occurrences of "ἔλεος" in the N.T., five are in the Pastorals, against four in the acknowledged Paulines (Roms. 3, Gals. 1); "σωτήρ" comes twenty-four times, ten times in the Pastorals (six in Titus), five in 2 Peter, once each in Eph. and Phil.

³⁹ "χάρις" is not found in the Johannine Epistles (except 3 Jn. 4 B), and only in 1:14-17 in the Gospel; "ἔλεος" does not come elsewhere in the Johannine corpus, while "εἰρήνη" occurs here, 3 Jn. 14 and five times in the Gospel.

⁴⁰ "Thus says" is the messenger formula used of God's words through his prophets in the Old Testament (eg. Ex. 5:1; Isa. 1:24) but also of messages from other Kings (Isa. 36:4). On this and the question of the continuing use of the formula see G. Rudberg, "Zu den Sendschreiben der Johannes-Apokalypse", *Eranos*, xi (1911), 170-79.

of the book (22:21) does suggest that in the greeting also we have an imitation of Paul, thus giving the whole book the form of a Pauline, or rather an 'apostolic', letter.⁴¹

1 Peter brings a new element into the picture, for here the wish is given explicit verbal form, "May grace to you and peace be multiplied". 2 Peter reproduces this in its essentials, while Jude has a similar form "May mercy to you and peace and love be multiplied". A close parallel may be found in the first century C. E. letter of R. Gamaliel, "To our brethren—May your peace be multiplied".⁴² It may be that in each case there is a conscious echo of the similar form noted earlier in Dan. 3:31 as an appropriate Scriptural precedent for a circular letter; it has been argued that this was a standard form in directive letters from Jerusalem to the Diaspora, but proof is lacking.⁴³ Significantly, Jude does not have the term we have found to be characteristic of Paul, "grace"; his "mercy" and "peace" could reflect 'Scriptural' or Jewish precedent, perhaps in a Palestinian Christian context, although the use of such a formula in a letter written in Greek would be, as we have seen, unusual. However the addition of "love" ("ἀγάπη") is obviously Christian and shows another way the Semitic greeting could be baptised into the Christian faith.⁴⁴ Jude also differs from Paul in not continuing with the theologically important "from God our Father—", which might point to his independence. Although 1 Peter follows Jude in this omission, his "grace to you and peace" does recall Paul's formula (although "grace" is not foreign to Peter's theology). Finally, where 1 Peter, like Paul, immediately qualifies his personal name by the designation "apostle of Jesus Christ", "Jude" is qualified by "slave of Jesus Christ, brother of James"; the first epithet also recalls Paul's own description of himself, in this case in Romans and Philippians,

⁴¹ So White, "St. Paul", p. 444. This is an indication of the formative influence of the 'Apostolic letter'.

⁴² See above n. 21.

⁴³ E. Peterson, *Frühkirche, Judentum und Gnosis* (Freiburg, 1959), pp. 129-36 argues that the prescripts of 1 Peter and 1 Clement independently follow the style of Jewish 'Diaspora' letters; however, the existence of such, never mind the style, can hardly be stated with certainty on the basis of the evidence available, and other letters included in Rabbinic literature do not use the "be multiplied" greeting. Since letters such as those of Gamaliel deal with tithing and the intercalatory month they would not provide an obvious model for the more pastoral letters of early Christianity.

⁴⁴ For the addition of love see 1 Cor. 16:23-24; 2 Cor. 13:11,13.

while the second may have helped accord the letter authority. It is significant that while the designation varies, the use of one—which would not be essential—is constant.

Here the evidence is at its most difficult to evaluate. We could see Jude as essentially imitating the Pauline form of greeting, especially the self-designation and use of a 'Scriptural' greeting, but doing so in his own language. It would then be possible to argue the same for 1 Peter (and, therefore, for 2 Peter) but to see closer adherence to the Pauline form in the designation "apostle" and in the "grace and peace". The alternative is to argue that in Jude we have the principal witness to a non-Pauline tradition of using a 'Scriptural' or Semitic greeting in a Christian letter written in Greek; 1 Peter might then also be independent or, as seems more probable to the present author, still influenced by the Pauline form. Any decision must not only depend on the background and date envisaged for Jude and on the question whether its circular address implies a more artificial form, but must also pay attention to the post-New Testament letters which use the 'Pauline' pattern without the 'Pauline' "grace", questions which can but be raised within the scope of the present article. Nonetheless, the contribution of Paul and his influence were clearly fundamental. It was primarily thanks to him that the 'apostolic letter' was born.

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS

Already during the New Testament period it would seem that the "Grace to you and peace" greeting had acquired an aura of apostolic authority. Although Christian writers continued to use the "χαίρειν" greeting in most letters, the continuing history of the 'apostolic' form shows the uses to which such an aura could be put.

Although 1 Clement is written as from one church to another, that it is the work of a single author, Clement of Rome, is rarely disputed. The greeting—"Grace to you and peace from God Almighty through Jesus Christ be multiplied"—is reminiscent of that of 1 Peter in the use of the verb "be multiplied", but also suggests the influence of Paul in that grace and peace come "from God". The description of God as Almighty reflects the desire to use 'Scriptural' language which we have noted in other contexts, while the change to "through Jesus Christ" is a mark of the

author's own style.⁴⁵ In the context of a letter exhorting the church at Corinth to set its house in order and to rediscover the pattern of life to which it had originally been called by Paul, the use of this greeting is particularly appropriate.

Polycarp's letter to the church at Philippi, also written in part against disorder, opens with a greeting in which each element has a parallel in one of the earlier forms we have studied, but which is identical to none: "Mercy to you and peace from God Almighty and Jesus Christ our Saviour be multiplied". The description of God as Almighty and the "be multiplied" wish recall what has already been said about 1 Clement, "mercy and peace" without the distinctive "grace" invite comparison with Semitic greeting but also with Jude, while Titus had also described Jesus as "Saviour" rather than the more common "Lord".⁴⁶ Most probably the parallels do not represent dependence, but we have here a new formulation of the greeting within the, now standard, style. No doubt it has influenced the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, which is in the form of a letter from the Church at Smyrna to that at Philomelium, "Mercy, peace and love of God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ be multiplied", although the addition of "love" is even more reminiscent of Jude.⁴⁷

However, showing that this style of greeting was not a standard Christian convention, Ignatius never uses the Pauline formula to open his letters. He does use something similar towards the end of his letter to the Smyrnaeans, and to the Trallians he writes that he is greeting them in 'apostolic style',⁴⁸ but although his piling up of clauses contrasts with the simplicity of the Greek conventional prescript, nonetheless his greeting itself is the standard Greek

⁴⁵ "διὰ ... Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ" appears earlier in the prescript and in the closing grace. The description of God as "παντοκράτωρ" is taken from the Greek Old Testament where it translates "תִּיבָרַךְ" and "יְיָ"; it also appears in the greetings of Polycarp, *Philippians* and of *The Apostolic Constitutions*.

⁴⁶ Like 2 John, Polycarp uses the preposition παρά rather than ἀπό (from).

⁴⁷ *Mart. Polycarp* also returns to calling God "Father" (with the Pastorals, rather than "our Father" with Paul) and Jesus Christ, "our Lord"—here the order, Lord Jesus Christ, is Pauline, the addition of "our" closer to the Pastorals! This variety of detail suggests that the model is being followed in principle but not slavishly. The letter is clearly intended for a wider audience than its address suggests.

⁴⁸ "ἐν ἀποστολικῷ χαρακτήρι", *Trall.*, praes. "χαρακτηρ" is a technical term designating a style and type of letter (cf. Ps.-Libanius in n. 7). *Smyrn.*, xii. 2, χάρις ὑμῖν, ἔλεος, εἰρήνη, ὑπομονή διὰ παντός.

“many greetings” (“πλεῖστα χαίρειν”).⁴⁹ Curiously, the spurious letters of Ignatius from the long recension do use variant forms of the ‘apostolic’ greeting.⁵⁰

From now on the use of the “grace” formula would seem to be in conscious imitation of the New Testament model. In commending Irenaeus to Pope Eleutherus, the churches of Vienne and Lyons wish “father Eleutherus” “greetings in God” (“χαίρειν ἐν Θεῷ”),⁵¹ but in describing to their brethren in Asia and Phrygia the persecutions which they have suffered (177 C. E.) they use the formula “peace and grace and glory from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord”.⁵² The inversion to “peace and grace” is unusual, but the addition of glory is doubtless occasioned by the subject of martyrdom. The use of the letter form may be influenced by the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, of which there are other literary echoes, but does not seem to have been continued by later Acts of Martyrs.

The *Epistula Apostolorum* (160 C. E.?) purports to come from all the Apostles and therefore, appropriately, commences “We greet you our sons and daughters with joy, in the name of God the Father, the Lord of the world, and of Jesus Christ. May grace be multiplied for you”.⁵³ The “be multiplied” wish points to 1 Peter although the omission of “peace”, leaving the ‘apostolic’ “grace”, is noteworthy. The fourth century *Apostolic Constitutions* also use the form to give verisimilitude, although the description of God as Almighty and the placing of Jesus in a prepositional clause recalls 1 Clement: “The apostles and presbyters to all those of the nations who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to you and peace from the Almighty God through our Lord Jesus Christ be multiplied in

⁴⁹ The only greeting in *Philad.* is “ἀσπάζομαι”; in *Magn.* and *Trall.* “χαίρειν” is dependent on “εὐχομαι”.

⁵⁰ The Ignatian “many greetings” form is used in the spurious letter to the Antiochenes, but that to the Tarsians has “mercy, peace from God (the) Father and (the) Lord Jesus Christ be multiplied continually”, that to the Philippians a similar form finishing at “Christ”, and that to Hero, “grace, mercy and peace from the Almighty God and Christ Jesus our Lord his only begotten Son” (ed. J. B. Lightfoot).

⁵¹ Eusebius, *H.E.*, V. 4.2.

⁵² Eusebius, *H.E.*, V. 1.3f. “εἰρήνη καὶ χάρις καὶ δόξα ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς καὶ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν”.

⁵³ Only the Ethiopic version of this part of the *Epistula Apostolorum* is extant; the Greek of the greeting would presumably have been “χάρις ὑμῖν πληθυνθείη” (ed. C. Schmidt, *T.U.*, xliii (1919)).

knowledge of him".⁵⁴ Since Peter and not Paul was one of the Twelve, the closer parallel with 1 (and 2) Peter is entirely appropriate!

The apocryphal letters associated with Paul are interesting in that the opportunity of supporting the fiction with his characteristic greeting is not generally taken. In the spurious correspondence between Paul and Seneca and in that between Paul and Corinth, all parties use the "χαίρειν" type greeting throughout.⁵⁵ Only in the letter of Paul to Laodicaea, extant in Latin, do we find the true Pauline form: "Paul, an apostle not by men or through men but through Jesus Christ, to the brethren who are at Laodicaea, grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ".⁵⁶ Later, Mani, who was accused by his opponents of writing as "apostle of Jesus Christ" in imitation of Paul, probably did use a Pauline style of greeting in some letters.⁵⁷ It would be interesting to know how the Montanist Themiso commenced the 'catholic letter' which he wrote "in imitation of the apostle"!⁵⁸

Letters played a remarkable role in the development of the early church, expressing or seeking to create a unity between the different communities, which was equally encouraged by the movement and welcoming of visitors. Thus by letter, as by more

⁵⁴ Ed. P. A. de Lagarde (Leipzig, 1862); "in knowledge of him" ("ἐν ἐπιγνώσει αὐτοῦ) recalls the addition to the greeting in 2 Peter 1:2.

⁵⁵ The correspondence between Paul and Seneca is, of course, in Latin and has "salutem" as the greeting (*P.L.*, Suppl. 1:673-678) In 3 *Corinthians* (ed. M. Testuz, *Papyrus Bodmer X-XIII* (Cologny-Geneve, 1959), pp. 9-45) Paul writes "χαίρειν" to "the brethren in Corinth", as had they to him.

⁵⁶ "Paulus apostolus—, gratia vobi et pax a deo patre et domino Ihesus Christo" (ed. A. v. Harnack).

⁵⁷ See Titus Bostrensis, *Adversus Manichaeos*, 3,1 (ed. de Lagarde). The letter to Menoch quoted by Augustine, *Opus imp. c. Julianum* III (*P.L.*, xlv. 1318) opens "gratia tibi et salus a deo nostro"; Mani's letter to Marcellus in the *Acta Archelai*, V. 1 Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 66.6) opens "χάρις, ἔλεος, εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς καὶ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ". Although the authenticity of both letters is disputed, they probably represent genuine Manichaean epistolary style.

⁵⁸ Eusebius, *H.E.*, V. 18.5. Beyond these examples the "χαίρειν" greeting apparently remained standard in Greek-speaking Christianity (as Eusebius, *H.E.*, VI. 1.5; VI. 45.1; VII. 3.2), while letters associated with the East use the "šlm" greeting (as Ps.-Clement, *De Virginitate*, I. 1, and the spurious epistles of Peter and of Clement to James). From the fourth century the greeting was often replaced by the address on the outside of the letter (see Gerhard, *op. cit.*, p. 59).

direct encounters, a sense of belonging, relationship and commitment was forged with distant communities which was more real than that with the immediate society in which they lived. As well as the actual sending of the letters, the fact that they were preserved, exchanged and collected together witnesses to the importance they were felt to have as symbols of that unity. While it is true that most of the New Testament letters can only be understood when seen as responses to particular situations and problems, yet such a contextual approach does not express their total meaning. So, also, they do indeed bear many of the proper conventions of the letter form, yet the letter form on its own does not fully explain the structure and method of the New Testament, and particularly the Pauline, letters. There is need for further analysis of the literary models used by the New Testament letters, and the theological understanding implied by these; the present study is a contribution to such an analysis. For we see that the greeting, only to be expected in a letter, expresses far more than the conventional formalities. The distinctive Christian grace speaks both of the 'apostolic' authority of the sender and of the divine gifts given to the recipients.

That Paul initiated the epistolary use of the formula—or, at very least, so used it as to give it an unmistakable apostolic stamp—has been clearly seen. If liturgical usage has played its part, this only underlines the role of the letter in the life and witness of the whole church. The continued use of the greeting, with variations, testifies in part to the early Christian writers' awareness of its distinctiveness and significance. Equally, it highlights the way they saw their own task as they sought to maintain the unity of the church against division and in the midst of suffering—for here were at work God's grace and peace; their only authority was the truly 'apostolic' authority of proclaiming those gifts and standing in succession to the first apostles.