

Die Gedankeneinheit des ersten Briefes Petri
Julius Kögel
The Princeton Theological Review 1:472-476. [1903]

The *Beiträge*, published under the editorship of Drs. Schlatter and Cremer, have already during their six years of existence yielded many a valuable contribution to theological research. The installment before us is a fine sample of the thorough work which we have learned to expect from this periodical, of which almost every number consists of a single treatise, worked out with greater fullness of detail than would be possible in an ordinary magazine article. The internal structure of the First Epistle of Peter furnishes the subject for the present investigation. Commentators have from the earliest times experienced difficulty in tracing the progress of thought in this epistle. To a certain extent its practical hortatory character accounts for this. But even a production of the most pronounced practical nature, if called forth by a definite historical occasion or situation, must have a certain unity of thought and purpose. The author thinks that hitherto expositors have not succeeded in discovering this practical organizing principle which holds together the several parts of the epistle. The very fact that there is such a principle of coherency underlying the parenetical material has been denied, and denied in the interest of the view that the letter is a late compilation, in which Pauline and other trains of thought are mechanically joined together, so as to obliterate their original meaning and connection. Dr. Kögel clearly sees that the Petrine authorship can be satisfactorily vindicated only when this stigma is removed from the epistle, by it being shown that here we have not a case of weak imitation but of spiritual originality, which has left its impress upon every utterance of the writer. Of course, this does not involve the denial that the influence of Paul's teaching is clearly traceable. Dr. Kögel believes that it was probably addressed by the Apostle Peter to the largely Gentile Christian congregations of Asia Minor—not at a date before Paul had exercised his missionary activity in that region, as Weiss assumes, but afterward, yet not later than the reign of Nero. This agrees with the position of Zahn in his *Einleitung*, but Dr. Kögel throws new light upon this position and adds strength to it by his inquiry into the fundamental thought of the epistle. In instituting this inquiry he warns against seeking the desired unity in the dogmatic system of the writer, and joins in the growing protest against treating the New Testament epistles or groups of epistles as representing so many "theologies." Undoubtedly there are points of view from which this protest is justifiable. We have no right to assume that the New Testament writers brought to each situation which confronted them an elaborate system of doctrine, and that the internal proportions of this system as it stood abstractly before their minds must consequently be reflected in every epistle. Neither have we the right to infer from the absence of certain doctrinal trains of thought in any one epistle, that these trains of thought were foreign to the writer's mind. On the other hand, there is danger that the reaction from the theologizing treatment of the past will land us into a method of dealing with the New Testament which overlooks or underestimates the important part played in its production by a pronounced doctrinal form of thinking. Though it be true that the writer's aim in most cases was purely practical, yet the practical emergencies of the situation in themselves would tend to develop a peculiar perspective of truth. As a matter of fact, the manner in which Dr. Kögel makes the writer of First Peter mould all his exhortations into corollaries of the one idea that dominates his mind, the energy and thoroughness with which he makes him pursue this idea into its most diverse practical bearings, constitute ample warrant for our continuing to speak of a Petrine Theology. That the theology was as much the result of the epistle as the epistle the product of the theology cannot in the least alter the main fact, that the theology is there.

The central thought to which reference has been made Dr. Kögel finds in the invisible form in which salvation is possessed by believers in the present world. Of this the *ελπις*-idea, according to some writers the keynote of the epistle, is only one form of expression. This is made clear in the opening chapter of the discussion entitled, "The Point of Departure," pp. 1-30. The author shows that *ελπις* and *πιστις* are not as in Paul coordinated conceptions, but that "hope" is according to our epistle a specific form of "faith." In I, 21, he advocates with much force the rendering "that your faith might be also hope in God," instead of "that your faith and hope might be in God," viz., hope *also* in addition to the "fear" spoken of in p. 16 as constituting the other important element in faith. According to I, 1, the *ελπις* is the life-principle of the Christian, because it is the aim of his regeneration. It is a "living hope," however, because, far from being an idle outlook into the future, it influences and shapes the present life. The idea of hope marks in the writer's view a peculiar interaction between future and present. A dualism exists between what the believer is entitled to become and the outward reality which surrounds him. This dualism, however, is made unavoidable, and at the same time is in principle overcome by the invisible nature of the Christian inheritance. This therefore, as Chapter 1 emphasizes, is the principle from which not only the prominence of "hope" but all other peculiarities in the epistle must be explained.

In the second section, pp. 31-97, the author discusses the important dogmatic conceptions of the epistles in the light of this principle. The importance of the Word results from the fact that it can mediate a salvation, which while real is yet invisible. Correctly we believe the regeneration of which the Word is the instrument is referred to the sphere of the spiritual consciousness: it means the introduction into a world of new views and hopes. When, however, in connection with this, Dr. Kögel makes an attack upon what he designates "the physiological conception of regeneration," he seems to us to forget the caution so carefully laid down by himself, viz., that the doctrinal ideas of the writer should not be explained as derived from an antecedently existing complete system. The implication of the attack clearly is that back of all the New Testament references to *αναγεννησις* there lies a fixed dogmatic conception of regeneration such as is found in theology. As a matter of fact the New Testament writers do not all understand the same thing by this term, and the confusion of thought will not cease until this is clearly recognized. 1 Peter 1:3, 23 cannot prove anything against the "physiological" nature of what is described in John 3:3, 5. The author here walks in the footsteps of Cremer. Besides this he interprets Peter as deriving all grace from the sole activity of the Word within which the Spirit appears shut up, as it were. In the later discussion this is carried through to the point of denial that any *χαρισματα* apart from the Word exist, and in 4:10 "the manifold grace of God" is accordingly understood of the natural equipment possessed by the readers, to which the illumination of the truth first imparts the character of grace. To us this seems a hyper-spiritualization little in accord with the massive thinking of the Apostolic age. While it is true that Christianity is in our epistle on the whole viewed as a conscious spiritual possession, this should not be pressed so far as virtually to exclude the deeper mystical aspect which it bears in Paul and John. The invisible character of the present salvation thus having for its result the staking of everything upon the Word, all contact with the truth inevitably becomes of decisive importance. This idea is actually made very prominent in the epistle, and Dr. Kögel points out the close correspondence between 1 Peter and Hebrews in this respect, a correspondence most obvious in this that both speak of the word as "living." Further, here, the author believes, lies the source of the doctrine of Christ's descent into Hades, inasmuch as universal judgment requires universal contact with the Gospel. In a very illuminating

paragraph the epistle's conception of the difference between the Old and the New Testament is unfolded as determined by the manner in which under each dispensation the Word stands related to the reality of salvation. Under the Old Testament it mediates an invisible salvation existing only as yet in promise, under the New an invisible salvation existing fully realized in heaven. We do not believe, however, that in 1:11, in "the Spirit of Christ" which was in the prophets, the mere absence of the article before Χριστου compels us to think of the historic Christ and exclude the reference to the Spirit as sent forth by the preexistent Christ. Still Dr. Kögel does not mean to deny that the writer of the epistle believes in the preexistence of Christ, although even in connection with 1:20 he is willing to speak of a probability only. Next a careful inquiry is made into the manner in which the Spirit-bearing word enters into the heart of man, and under this rubric the role played in the epistle of the contrast between σαρξ and πνευμα is discussed. Briefly stated the conclusion amounts to this: that man is naturally both flesh and spirit; that the former is equivalent to his externality and connects him with the visible sensual world, the world of man, whence it also is the seat of suffering and sin, whereas the latter constitutes his internal being, by which he is related to God and receptive to the divine revelation. In other words, the underlying principle of the distinction is this, that the invisible internal is for the present state the sphere of the believer's true religious life. Christianity consists in exalting the hidden inner life of the πνευμα and suppressing the visible external life of the σαρξ (cf. 3:3). It is worth while to notice here how inevitably the view which binds the operation of the Spirit absolutely to the Word is driven into positing a better element in the natural man, to which this noetically operating Spirit can address or attach Himself. If the πνευμα in its contrast with σαρξ is thus psychologically conceived, why is it, we ask, that in 2:11, "the fleshly lusts" are opposed to "the soul" rather than to "the Spirit"? The explanation offered of this in the note on p. 66 is hardly satisfactory. But not merely this contrast between σαρξ and πνευμα, also the epistle's conception of the grace of God is explained, it would seem to us somewhat artificially, from the central thought of invisibility: "God hides Himself . . . behind the heavy thundercloud of calamity and wrath. Over against this it is of great importance to emphasize the divine grace." Undoubtedly the emphasis placed on grace has something to do with the problem of the believer's suffering. But that the writer conceived of the connection in this roundabout, far-fetched way, we cannot bring ourselves to believe. Here Dr. Kögel has worked his discovery for more than it is worth. What is further said by way of analysis of the Petrine conception of grace is very lucid and valuable. The two elements distinguished are those of love and sovereignty. The author observes that, in contrast with Paul, the reference of grace to sin remains on the whole in the background, although it is not entirely overlooked. The remarks about the sovereignty-element in grace are golden words. In the last section of the dogmatic part the viewpoint of invisibility is applied to the Christology of the epistle. Both the resurrection and the second coming are regarded as outward manifestations of a power invisible in itself, whence the latter is called by preference αποκλυψις. From the emphasis placed on the visibility in the resurrection Dr. Kögel draws an argument in favor of Petrine authorship. Even the sufferings of Christ are represented as primarily, in the view of the epistle, a means for revealing the concealed, invisible glory of His love. Here again, while it is perhaps quite possible and legitimate to say that such is the dogmatic background which would naturally belong to the statements in question, it is going too far to affirm that the writer in framing them had this background consciously in mind. This applies likewise to the attempt made to show that the doctrine of the Person of Christ reveals the influence of the same idea. Here the view above commented upon with regard to the contrast between σαρξ and πνευμα is carried through in the exegesis of 3:18, but we are not told clearly whether the πνευμα of Christ was a psychological or charismatic element in Him.

The third chapter of the treatise deals with the parenetical material which forms the main body of the epistle. In a very skillful manner it is shown how the phraseology of 1:1 (εκλεκτοις, παρεπιδημοις, διασπορας) is carefully chosen so as to bring out the ultimate ground of the practical difficulty in which the readers found themselves. Their suffering results from the fact that while yet in the world they are no longer of it. For this suffering, to which the writer endeavors to reconcile them, was of a specific kind, viz., brought upon them by the enmity of the world. And it is an exceedingly acute observation that the most aggravating element in this suffering must have lain in the evil interpretation the world put upon their most sacred solicitude and upon their best-meaning efforts to do it good. Here the invisible, hidden character of their relation to God made itself felt painfully. By way of consolation the apostle refers them to the testimony of conscience, which accounts for the prominence of this conception in the epistle, and on the other hand to the positive effect which such suffering, patiently endured, cannot fail to have in the end upon those who inflict it, which accounts for the typical light in which the passion of Christ is held up to the readers. So far as the believer himself is concerned the solution of the problem is found in this, that the fact of suffering involves the assurance of his true union with God (cf. 4:12-14). Still further, the suffering endured serves for the suppression of the σαρξ and in so far breaks the influence of sin, 4:1. It also leads to the triumphant maintenance and strengthening and so to the verifying of the genuine character of faith in the last day, 1:7. Along each of these lines it is the idea of the invisibility of the present salvation which illumines the problem of suffering. Especially with reference to the nexus between faith and suffering the author shows this very convincingly. In the more general discussion of faith the natural transition from πιστις into ελπις is explained from the provisional invisibility of the object, and Heb. 9:1, quoted in confirmation. In conclusion, the manner in which faith, as the means of appropriating the invisible, determines the Christian's relation to God, the brethren and the world is traced in detail. In this part of the discussion the remarks about the progress of thought in chap. 1:13-17, where the idea of ελπιζειν τελειως leads on to the thought of letting one's self be dominated entirely by the holiness of God, and where the idea of holiness is unfolded as, on the one hand, productive of trust through the fatherhood of God, on the other hand, as productive of fear through his judgeship, are most instructive. To ver. 17, as Dr. Kogel points out, Phil. 2:12 furnishes a striking parallel. The inner connection between ελπις and holiness, in the sense of separation from the world and dedication to God, appears also in 3:5, "the holy women, who hoped in God." In regard to the relation between the brethren, the absence of every visible union is taken to explain the emphasis which the epistle places upon the inner, spiritual coherence and cooperation, an idea which finds classical expression in the figure of the house built of living stones in chap. 2:3-5. Finally, the epistle's view of the Christian's ideal relation toward the world is briefly summed up in the demand of inner separation from its lusts and the conviction that a wholesome, persuasive influence cannot fail to be exerted upon it through this very separation. The invisibility of the inner salvation requires, as it were, a provisional outward embodiment, a disclosure of its hidden power in the καλη αναστροφη of believers in their αγαθοποιειν, through which it will be enabled to affect the world even where the abstract truth as such is resisted.

The fourth chapter inquires on the basis of the foregoing into the plan and structure of the epistle. The fifth is devoted to what the author calls "probabilia with reference to the author, the reader and the date of composition." What these "probabilia" are has been indicated in the foregoing. Particular attention may be called to the skillful way in which Dr. Kögel turns his exegesis of the peculiar phraseology of the title, above commented upon, against the hypothesis of Harnack and others,

according to which this title would be a later addition to the epistle, so that originally it would not have laid any claim to Petrine authorship. In our opinion he has shown irrefutably that the terms employed, such as εκλεκτοις, παρεπιδημοις, διασπορας, are a subtle prelude to and strike the keynote of the most characteristic ideas in the body of the epistle. They must therefore be original. No one else but the writer himself could have so delicately and suggestively introduced his theme. In view of this the choice obviously lies between declaring the epistle a pseudepigraphical product, deliberately sent out under the forged name of Peter, or accepting it as the genuine work of the Apostle. The more clearly this alternative is presented, the more firmly all lovers of the Word of God will cling to the latter position. It is not the least merit of Dr. Kögel's searching investigation that it thus simplifies and narrows down the problem of authorship.