

**‘The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of Peter:
A tradition-historical study of the Akhmîm Gospel Fragment’**

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Abstract

The resurrection of Jesus lies at the very heart of the Christian faith. Apart from its proclamation the movement would have never continued after Jesus’ crucifixion. Belief in the resurrection of Jesus initiated an interesting and developing history of interpretation that entailed clarification, elaboration, and apologetic, usually in response to scepticism and sometimes severe criticism. The present thesis focuses on the history of the understanding of Jesus’ resurrection, particularly as it came to expression in the second century, especially in reference to a work known as the *Gospel of Peter*. Such critical study is necessary, for the resurrection account in this gospel text has been neglected. Even in Paul Foster’s recently published major study, the resurrection is not discussed to any significant degree. This investigation, however, cannot simply begin with the early Church’s proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus; it must investigate the antecedents of this idea, for these antecedents shaped in important ways how the idea was understood.

The thesis proper devotes two chapters (Chapters Two and Three) to the discovery and early assessment of the Akhmîm gospel fragment, a fragment scholars at once assumed was the *Gospel of Peter*, a writing that was condemned by Bishop Serapion at the end of the second century. An important purpose of the thesis is to test this assumption, show how tenuous it is, and to propose better criteria for determining the date and location of the text, of which the Akhmîm fragment is a part. But before directly addressing this difficult question it is necessary to review the emergence of the resurrection idea. This will allow us with greater nuance to place the Akhmîm gospel fragment in its context.

Two chapters (Chapters Four and Five) are devoted to the emergence of the resurrection idea in Israel’s antiquity and in the Second Temple (or intertestamental) period. Chapter Four traces the emergence of afterlife ideas in the old Scriptures of what now constitute the Hebrew Bible. Special attention is given to texts that may hint at bodily resurrection. Chapter Five traces the emergence of resurrection ideas in texts that begin to circulate in the two centuries or so before the time of Jesus. In these texts the hope of bodily resurrection is explicit.

Chapter Six examines the resurrection idea in the writings of the New Testament looking at teaching about the resurrection, stories of resuscitation, and the resurrection of Jesus himself. Special attention is given to the New Testament’s interpretation of passages from the Hebrew Bible in support of the resurrection idea.

Chapters Seven and Eight return to the question of the Akhmîm gospel fragment inquiring on what basis this fifth-century text can be identified with the second-century *Gospel of Peter* and, apart from such identification, can be dated to the second century. It is argued that the Akhmîm fragment can be dated to the second half of the second century not by appeals to the Oxyrhynchus texts 2949 and 4009 but by a comparative