

'Kruger correctly points to the second century as crucial in the formation of what became subsequent Christianity, and the New Testament too. This book will serve readers well in pointing to important developments, issues, writings and people that make the second century essential for the study of Christian origins.'

*Larry Hurtado, Emeritus Professor of New Testament Language,  
Literature and Theology, University of Edinburgh*

'In this well-written study, Michael J. Kruger makes accessible the overlooked, yet fascinating world of second-century Christians. He not only introduces readers to the key texts, figures and modern scholars in the discussion but also the social circumstances in which second-century Christians made their distinct identity claims. Kruger treats complex topics, such as the relationship between Judaism and Christianity, pagan criticisms of Christians or the textual culture of early Christians, with nuance. *Christianity at the Crossroads* is a fantastic introduction to second-century Christianity.'

*Chris Keith, Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity  
St Mary's University, London*

Michael J. Kruger (PhD, University of Edinburgh) is President and Samuel C. Patterson Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity at Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina, USA. He is the author of several books, including *The Question of Canon: Challenging the status quo in the New Testament debate* (IVP Academic, 2013), *Canon Revisited: Establishing the origin and authority of the New Testament books* (Crossway, 2012), and *The Heresy of Orthodoxy: How contemporary culture's fascination with diversity has reshaped our understanding of early Christianity* (Crossway, 2010; co-authored with Andreas Köstenberger). In addition, he is the co-editor of *The Early Text of the New Testament* (Oxford, 2012) and *Gospel Fragments* (Oxford, 2009).

# CHRISTIANITY AT THE CROSSROADS

How the second century shaped  
the future of the Church

MICHAEL J. KRUGER



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Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge  
36 Causton Street  
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# Preface

This modern phenomenon we call Christianity is so enormous – in terms of age, scope and influence – that it is easy for us to think it has always been this way. Or that Christianity had to be this way. We can begin to think that the Christian movement had to prevail. It had to grow. It had to succeed. It was a foregone conclusion. Even more than this, we can begin to think that it had to be this version of Christianity that prevailed. How most Christians think now, what they read now, how they act now – this was the way, we might think, it was always going to be.

But such thinking is a luxury of those who live after the fact. It is only in hindsight that events take on an air of inevitability. For the earliest Christians, the future was not at all certain. It wasn't yet clear whether this new movement was even going to survive. Nor was it clear which books it would read. And it certainly wasn't clear what most Christians would believe. All of this would need to be worked out. And this volume will argue that many of these issues – some of the most critical for the survival of Christianity – were shaped by the events of the second century. In other words, it was the challenges, obstacles and transitions faced by Christians in the second century that, in many ways, would determine the future of the Church for the next two millennia. It was a century (though not the only one) when Christianity stood at a crossroads.

My interest in the second century, however, did not begin with this book. Indeed, many of my prior areas of research – NT canon, apocryphal gospels, transmission of the NT text, the battles over heresy and orthodoxy – all seemed to play out largely (or perhaps most critically) in the second century. And when I looked for a volume that would provide an overall introduction to this critical period, I found that there were very few options. What seemed (to me at least) to be a very important period had received proportionally much less attention than the other centuries of the early Christian movement. My hope is that the current volume will help, at least a little bit, to fill that gap. It is only intended as an introduction – and thus will provide only a general overview of what Christianity was like and what it faced during this century. But hopefully it will spur on more research in the years to come.

I should also note that this current research project increased my appreciation for the second century in an additional (and unexpected) way.

## *Preface*

My research about what second-century Christians were like, and the opposition they received, made me see that there is much more in common between the second-century Church and the twenty-first-century Church (at least in the Western world) than I originally thought. Of course such a statement is a truism of sorts – no doubt every generation of Christians can relate to the early Church in some fashion. Yet, it is hard to miss the fact that Christianity in the modern Western world has lost considerable cultural influence over the last generation and is now facing ever-increasing social and legal pressures. While certainly not comparable to the pressures faced by second-century Christians, the modern Church is being seen more and more as a threat to the social stability of modern society – similar to the way the second-century Church was viewed by the Roman elites. And, at least in this way, there is much that the modern Church can learn from our second-century counterparts. If nothing else, we need to learn (again) what it means to be the Church when we lack social or political standing. And that is something that, sadly, has been largely forgotten.

For a project like this one, I have many people to thank. I am grateful to Philip Law at SPCK for his faithful pursuit of me for this project, and for Dan Reid and his support at IVP Academic. I am thankful for the many who have read portions of this book and provided helpful feedback, including Chuck Hill, Larry Hurtado, Chris Keith, Craig Blomberg, Michael Bird and Andreas Köstenberger. This volume is better because of their input, though I remain responsible for its shortcomings. A word of thanks is also due to my TAs Aaron Ingle and Jason Piland who worked tirelessly on various details in the editing process. Of course, most of all I owe a debt of gratitude to my family. My wife Melissa has been so encouraging and sacrificial over the years as I have holed up in my study writing and doing research. She is truly a saint in every real sense of the word. And my children Emma, John and Kate are part of the reason I write all my books. May this volume (some day) encourage them as they reflect upon Christianity's distinctive and fascinating beginning.

# Abbreviations

<i>1 Apol.</i>	<i>First Apology</i> (Justin Martyr)
<i>1 Clem.</i>	<i>1 Clement</i>
<i>2 Apol.</i>	<i>Second Apology</i> (Justin Martyr)
<i>2 Clem.</i>	<i>2 Clement</i>
<i>ABD</i>	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> (ed. David Noel Freedman; 6 vols; New York: Doubleday, 1992)
<i>Acts John</i>	<i>Acts of John</i>
<i>Acts Paul</i>	<i>Acts of Paul</i>
<i>Acts Pet.</i>	<i>Acts of Peter</i>
<i>AJP</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>Annals</i>	<i>Annals</i> (Tacitus)
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i> (ed. H. Temporini and W. Haase; Berlin, 1972–)
<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Jewish Antiquities</i> (Josephus)
<i>Apol.</i>	<i>Apology</i> (Tertullian)
<i>Apol.</i>	<i>Apology</i> (Aristides)
<i>AThR</i>	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
<i>Autol.</i>	<i>To Autolyclus</i> (Theophilus)
<i>Bapt.</i>	<i>Baptism</i> (Tertullian)
<i>Barn.</i>	<i>Epistle of Barnabas</i>
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</i>
<i>BR</i>	<i>Biblical Research</i>
<i>Cels.</i>	<i>Contra Celsum</i> (Against Celsus, Origen)
<i>Comm. Jo.</i>	<i>Commentary on the Gospel of John</i> (Origen)
<i>Comm. Tit.</i>	<i>Commentary on the Epistle of Titus</i> (Jerome)
<i>De usu partium</i>	<i>On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body</i> (Galen)
<i>Dial.</i>	<i>Dialogue with Trypho</i> (Justin Martyr)
<i>Did.</i>	<i>Didache</i>
<i>Diff. Puls.</i>	<i>On the Difference of Pulses</i> (Galen)
<i>Diogn.</i>	<i>Epistle to Diognetus</i>
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i> (Epistles, Augustine)
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i> (Epistles, Pliny the Younger)

*List of abbreviations*

<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae morales (Moral Epistles, Seneca)</i>
<i>Ep. Apos.</i>	<i>Epistula Apostolorum (Epistle of the Apostles)</i>
<i>Eph.</i>	<i>To the Ephesians (Ignatius)</i>
<i>Epid.</i>	<i>Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching (Irenaeus)</i>
<i>Epist.</i>	<i>Epistulae (Epistles, Jerome)</i>
<i>Exc.</i>	<i>Excerpts from Theodotus (Clement of Alexandria)</i>
<i>ExpT</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
<i>Gos. Phil.</i>	<i>Gospel of Philip</i>
<i>Haer.</i>	<i>Against Heresies (Irenaeus)</i>
<i>Haer.</i>	<i>Refutation of All Heresies (Hippolytus)</i>
<i>Helv.</i>	<i>Adversus Helvidium de Mariae virginitate perpetua (Against Helvidius, on the Perpetual Virginity of Mary, Jerome)</i>
<i>Hist.</i>	<i>History of Rome (Livy)</i>
<i>Hist. eccl.</i>	<i>Historia ecclesiastica (Ecclesiastical History, Eusebius)</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JECS</i>	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
<i>JEH</i>	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
<i>JES</i>	<i>Journal of Ecumenical Studies</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>Leg.</i>	<i>De legibus (On the Laws, Cicero)</i>
<i>Magn.</i>	<i>To the Magnesians (Ignatius)</i>
<i>Mand.</i>	<i>Shepherd of Hermas, Mandate</i>
<i>Marc.</i>	<i>Against Marcion (Tertullian)</i>
<i>Mart. Pol.</i>	<i>Martyrdom of Polycarp</i>
<i>Nat. d.</i>	<i>De Natura Deorum (Nature of the Gods, Cicero)</i>
<i>Neaer.</i>	<i>In Neaeram (Against Neaera, Demosthenes)</i>
<i>Nero</i>	<i>Life of Nero (Suetonius)</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>Oct.</i>	<i>Octavius (Minucius Felix)</i>
<i>Or.</i>	<i>Oration to the Greeks (Tatian)</i>
<i>P&amp;P</i>	<i>Past and Present</i>
<i>Paed.</i>	<i>Paedagogus (Christ the Educator, Clement of Alexandria)</i>
<i>Pan.</i>	<i>Panarion (Refutation of All Heresies, Epiphanius)</i>
<i>Pasch.</i>	<i>Peri Pascha (On the Passover, Melito of Sardis)</i>

*List of abbreviations*

<i>Peregr.</i>	<i>The Passing of Peregrinus</i> (Lucian)
<i>Phil.</i>	<i>To the Philippians</i> (Polycarp)
<i>Phld.</i>	<i>To the Philadelphians</i> (Ignatius)
<i>Pol.</i>	<i>To Polycarp</i> (Ignatius)
<i>Praep. ev.</i>	<i>Praeparatio evangelica</i> ( <i>Preparation for the Gospel</i> , Eusebius)
<i>Praescr.</i>	<i>De praescriptione haereticorum</i> ( <i>Prescription against Heretics</i> , Tertullian)
<i>ProEccl</i>	<i>Pro ecclesia</i>
<i>Quis. div.</i>	<i>Quis dives salvetur</i> ( <i>Who is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved?</i> , Clement of Alexandria)
<i>ResQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
<i>Rom.</i>	<i>To the Romans</i> (Ignatius)
<i>Sat.</i>	<i>Satirae</i> ( <i>Satire</i> , Juvenal)
<i>SBL</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>Scap.</i>	<i>Ad Scapulam</i> ( <i>To Scapula</i> , Tertullian)
<i>SE</i>	<i>Studia Evangelica</i>
<i>SecCent</i>	<i>Second Century</i>
<i>Sim.</i>	<i>Shepherd of Hermas, Similitude</i>
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
<i>Smyrn.</i>	<i>To the Smyrnaeans</i> (Ignatius)
<i>ST</i>	<i>Studia Theologica</i>
<i>Strom.</i>	<i>Stromateis</i> ( <i>Miscellanies</i> , Clement of Alexandria)
<i>TLZ</i>	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
<i>Trad. ap.</i>	<i>Apostolic Traditions</i>
<i>Trall.</i>	<i>To the Tralleans</i> (Ignatius)
<i>Treat. Seth</i>	<i>Second Treatise of the Great Seth</i>
<i>TrinJ</i>	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
<i>TS</i>	<i>Theological Studies</i>
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>VC</i>	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
<i>Vir. ill.</i>	<i>De viris illustribus</i> ( <i>On Illustrious Men</i> , Jerome)
<i>Vis.</i>	<i>Shepherd of Hermas, Vision</i>
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>
<i>ZPE</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>



# Introduction

## *What is so important about the second century?*

Frankly, it was a messy century.

Walter H. Wagner<sup>1</sup>

With followers in the billions, Christianity is the world's largest religion. Every Sunday, believers from all over the globe – from Roman Catholic to Pentecostal – gather together in some fashion to worship Jesus Christ. Spires of churches dominate the skylines of most major cities. Christians are represented in all levels of society, from the richest to the poorest. As an institution, the Christian Church wields substantial influence over major aspects of our modern culture. From ethics to the arts and even to politics, there hardly seems to be an area it has not touched. In short, Christianity is a global phenomenon.

But it was not always so. There was a time, nearly two thousand years ago, when Christianity was in its infancy. It possessed very little cultural influence, was weak and frail, and found itself fighting for its life. Theological formulations were imprecise and undeveloped, factions and 'heresies' were dominant, attacks from pagan philosophers were rampant, and the future was altogether uncertain. On top of all of this, Christianity was, for the first time, moving forward without the direct guidance of living apostles and still did not yet have a fully formed New Testament canon.

When was this time? It was the second century. This particular block of time is one of the most critical in the life of the Church – perhaps the moment when it was most vulnerable. It is what we might call the *transitional* century for the early Christian faith. The Church was out of the apostolic womb and now trying to take its first breath. Like a new-born animal on the Serengeti plains, Christians found themselves in a dangerous world. As Walter Wagner observed, 'The second century was a time of sharp disappointments, gradual adjustments, bitter controversies, and grave hazards for Christian communities.'<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Walter F. Wagner, *After the Apostles: Christianity in the second century* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Wagner, *After the Apostles*, 1.

It is ironic, however, that within the study of early church history (first five centuries), the second century has arguably received the least attention from modern scholars. Christianity in the first century, of course, has been extensively studied, primarily through the lens of the New Testament writings themselves, our earliest Christian texts. And the third and fourth centuries (and beyond) have generated quite a bit of scholarly attention because, by that time, Christianity's presence and influence was on the rise. The new religion was no longer new; it had a substantial leadership base (e.g., Origen, Eusebius, Athanasius), its doctrinal disagreements were being hammered out (e.g., the Council of Nicaea), and the boundaries of the New Testament canon had largely solidified. Such developments have given historians much to study and explore. But the second century, bracketed by these two well-known periods of church history, has been all too easily overlooked. As Everett Ferguson observed, 'In spite of its importance, the second century is a period inadequately understood in its own right. It might even be said to have been a neglected period.'<sup>3</sup>

### Currents in the study of the second century

Of course, there have been exceptions to this general pattern of neglect. But we can only note a few examples here. If we look to some older works, we might think of William Cunningham's volume, *The Churches of Asia: A methodological sketch of the second century* (Macmillan, 1880) which covers a number of aspects of church life during this time, including ecclesiological structure, battles with heretical groups like Gnosticism, and even church discipline. But needless to say, it is considerably out of date. We might also note the second volume of Philip Carrington's two-volume church history entitled *The Second Christian Century* (Cambridge, 1957), but this was simply part of a larger work and now too is out of date. In the early 1980s, a group of scholars came together to start a new journal, entitled *The Second Century*, which was devoted to studying precisely this area. This was certainly a step in the right direction, but the narrow focus of the second century could not be sustained and the title of the journal was eventually changed to the *Journal of Early Christian Studies*.

One of the most helpful overviews of the second century would certainly be K. W. Tröger's *Das Christentum im zweiten Jahrhundert* (Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1988). Tröger covers many of the same subjects of the current volume – Christianity within the Roman Empire, Christian literary

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<sup>3</sup> E. Ferguson, 'A New Journal', *SecCent* 1 (1981), 3–4.

production, theological diversity and even early Christian worship. But, in addition to being nearly 30 years old, it remains inaccessible to many in the English-speaking world. Walter H. Wagner's *After the Apostles: Christianity in the second century* (Fortress Press, 1994) covers many of the main figures and theological disputes during this critical period, but gives little attention to other important issues, such as the development of the canon and the transmission of the New Testament text.

Of course, there have been countless works that cover just one particular aspect of the second century. For example, Eric Osborn's *The Emergence of Christian Theology* (Cambridge, 1993), focuses on the theological developments of early Christians largely through the lens of key second-century figures such as Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian. In a similar vein, *Christianity in the Second Century: The case of Tatian* (Routledge, 2003) by Emily J. Hunt offers much helpful material about Tatian, his theology and his place in early Christianity. Also looking at just a slice of this period is *Paul and the Second Century*, edited by Michael F. Bird and Joseph Dodson (T&T Clark, 2011), which examines the influence and use of Paul in the second century from a variety of perspectives. Examining just the text of the Gospels in this century is *The Gospel Traditions of the Second Century: Origins, recension, text, and transmission*, edited by W. L. Petersen (Notre Dame, 1989). More recently, Judith Lieu's *Marcion and the Making of a Heretic: God and Scripture in the second century* (Cambridge, 2015) explores the person and theology of Marcion during this critical period through the lens of the heresiologists that critiqued him. However, all of these works (and more could be added), as helpful as they are, are fairly narrowly focused on just one aspect of the broader second-century phenomenon.

Larry Hurtado's recent volume, *Destroyer of the Gods: Early Christian distinctiveness in the Roman world* (Baylor, 2016), should also be mentioned. While this volume does not intend to be, like the present volume, a broader introduction to the second century, it does cover some of the same ground. Hurtado focuses upon the characteristics which made Christianity unique or distinctive within its Greco-Roman context, and thus explores some of the same issues I cover below; e.g., early Christian worship, intellectual and political persecution, and the 'bookish' nature of the early Christian movement. Hurtado's volume was published just as this volume was being completed (autumn, 2016), so I had little opportunity to utilize its excellent content. But even in my quick read through a pre-published version of the book, I was encouraged to see that our conclusions were remarkably similar. Of course, the volumes are also

different in a number of ways. As will be seen below, this current volume also covers more sociological dimensions of early Christianity, specific elements of Christian worship (baptism, Lord's Supper, house churches), the emergence of the episcopal church structure, the battles over heresy and orthodoxy, and the state of the NT canon and text in the second century.

Another encouraging sign of renewed interest in the second century is the (very) recently published volume, *Christianity in the Second Century: Themes and developments*, edited by James Carleton Paget and Judith Lieu (Cambridge University Press, 2017). This volume contains a collection of papers given at a 2013 conference held at Cambridge University entitled, 'The Christian Second Century'. Unfortunately, this volume was published just as the current book was headed to press and I was unable to engage with what looks to be a rich trove of essays. Of course, it is a very different volume from the current one, since it is a collection of academic papers from various authors on a wide range of technical subjects.

This all-too-brief survey can certainly not do justice to the vast number of scholarly works that have touched on the second century in some fashion. But it nonetheless provides the necessary backdrop to understand the purpose of this volume, namely to build upon these earlier studies and to take a further (and deeper) step into the second century of Christianity. While the aforementioned volumes have proved to be a great help in this regard, there is no updated, single-volume resource for students (or scholars) that addresses the broad range of issues faced by Christians in this century and this century only. This present volume is structured to accomplish precisely that goal. It is certainly not intended to be the final word on the subject – on the contrary, it is designed to generate many *more* words on this subject, as interest in the second century (hopefully) increases.

### Key issues in second-century Christianity

With this very selective survey in mind, we now turn to the distinctive issues faced by second-century Christians that justify more scholarly attention on this oft-overlooked century. In prior generations of scholars, the second century has sometimes been viewed as a time period when Christianity was simply taking the next step in its inevitable march towards dominance and institutionalization as it easily swatted away heretical groups like the 'Gnostics' and rallied around a fixed 'orthodoxy'. Such an approach, particularly in light of the work of Walter Bauer, has been rightly critiqued as overly simplistic and not accounting for the complexity and diversity of the second

century.<sup>4</sup> We must be careful not to study second-century Christianity as if its future were already predetermined. That said, we must also be careful of the opposite mistake. The diversity and complexity of this time period does not necessitate a view where the Christian movement is merely stuck in a morass of conflict and does not change or develop at all. It is not illegitimate to ask how (and why) early Christianity might have looked different at the end of the second century from how it did at the beginning of it.

In light of these considerations, it might be helpful to describe the second century as a period of *transitions*. Of course, this doesn't mean that everything in the second century was different from the first (or from the third). On the contrary, we shall see below that many first-century trends continue on into the second century and beyond. Nor does it mean that these transitions were neat and tidy, all aimed toward a predetermined end point. Nevertheless, we can say that Christians during this period stood at a crossroads: the changes and challenges they faced, and how they would respond to them, would (re)shape the Christian movement for years to come. Here we shall briefly outline some of these transitions which, of course, will be fleshed out further in the subsequent chapters in the book.

### **Sociological transition**

As will be discussed in Chapter 1, the sociological make-up of Christianity in the second century is worthy of more scholarly attention. In particular, the second century marks a time when distinctions between Judaism and Christianity were more established and visible. Christianity was viewed less and less as a sect within Judaism and had begun to achieve its own distinctive identity within the Greco-Roman world. Consequently, the second-century Church proved to have a large (if not dominant) population of Gentiles that brought with it a number of intellectual and cultural challenges. This demographic shift allowed Christianity to reshape the standard definition of 'religion' in the Greco-Roman world. Whereas most religions were seen as tightly bound to a particular ethnic or national identity, Christianity was adopted by a variety of people groups, crossing the standard boundaries. In a rather unprecedented fashion, Christianity now allowed religion to be conceived as an entity independent of the ethnic-cultural components that were normally (and inevitably) attached to it. This chapter also explores the educational and economic status of early Christians, as well as the popularity of Christianity among women.

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<sup>4</sup> E.g., see W. Löhr, 'Das antike Christentum im zweiten Jahrhundert: neue Perspektiven seiner Erforschung', *TLZ* 127 (2002), 249–62.

## **Cultural-political transition**

The second century proved to be a time when Christianity found itself immersed deeply in a 'pluralistic' world – very different from both the Jewish world into which it was born and the later Christian Empire it would become under Constantine. Due to the fact that Christianity was now more visible as its own 'religion' (if that term is even applicable), it garnered additional attention from the governing authorities and intellectual leaders in the Greco-Roman world. Although Christians had already begun to suffer persecution from the Roman government in the first century (e.g., under Nero), the barrage of attacks in the second century would prove to be substantial. Chapter 2 explores how Christianity's commitment to exclusive, monotheistic worship of Jesus was viewed as not only culturally peculiar and intellectually wanting, but also as politically subversive and a threat to the stability of the Roman state. Consequently, governing authorities began to arrest and (at times) even execute Christians – often at the behest of the Roman mob – and the intellectual elites began to attack Christianity's philosophical credibility. This situation gave rise to the second-century apologists who pushed back on a number of fronts, defending and explaining the infant Christian faith to all who would listen. As a result, the second century would prove to be the 'golden age' of apologetics. Or as Eric Osborn put it, 'Christian philosophy begins here in the second century.'<sup>5</sup>

It is worth noting that this particular feature of second-century Christianity makes it especially relevant for the modern reader of this volume. Given that we, too, live in a pluralistic society, we are asking questions that sound more like the questions asked by second-century Christians than by fourth- or fifth-century Christians. Such questions include 'Is there a god?', 'How many gods are there?', 'How can we know this God?', and 'Are all religions the same?' The second century was the time when Christians began to develop more well-rounded answers to these questions.

## **Ecclesiological transition**

As the Church began to grow and expand, Christians faced an additional challenge of how it would operate and how its leadership would be structured. Before long, there would be multiple Christian congregations in individual cities, raising questions about how they would be governed and how they would relate to each other. Moreover, churches were facing doctrinal disagreements and divisions (more on this below) which required

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<sup>5</sup> Eric Osborn, *The Beginning of Christian Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 1.

strong and steady leadership. Chapter 3 explores how these challenges led to a transition in ecclesiastical structure. While the evidence suggests the first-century Church was largely led by a plurality of elders/presbyters, by the end of the second century that structure had changed considerably. At some point during the second century, churches began to be ruled by a singular bishop (as opposed to a plurality of elders) – what some would call a ‘monoepiscopate’. This chapter also explores the particular elements of early Christian worship and how that made these new believers distinct from the broader religious context out of which they came. The overall transition in ecclesiology and worship allowed Everett Ferguson to observe, ‘The second century was the time when the form of ministry assumed the shape which was to become traditional in church history.’<sup>6</sup>

### Doctrinal-theological transition

Perhaps the most dominant feature of second-century Christianity, and certainly one promoted by Walter Bauer and his followers, is its profound doctrinal and theological diversity. This century witnessed an explosion of what might be called ‘heresies’ (e.g., Marcionism, Gnosticism, Montanism, the Ebionites) and ‘heretics’ (e.g., Basilides, Valentinus, Ptolemy, Heracleon, Theodotus). In battle with these groups and individuals were ‘orthodox’ writers such as Polycarp, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria. And these writers appealed to what is known as the ‘rule of faith’ – a widespread and well-established summary of the apostolic teaching that had been passed down to the churches. Thus, the second century was a battleground where different versions of Christianity were competing for the right to be regarded as the authentic (or original) version of the faith. It is for these reasons that Lieu argues that ‘the second century was a period of intersecting paths moving in different directions, with as yet no obvious main road or right direction’.<sup>7</sup> Again, this is another way of saying second-century Christianity stood at a crossroads. In Chapters 4 and 5, we shall explore this issue of theological diversity and unity in early Christianity and its implications for understanding whether terms like ‘heresy’ and ‘orthodoxy’ are meaningful and relevant for this period.

### Textual-canonical transition

Closely related to the emergence of debates over heresy and orthodoxy is the emergence of debates over text and canon. The second century was

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<sup>6</sup> E. Ferguson, ‘Church Order in the Sub-Apostolic Period: A survey of interpretations’, *ResQ* 11 (1968), 225.

<sup>7</sup> Judith Lieu, *Marcion and the Making of a Heretic: God and Scripture in the second century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 11.

*List of abbreviations*

<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae morales (Moral Epistles, Seneca)</i>
<i>Ep. Apos.</i>	<i>Epistula Apostolorum (Epistle of the Apostles)</i>
<i>Eph.</i>	<i>To the Ephesians (Ignatius)</i>
<i>Epid.</i>	<i>Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching (Irenaeus)</i>
<i>Epist.</i>	<i>Epistulae (Epistles, Jerome)</i>
<i>Exc.</i>	<i>Excerpts from Theodotus (Clement of Alexandria)</i>
<i>ExpT</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
<i>Gos. Phil.</i>	<i>Gospel of Philip</i>
<i>Haer.</i>	<i>Against Heresies (Irenaeus)</i>
<i>Haer.</i>	<i>Refutation of All Heresies (Hippolytus)</i>
<i>Helv.</i>	<i>Adversus Helvidium de Mariae virginitate perpetua (Against Helvidius, on the Perpetual Virginity of Mary, Jerome)</i>
<i>Hist.</i>	<i>History of Rome (Livy)</i>
<i>Hist. eccl.</i>	<i>Historia ecclesiastica (Ecclesiastical History, Eusebius)</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JECS</i>	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
<i>JEH</i>	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
<i>JES</i>	<i>Journal of Ecumenical Studies</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>Leg.</i>	<i>De legibus (On the Laws, Cicero)</i>
<i>Magn.</i>	<i>To the Magnesians (Ignatius)</i>
<i>Mand.</i>	<i>Shepherd of Hermas, Mandate</i>
<i>Marc.</i>	<i>Against Marcion (Tertullian)</i>
<i>Mart. Pol.</i>	<i>Martyrdom of Polycarp</i>
<i>Nat. d.</i>	<i>De Natura Deorum (Nature of the Gods, Cicero)</i>
<i>Neaer.</i>	<i>In Neaeram (Against Neaera, Demosthenes)</i>
<i>Nero</i>	<i>Life of Nero (Suetonius)</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>Oct.</i>	<i>Octavius (Minucius Felix)</i>
<i>Or.</i>	<i>Oration to the Greeks (Tatian)</i>
<i>P&amp;P</i>	<i>Past and Present</i>
<i>Paed.</i>	<i>Paedagogus (Christ the Educator, Clement of Alexandria)</i>
<i>Pan.</i>	<i>Panarion (Refutation of All Heresies, Epiphanius)</i>
<i>Pasch.</i>	<i>Peri Pascha (On the Passover, Melito of Sardis)</i>