

*Christianity at the Crossroads:
How the Second Century Shaped
the Future of the Church*
Available March 6, 2018
\$30, 256 pages, paperback
978-0-8308-5203-1

Christianity at the Crossroads provides an accessible and informative look at the complex and foundational issues faced by an infant church still trying to determine its identity. The church's response to the issues of heresy and orthodoxy, the development of the canon, and the transmission of the Christian Scriptures not only determined its survival, but determined the kind of church it would be for generations to come.

The Most Vulnerable Time for the Christian Faith

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.'

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.'

— Taken from the introduction

 INTERVARSITY PRESS

Visit ivpress.com/media

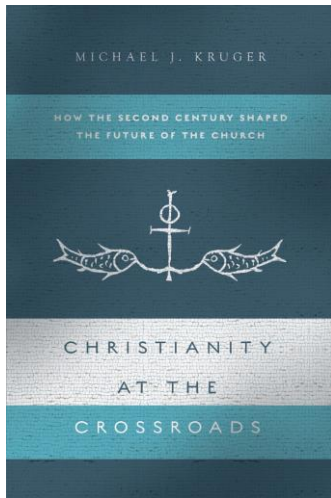


**FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO SCHEDULE AN INTERVIEW CONTACT THE
INTERVARSITY PRESS PUBLICITY TEAM:**

Alisse Wissman, print publicity, at 800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or awissman@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, broadcast and online publicity, at 800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com

ivpress.com/academic



*Christianity at the Crossroads:
How the Second Century Shaped
the Future of the Church*
Available March 6, 2018
\$30, 256 pages, paperback
978-0-8308-5203-1

Michael Kruger's introductory survey examines how Christianity took root in the second century, how it battled to stay true to the vision of the apostles, and how it developed in ways that would shape both the church and Western culture over the next two thousand years.

Kruger Offers Fresh Insight into “The Black Box of Christian History”

“Kruger takes us into a world in which ‘Christianity’ is still very much at risk and up for grabs, struggling to find its identity in the midst of forces within and without seeking to define its identity or suppress its existence. His book invites us into the tensions and trajectories that would eventually give shape to what we, in distant retrospect, take for granted as Christian faith, practice, and polity. I recommend it highly, alongside the texts that have richly informed it (the apostolic fathers, the early martyrologies, and the apologists), to all those interested in learning how ‘New Testament faith’ found its footing and began to take root.”

—David A. deSilva, trustees' distinguished professor of New Testament and Greek, Ashland Theological Seminary

“If you’ve ever wondered what happened to the church after the apostles, how the church began to expand and grow, and why it developed its particular beliefs, then Michael Kruger has written the book for you. In this learned volume, Kruger takes readers into the mysterious second century, where he lucidly explains things like the formation of a distinctive Christian identity, pagan responses to Christianity, the rise of certain heresies, and the canonization of the New Testament. This book will open a whole new world that you never knew existed!”

—Michael F. Bird, lecturer in theology, Ridley College, Melbourne, Australia

“This is a good introduction and overview of Christianity in the second century, which was a crucial period of growth, opposition, and development of doctrines and practices. Readable and informed, Kruger’s book is a recommended choice for course readings and for individuals seeking to know more about early Christianity.”

—Larry W. Hurtado, professor emeritus of New Testament language, literature, and theology, School of Divinity (New College), University of Edinburgh

“Though most of us are pretty sure that something happened between the apostolic era and the Council of Nicaea, even professional historians can be pretty foggy on what that ‘something’ was or why it matters; the second century has always been the black box of Christian history. Now with this well-researched yet highly accessible book, Kruger recovers important flight data that shows just how crucial this overlooked trajectory is to understanding Christian history and even Christianity as we know it today.”

—Nicholas Perrin, Franklin S. Dyrness Professor of Biblical Studies, Wheaton Graduate School

INTERVARSITY PRESS
Visit ivpress.com/media



FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO SCHEDULE AN INTERVIEW CONTACT THE INTERVARSITY PRESS PUBLICITY TEAM:

Alisse Wissman, print publicity, at 800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or awissman@ivpress.com
Krista Clayton, broadcast and online publicity, at 800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com
ivpress.com/academic



ENDORSEMENTS



Michael J. Kruger (PhD, University of Edinburgh) is president and professor of New Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina. His recent publications include *The Question of Canon* and *The Early Text of the New Testament*, coedited with Charles E. Hill.

michaeljkruger.com

"The second century, a sprawling, fascinating, and formative period in the history of Christianity, may be well studied, but it is neither well nor easily comprehended. Mike Kruger's Christianity at the Crossroads is an excellent remedy for that problem! Any reader who wants a better understanding of the situation of the church in that period, its place in the world, its worship, its struggles, and its Scriptures will benefit from this highly informative compendium. Besides being a trustworthy guidebook, it is also a well-designed, source book for those interested in further study."

— Charles E. Hill, John R. Richardson Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity, Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando

"Many scholars of early Christianity are pushing beyond the New Testament era, into the second century; however, the complexity of issues magnifies due to the intersection of such a diverse expression of Christian groups interpreting biblical texts and developing their approaches to theology and society. With Christianity at the Crossroads, Michael Kruger provides an orientation to the diversity of groups, texts, and practices that students and scholars of Christian origins will find invaluable. He summarizes the best of contemporary research about second-century Christianity and provides robust bibliographies for further study. This is definitely a book I wish I had a decade ago, when I began my work in this area."

— Ben C. Blackwell, assistant professor of Christianity, Houston Baptist University