

Part 7

After the New Testament

Christianity in the Second Century

Luke Drake

Imagine that two thousand years from now a group of historians want to understand Latter-day Saint history and culture from 1918 to 2018. Suppose, however, that the only resources these historians have available to them are a copy of the April general conference report from 1975; several posts from a variety of blogs and from Facebook (with comments); a few dozen copies of sacrament meeting talks from Church members in Bolivia, Ghana, Indonesia, and Argentina; an excerpt from a sermon given by Chieko Okazaki; a handful of articles from the *Salt Lake Tribune*; a letter from the First Presidency discussing safety in Church activities; an op-ed on California's Proposition 8 from the *New York Times*; a collection of talks given by President Boyd K. Packer; and a Sunday School manual in Spanish that was published in 1940. If these were the only resources that these future people had at their disposal, what sort of portrait could and would they draw of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries? In what ways would their understandings of Latter-day Saint religion and culture be incomplete? What questions would be ultimately unanswerable?

In some ways, scholars of second-century Christianity (AD 100–200) face a similar predicament. What we can say about Christianity in this period is the product of a relatively sparse amount of surviving historical evidence. For example, other than several dozen ancient writings, no Christian archaeological evidences survive from the first or second century—no buildings, no paintings, no sculptures, no pottery, nothing.¹ Our only surviving evidences of Christian groups in this period are literary in nature: some letters, some

fictional texts, some Christian regulatory handbooks, some sermons that would have been delivered in a worship setting, some Christian critiques of Jews and pagans, and so on.² What this means for us is that in order to tell the story of second-century Christianity, we must take an extremely close and critical look at the surviving literature of the period and then do our best to extrapolate cautiously from that literature in order to find answers to our questions. In fact, we may even have to acknowledge that some questions cannot be readily answered based on the extant evidence.

Therefore, while the questions that this chapter will address are seemingly simple, answering them is at times complicated and challenging. What would life have been like for a Christian in the second century? What did second-century Christians believe about God and Jesus and humankind's relationship to the divine? How did these early Christians practice their Christianity? What were their churches and church services like? Were they persecuted? If not, why do we hear so much about early Christian persecutions? If so, how did they respond to these persecutions? What was the role of women in Christian communities? What was the status of scripture? For the past couple of centuries, brilliant scholars (largely from, but not limited to, Europe and the United States) have devoted themselves to answering these questions by means of the handful of literary evidences that survive from this time. In this chapter I will briefly discuss several questions in turn, addressing only the broadest strokes of scholarship.

What Did Second-Century Christians Believe?

One of the characteristics of second-century Christianity is the remarkable degree of diversity that we find on any number of theological issues.³ Questions regarding the nature of God and of Jesus, the contours of scripture, religious practice, church authority structures, the role of women, and so forth were variously answered and contested by Christian groups throughout the empire. In other words, when considering the question What did second-century Christians believe? we must likewise ask, Which Christians? When? Where?

To give a sense of the significance and complexity of the diverse beliefs and practices in this period, let's examine just a few theological questions that were under dispute (these questions would reverberate for centuries) and examine only a few of the ways they were addressed within just one city, Rome. The questions to be considered are: What was the nature of Jesus Christ? More specifically, to what degree was he human? To what degree was he divine? What sort of body did he have, and what were the implications of Christ's body for his followers (and their respective bodies)?

While Christians were very much in the minority when compared to their non-Christian and Jewish counterparts in the middle of the second century AD,⁴ they appear to have achieved a solid foothold in the empire's capital, Rome.⁵ Among the Christians who lived in Rome at this time were three important intellectual figures—Marcion, Valentinus, and Justin Martyr—each of whom disagreed strongly with one another on the question of Christ's nature and whose theological views very likely represented a significant number of

Christians in Rome at that time. To demonstrate the variety of ways in which second-century Christians understood their theology, we shall briefly examine the belief systems of each of these three figures.

Marcion (active ca. AD 140–150)

Marcion was a wealthy Christian shipowner from Asia Minor who moved to Rome and immediately became an influential part of the Christian cause, in part through a generous donation of money that he made to the Roman church.⁶ By AD 144, however, he appears to have been expelled from his congregation, and his financial offerings were allegedly returned to him. Marcion's expulsion, it seems, was connected to his position on a number of theological issues. In a book that he entitled *Antitheses*, Marcion made the case that the God of the Jewish scriptures, the creator of this material realm, was *not* the same God as the God of Jesus. For whereas the God of the Jewish scriptures was wrathful, the God of Jesus was merciful and forgiving; whereas the God of Jewish scripture ordered the destruction of entire populations of people, the God of Jesus instructed his disciples to love one's enemies. Marcion, in effect, was proposing the existence of not one God, but *two*: a lower God, as depicted in the Old Testament and that was worshipped by the Jews, and a higher God, as revealed by the teachings of Jesus, to whom true Christians devoted themselves.

Marcion's differentiation, then, between the true God of Jesus and the wrathful God of Jewish scripture affected how he perceived the nature of Jesus and his role in human salvation. Jesus, according to Marcion, had *not* come to the world on behalf of the God of the Jewish scriptures but rather to redeem humanity *from* the God of the Jewish scriptures. Furthermore, because the God of the Jewish scriptures had created the material realm, and because Jesus had nothing to do with that God, Jesus, then, had nothing to do with the material realm. As such, for Marcion, Jesus was a fully divine being, sent from the true God, who only *appeared* to have a material body. Jesus only *appeared* to eat, drink, and suffer in the flesh. As a fully divine being, he did not actually participate in these material activities. Christianity then, for Marcion, entailed abandoning the lesser deity of Judaism (including renouncing the Old Testament)⁷ and worshipping the true God that had sent Jesus to this material realm. Marcion's message and evangelizing activities were profoundly influential, attracting large numbers of adherents throughout the empire, especially in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey).

Valentinus (ca. AD 100–ca. 175)

Valentinus was a creative Christian teacher, philosopher, and writer, probably trained in Alexandria, Egypt, and active in Rome in the middle of the second century.⁸ In Rome he founded his own school of Christian thought, which would go on to produce a large number of Christian philosophical figures in later decades. Valentinus's theological system (often described as "gnostic") is far too complicated to discuss here—indeed, there are relatively few scholars who are capable of treating Valentinus's material with the sort of philosophical

rigor that it demands—but we can, at the very least, make mention of a few of his views on the nature of Jesus.⁹

Valentinus taught that salvation was attained by knowledge of, or acquaintance with, the Father, God. The messenger that brought this saving knowledge, or *gnosis*, to humanity was the Word, or the Son, Christ, who took on a body in the form of Jesus of Nazareth. In other words, Valentinus argued that Christ was entirely divine and that he incorporated a body, albeit one of a superior nature to those of everyday men and women. Most famously, perhaps, Valentinus is said to have opined on Jesus's divine essence in this way: "He was continent, enduring all things. Jesus digested divinity: he ate and drank in a special way. . . . He had such a great capacity for continence that the nourishment in him was not corrupted; for he did not experience corruption."¹⁰ While discussions of Jesus's digestive processes may seem strange or even inappropriate to readers today, it reflects a deep concern held by many ancient people regarding the nature of God, the body, material existence, and so forth. It appears that, for Valentinus, Jesus was endowed with a special sort of body—one made up of fiery materials that were capable of destroying whatever food the body took in.¹¹

Justin Martyr (ca. AD 100–165)

Justin Martyr¹² was born to Greek parents in Samaria and also had the very rare opportunity to be educated in the Greek philosophical tradition. At some point in the early second century, he converted to Christianity and eventually arrived in Rome, where he (like Valentinus) started his own Christian philosophical school. Justin wrote several works after becoming a Christian, a handful of which survive today.

Justin also made his own particular case for the nature of Christ—a case that will sound much more familiar to contemporary Christian readers since it resembles some of what was codified in later Christian centuries. Like Marcion and Valentinus, he proclaimed that Jesus was a divine being. Unlike his two contemporaries, however, Justin also advocated for Jesus's full humanity: he was born into flesh and blood, he developed from infancy into manhood, he ate real food, he suffered, and he eventually experienced death. Jesus was *both* human and divine.¹³ Justin's view, to some degree, would eventually become the dominant view held by most Christians in later centuries.

My purpose in offering this comparative overview of a few theological positions of these three ancient Christians is to make the very simple point that the belief systems of second-century Christians cannot be reduced to one set of beliefs. In fact, these three viewpoints represent only a fraction of the positions held by Christians in the second century on a single set of theological questions regarding the nature of Christ. We have evidences of competing positions held by other Christians at the same time in different locations: some Christians, for instance, believed that Jesus was born as a mortal but later *became* God's Son at the time of his baptism on account of his extraordinary degree of righteousness. Still others believed that "Jesus" and "the Christ" were entirely separate entities: Jesus was a mortal man who became inhabited by "the Christ," a divine entity that lived within the mortal

tabernacle of Jesus for the duration of its divine ministry. Shortly before the Crucifixion, the immortal Christ departed from the mortal Jesus, leaving him to die on the cross. The list goes on.

Scholars have written countless books attempting to lay out the manifold religious views and practices of second-century Christians: everything from early Christian views on the divine realm, salvation, church organization, ritual practice, sexual ethics, the role of women, and so forth.¹⁴ The point in all of this, then, is that the category of “Christian” in the second century is a capacious one, comprising a variety of beliefs and practices depending, in part, on where one lived and on the traditions and sensibilities of one’s particular Christian community.

An Aside on Early Christian Diversity

As an aside, it may be tempting for Latter-day Saints to presume that the diversity of thought and practice that we see in second-century Christianity was simply the product of a kind of general apostasy, understood as the consequence of people sinfully turning away from the original teachings of the apostles. This is a view maintained by many contemporary Christians, that is, that the Christian movement in the apostolic age—as reflected in the New Testament—was unified in its theology and practice and that second-century Christianity represents the proliferation of aberrant and schismatic beliefs.¹⁵ In other words, many Christians today suppose that in the era of the New Testament, the early disciples of Jesus had all the answers on what a Christian should do and believe and that this early system was altered by the introduction of false ideas in later centuries.

In order to gain a more sophisticated picture of the historical situation, contemporary readers should remember a few things. First, the answers to many of the theological questions faced by second-century Christians were not at all obvious, in part because many of them were never addressed in the early years of the “Jesus movement.” Paul, for instance, wrote several letters that were viewed by many second-century Christians as authoritative; none of these letters, however, offer an extended treatise on the nature of Jesus.

Second, contemporary Christians should likewise remember that at this time there was no universally fixed canon of scripture and that different Christians in different places had access to a different set of authoritative texts and oral traditions to inform their faith and practice. For instance, suppose you were a second-century convert living in North Africa who had access to only the Gospel of Mark, a Gospel that says nothing about a virgin birth and provides no description of any kind of Jesus’s resurrected body. What would you deduce about the nature of Jesus? It seems reasonable that you might interpret Jesus’s baptismal scene as the moment in which Jesus was called to be the Son of God. Imagine, then, another Christian living in Rome. Suppose this Christian has access to the letters of Paul, in which Paul states that Jesus was born “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Romans 8:3) and that the resurrected body is a “spiritual body” (1 Corinthians 15:44). One can imagine how this Christian might be more likely to embrace a notion of Jesus that is phantasmal, in which Jesus only

appeared to take on flesh. Finally, suppose a third Christian living in Ephesus ascribes particular value to the Gospel of John, in which the Word is said to have become flesh (John 1:14) and in which Thomas seems to verify the fleshly nature of Jesus's resurrected body (20:26–28). One can see how this Christian might have deduced that Jesus was a being that took on flesh and that his resurrection was a bodily resurrection (though how he or she might have understood “bodily” would have been contingent on a host of other variables).

To be clear, I am not saying that Valentinus, Marcion, and Justin had access only to biblical materials that supported their theological positions. Rather, I am suggesting that often these second-century Christians were faced with questions that had either not been asked or had not been universally resolved by the followers of Jesus in the decades following the apostolic era and that their efforts to answer them in ways that stayed faithful to their religious traditions yielded a variety of conclusions.¹⁶ In this way, second-century Christians were not so different from the early apostles: it is clear from the New Testament writings that Paul had disagreements with his authoritative contemporaries (e.g., James, Peter) on matters regarding salvation and the Mosaic law; it only follows that he and other Christians of his era disagreed on other theological matters as well.

Finally, contemporary readers would do well to remember the near impossibility of Christian unity in light of the tremendous challenge to intercongregational communication posed by vast geographic distances. It should therefore not be surprising to find that an ancient assembly in Carthage (North Africa) harbored beliefs about God, scripture, and revelation that were at variance with the beliefs of their contemporaries in distant Syria. We must remember that today we have the great advantage of Church communication that happens almost instantaneously and that there is a worldwide effort at Church headquarters to produce, distribute, and translate correlated manuals and materials to ensure that the same things are being taught in all congregations around the globe. These sorts of communicative and administrative mechanisms were not in place in the second century AD.¹⁷

What Did Christian Worship in the Second Century Look Like?

Because there was no mechanism by which early Christians could be completely correlated or unified on all aspects of their religious beliefs, there was no singular, universal model for Christian worship at this time: an assembly of Christians in Rome would have expressed their devotion in ways that were both similar to and different from neighboring assemblies *in the same city*, let alone an assembly in faraway Cyprus. With this in mind, we can begin to flesh out what the scant amount of surviving literature from this period tells us about second-century Christian worship.

House churches

To begin, it is important to remember that, as noted above, we have no surviving archaeological evidence of second-century Christian religious practice: so far as we know, there were

no buildings in the second century that were *exclusively* dedicated to Christian worship. Where, then, did early Christians engage in their religious practice? It appears that they met in what scholars have come to call “house churches”—the homes of wealthy members of the local congregation that could accommodate more than a handful of people. Early Christians likely met in the homes of their more affluent neighbors in order to celebrate their religion and venerate their God together (much like members of the Church did at the start of this dispensation and continue to do so in certain places around the world where the Church is relatively new). In other words, in a given city, it is likely that a variety of house churches would hold worship meetings independently from one another. The size of the assembly would have been constrained by the size of the home they met in, and in the earlier stages of Christian history it is likely that the leader of the meetings was the owner of the home.¹⁸

Baptism

For most Christians, water baptism was a necessary ritual act by which one entered into the Christian community.¹⁹ The way in which baptism was carried out likely depended, in part, on the time and place in which it was performed. One surviving literary reference entitled the *Didache* (or “Teachings”) lays out a particular perspective for how baptism should be performed:

[After you have reviewed a set of prescribed ethical positions with the potential convert,] baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in running water. But if you have no running water, then baptize in some other water; and if you are not able to baptize in cold water, then do so in warm. But if you have neither, then pour water on the head three times in the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit. And before the baptism let the one baptizing and the one who is to be baptized fast, as well as any others who are able. Also, you must instruct the one who is to be baptized to fast for one or two days beforehand. (*Didache* 7.1–4)²⁰

Again, there is no reason to believe that this set of instructions would have been followed in all areas of the ancient world. It simply shows that at least some second-century Christians were interested in codifying what they viewed as the correct, authorized mode of baptism.

Many of our sources indicate that there was a preparatory period prior to baptism in which one renounced sin and received doctrinal instruction. Some ancient texts indicate that the prospective Christian was to be baptized in the nude.²¹ He or she would then emerge from the water and be given a white robe. Some communities even fed the newly baptized person milk and honey.²² Others concluded the baptismal ritual with prayers and a kiss (Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 65.1–2).²³ Among some second-century Christians, it became customary to anoint the baptized person with oil;²⁴ for others this was done before baptism.²⁵ Tertullian, a powerful Christian authority in North Africa, attests that hands were laid on the newly baptized Christian as a way of “invoking and inviting the Holy Spirit.”²⁶ In many

ancient Christian texts, baptism is called a “seal,” invoking the image of a wax seal that was used to secure the contents of a document. We should note that Christian baptism was not a practice invented by early Christians but rather had its origins in Jewish religious practice—Christians took over and elaborated the practice from Jewish tradition and instilled in it new theological meaning.²⁷

*Sunday gatherings: Reading, sermons, prayers, Eucharist*²⁸

Most Christians gathered together on Sundays to engage in weekly worship, although we have evidence of some Christians who continued to worship on Saturdays (i.e., Sabbath), in accordance with the commands in the Old Testament. While the particularities of these gatherings would have varied according to time and place, an ancient anecdote will suffice to paint a broad picture. Justin Martyr, in *First Apology* 67, records that Christians gathered on Sunday, the day on which Jesus Christ had risen from the dead. A reader within the community read from the “memoirs of the apostles” or “the writings of the prophets” for as long as time permitted.²⁹ The group then listened to a sermon given by the presiding authority, in which they were often exhorted and instructed on how to live.³⁰ The congregation then rose and prayed together, after which “bread and a cup of water and [a cup] of wine mixed with water”³¹ were administered to the group, over which the presiding authority prayed once more. Deacons carried a portion of the eucharistic meal to those who were unable to attend. Resources were also collected by the presiding authority from those who could afford to donate in order to take care of orphans, widows, refugees, the sick, the poor, the imprisoned, or any other Christian in need.

The role of women

Based on what we have seen thus far, it should come as no surprise that the role of women within the early Christian assembly was a contested one. We should note that, by and large, ancient ideologies of gender in the Roman world were unfavorable to women, depicting them, more or less, as underdeveloped men. Many Christian congregations imbibed this worldview wholesale, imagining women as mentally and morally weak, as relatively incapable of public leadership, and as a continual source of sexual danger to those around them.³²

That said, among other Christian communities of the second century it is abundantly clear that women played prominent roles in the spiritual formation and growth of the group: they served in leadership roles, received revelation, prophesied, enjoyed spiritual gifts, and were viewed as powerful, charismatic leaders and teachers.³³ As we see in nearly all ideological disputes between Christian groups, each side made vigorous appeals to scripture in order to defend their respective theological positions.

To What Degree Were Christians Persecuted? How Did Christians Respond to Persecution?

A popular misconception today is the idea that all early Christians lived in perpetual fear and hiding under the impending threat of persecution and execution at the hands of Roman officials. The nature of the Christian situation, however, appears to have been less extreme, although certainly marked by the suffering and death of some at various times and places. The Roman Empire was generally tolerant of the religious activities of those who lived within it so long as these activities were not deemed seditious. Furthermore, the empire possessed a sophisticated legal system, and early Christians would have largely enjoyed the same rights and privileges as their pagan and Jewish contemporaries. They would have had equal access to many of the commercial, political, and social opportunities that their neighbors did and would have participated according to their own interests and capabilities.

This is not to say, however, that Christian beliefs and practices were viewed favorably by many of their non-Christian and Jewish contemporaries—quite the contrary, as we shall see below. Nor is it the case that many early Christians did not experience serious episodes of persecution, beginning even in the New Testament era (see 1 Peter 4:12). Some Christians were tortured and others were violently killed on account of their religious convictions. Such persecutions, it appears, were local and occasional in nature, not universal and systematic (at least until the third and fourth centuries). In other words, it was possible for a group of Christians in Gaul (modern-day France) to suffer death by torture at the same time that a group of Christians in Rome enjoyed the eucharistic meal. In fact, the first instance of official, empire-wide persecution did not occur until the year AD 250 under the emperor Decius.³⁴ All known prior episodes of persecution were local or regional and were the product of *ad hoc* concerns.

An example of local persecution: Nero

One of the earliest and most famous instances of local persecution occurred under the rule of the Roman emperor Nero. In the year AD 64, a fire broke out in the city of Rome. Many contemporary Romans believed that the emperor Nero had purposefully caused the fire to facilitate one of his building projects. In order to draw unwanted attention away from himself, Nero accused and subsequently tortured Christians of the city, publicly blaming them for the act of destruction.

This episode is instructive for a few reasons. First, we should note the *local* nature of the persecution: Nero persecuted Christians in Rome and in Rome alone. Second, we should note the *logic* of the persecution: Nero persecuted the Christians of the city in order to deflect the blame for the act of arson from himself. In other words, in this episode Christians were not persecuted for their religious beliefs per se. Rather, they were persecuted because of imperial corruption—Nero needed someone to blame, and early Christians fit the bill. Fifty years later, the Roman historian Tacitus claimed that Nero specifically targeted the

Christians because they were generally hated by the people of Rome (for more on this, see “Charges against Early Christians,” below).³⁵

It is not uncommon for some contemporary commentators to describe this event as the first evidence of imperial persecution. Such a statement, however, can be misleading; for while it is true that an emperor was behind the decree, it tends to imply that the persecution was universal, which it was not. Nero’s persecution against the Christians was a local event, stimulated by local concerns.³⁶ That said, it is likely that Nero’s actions set a precedent for local and regional administrators who, over the course of the next two centuries, sporadically engaged in violent activity against their Christian contemporaries for a variety of cited reasons.

Charges against early Christians

Early Christian and non-Christian literature of the period records several charges that were brought against Christians in these local and regional disputes. Christians were accused, for instance, of adhering stubbornly to foolish doctrines (resurrection, incarnation) and for venerating a crucified criminal. They were accused of disrupting the family, such as when a new convert renounced her biological family in the name of her faith. Some early critics, seizing on the Christian ritual practices of the Eucharist and the holy kiss among members of the congregation, charged Christians with practicing cannibalism (devouring the flesh and blood of Christ) and incest (mingling sexually with those they called “brother” and “sister”).³⁷ Because some Christian groups congregated at night, they were occasionally accused of plotting revolutionary political activities. Christians were likewise criticized by some of their Jewish contemporaries regarding a range of mostly theological issues: Christians were condemned, for instance, for abandoning the law of God as outlined in scripture (circumcision, Sabbath observance, and so forth) and for following a false Messiah and a magician.³⁸

Interestingly, Christians were even accused of *atheism*, which, in an ancient context, did not imply that Christians didn’t believe in God but rather that they failed to show proper piety to *all* the gods, including the cult of the emperor. In the ancient world, one maintained a proper relationship with the gods by offering sacrifices and libations (wine offerings) to them in their temples. The gods were pleased by the sacrifices of the local populace and generously provided things like good crops, moderate weather, and protection against barbarian enemies (*pax deorum*, or “the peace of the gods”). The emperor himself was considered by many to be a god, and sacrifices were likewise offered to him and other imperial figures in many parts of the empire to ensure continued peace in the land. Those early Christians who had converted to the Christian movement now found themselves in a precarious social situation: by refusing to offer sacrifices to the gods and emperors at feasts and in local temples, they risked being seen as disrespectful to both local cults as well as to the Roman state. To refuse to offer sacrifices could be interpreted not only as an affront to powerful deities—hence threatening divine displeasure—but also as a political statement against the empire.

Because of this, Christians were viewed by some as antisocial, treasonous, and blasphemous, and their religious practices were seen as the source of local calamities.³⁹

This sense of suspicion toward this upstart religious movement at times materialized into episodes of mob violence. In more severe cases, regional administrators would get involved, especially when they had reason to believe that Christians were guilty of crimes that were contrary to Roman law and culture (treason, cannibalism, and so forth). In rare cases, emperors became involved in regional disputes regarding Christians. Such a case occurred in ca. AD 112, when the emperor Trajan approved the execution of Christians in Asia Minor who refused to offer sacrifices to his cult image and to deny their Christianity.⁴⁰ Similarly, at the end of the second century, Marcus Aurelius approved the regional persecution of Christians in Lyons and Vienne.⁴¹ Christian responses to the critiques and violence leveled against them were, obviously, diverse and in accordance to personal propensities. For the sake of simplicity, we'll consider two broad Christian responses to pagan opposition: martyrdom and apologetics.

Martyrdom

In approximately AD 110, a Christian bishop of Antioch named Ignatius was arrested and transported to the capital of Rome in order to face trial and execution for a crime that is unknown to us today. In one of his most powerful (and, for some, unsettling) remarks to the Christians that he would leave behind, he said, "I am willingly dying for God, unless you hinder me. I urge you, do not become an untimely kindness to me. Allow me to be bread for the wild beasts; through them I am able to attain to God" (Ignatius, *Romans* 4.1).⁴² While certainly not representative of all Christians of his day, Ignatius represents an illustrative example of one response to persecution that flourished in the second and third centuries AD: that of the Christian martyr who willingly and eagerly looked forward to dying on behalf of the Christian cause. Notice that Ignatius does not simply accept the prospect of a painful death—he demands it: "May I have the full pleasure of the wild beasts prepared for me; I pray they will be found ready for me. Indeed, I will coax them to devour me quickly—not as happens with some, whom they are afraid to touch. And even if they do not wish to do so willingly, I will force them to do it" (Ignatius, *Romans* 5.2).

In the second and third centuries and in tandem with the local and regional persecutions of the period, we see the emergence of literature that celebrates the activity of Christian martyrs.⁴³ In these literary works, male and female Christian martyrs are depicted as the paragons of Greek masculinity: resolved in their convictions, unflinching in the face of excruciating pain, anxious to meet a noble death, all on account of their devotion to Christ and their Christian identities.⁴⁴

Within some Christian communities, martyrs come to be seen as religious figures with particularly potent spiritual capacities: martyrs were said to possess the ability to see visions, to perform miracles, and to atone for sins. In one text written at the turn of the third century, a bishop and a presbyter are seen to be pleading at the feet of a female martyr, indicating

perhaps that for some Christians, the martyr was at the pinnacle of church hierarchy.⁴⁵ Christian theology regarding both the martyr's relationship to the living as well as the martyr's larger role within the divine plan would develop in subsequent centuries, particularly after the Christianization of the Roman Empire.

Martyr narratives, both oral and written, no doubt served an important function for early Christians in the face of real or perceived persecution. For those Christians who faced physical torment from local antagonists, martyr narratives provided models for righteous suffering and gave assurances of eternal rewards in spite of earthly agonies and humiliations. For those Christians who faced the perceived threat of persecution, such stories would have served as sources of inspiration and solidarity within their small, second-century house churches. The deaths of certain key figures, especially when displayed in a heavenly light, no doubt fueled the imagination and strengthened the bonds between the members of Christian communities.⁴⁶

Apologetics

Opposition to Christian communities did not always take the form of physical violence. Many learned, non-Christian elites viewed Christians and their cult in the same way that they perceived other religious groups that they deemed as foreign:⁴⁷ at best, as the product of silly superstitions or, at worst, a cancer that threatened the religious, economic, and political fabric that differentiated Rome from barbarian nations. These literary attacks on Christians and Christianity often took the form of brief asides (e.g., the Roman historian Tacitus's reference to Christianity as "a most mischievous superstition," *Annals* 15) as well as full treatises (e.g., the pagan philosopher Celsus's scathing anti-Christian volume, *True Doctrine*), in which Christians were systematically mocked or charged with a litany of allegations.

By the middle of the second century a literary class of Christians emerged, armed with the rhetorical and philosophical training necessary to combat the intellectual attacks made against the fledgling Christian movement: these figures are known today as early Christian *apologists*. The term *apologist* derives from the Greek word *apologia*, which means "defense" or "a speech in defense of" something. Hence, when one speaks of an early Christian apologist, or of early Christian apologetics, or of an early Christian apology, one is not referring to Christians who were apologizing for their religion (in the sense of saying, "I'm sorry for being a Christian"); rather, these were Christians who were actively defending their religion, often employing scathing attacks of their own against the philosophical and theological positions of their pagan and Jewish opponents.

We have apologetic literature that survives from the second century onward, designed to meet the attacks made by the cultured critics of earliest Christianity, as well as to make reasoned cases for the superiority of the Christian religion to its pagan and Jewish counterparts.⁴⁸ The ways in which Christian apologists defended their religion varied according to their circumstances and rhetorical skill. Some sought to leverage pagan and Jewish history, philosophy, and culture on behalf of their reasoned defense of Christianity and, by so doing,

to demonstrate that Christian beliefs and practices were in harmony with, and even the paragon of, the more virtuous aspects of pagan or Jewish tradition. Justin Martyr, for instance, argued in his defense against pagan critics that Christians' belief in Christ (the Word, Greek *logos*) was, in fact, the zenith of an ancient tradition practiced by the Greek philosopher Socrates.⁴⁹ Others sought to defend Christianity by claiming absolute Christian exclusivity: Christian doctrine and practice, they argued, had nothing to do with the systems of this world. Such a position allowed them to condemn every aspect of the pagan and Jewish cultural systems that surrounded them.⁵⁰ The apologetic tradition continued until Christianity had become the dominant religious force in the ancient Mediterranean.⁵¹

What Contributions Did (and Can) Second-Century Christianity Make to the Restored Gospel?

This question has many answers—far too many for this short chapter. For our purposes, I will mention only two, along with an accompanying observation. First, contemporary Latter-day Saints—like all Christians—owe the survival of their religious textual heritage (e.g., the New Testament) to the largely uncelebrated efforts of second-century Christians who protected and preserved the literature of the first century. Early members of the “Jesus movement” wrote the foundational literature of Christianity, including some of its finest gems: Luke’s parable of the prodigal son (Luke 10), Matthew’s discussion of sheep and goats (Matthew 25), Paul’s discourse on charity (1 Corinthians 13), and James’s invitation to seek wisdom from God (James 1:5–6), among others. It was second-century Christians, however, who preserved the literature for later generations, both by making these texts a central component of their religious practice, as well as by painstakingly reproducing new manuscripts to carry the tradition. Consider the logistics: in order for a Christian community to have a copy of the Gospel of John, someone in the congregation had to obtain an older manuscript and reproduce it, word for word, by hand. The second-century Christians who did this were not professional scribes: they were average people who dedicated long hours to the preservation of what they saw as sacred. Whatever inspiration contemporary Latter-day Saints derive from ancient scripture is owed, in part, to the unsung efforts of nameless second-century Christians who ensured that their tradition was not lost (the same can be said of the often unrecognized labor of the Christian copyists who followed them).

Second, several doctrinal innovations or clarifications emerged in the second century that have informed or align with Latter-day Saint thought and practice today. These doctrines are often attributed to the earliest disciples of Jesus (i.e., to writers of the New Testament, or to Jesus himself), though our first clear evidences of them tend to emerge in the second century. The nature of Jesus as a being who is both human and divine, as discussed above, can be seen as one of these doctrines. Latter-day Saint understandings of Jesus align with a theological position that has its roots in second-century reflections on Jesus.⁵² Additionally, since the inception of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, prophets have urged Church members to “seek for truth wherever [one] might find it.”⁵³ By this view,

the restoration of gospel fullness would include the quest for new and refined truths scattered throughout the writings of these Christian ancestors; in addition to sifting through their writings to find examples of shared beliefs and practices, there is great value (perhaps, sometimes, more value) in reading early Christian literature with the trust that it contains religious truth that we have not yet fathomed or appreciated—like forgotten treasures hidden in a field (see Matthew 13:44; Gospel of Thomas 109).

Finally, one should remember that, while we have already noted that Christians were not universally persecuted by imperial edict in the second century, it was nonetheless no easy task to be a Christian at that time. The Christians who preserved scripture, who received revelation about the nature of God and his gospel, and who laid the foundation for later Christian generations did so amid remarkable social risk and uncertainty. They were in the vast minority, subject to periodic regional persecutions, and considered by their non-Christian counterparts to be a foreign and laughable cult. Some were tortured and others killed on account of their faith. Latter-day Saints of the twenty-first century should feel a similar sort of appreciation for these ancient pioneers as they rightfully do for their nineteenth-century counterparts: both groups laid the foundations for the spiritual communion that Latter-day Saints enjoy today.

Conclusion

Although generally overshadowed in popular discussions of early Christian history by the towering influence of the New Testament and later fourth-century councils and creeds, second-century Christianity produced some of the most influential figures, innovations, and literature of Christian tradition. Within these decades we find many of the seeds that blossomed into Christian orthodoxy in subsequent centuries, shaping the West and the world as we know it. Historically, Latter-day Saints have felt little need to devote attention to this period of time—or worse, have even relegated the activities of second-century Christians entirely to the category of “apostate.”⁵⁴ Casting light on the virtuous efforts and accomplishments of these early figures not only demonstrates the debt owed by contemporary Christians (including Latter-day Saints) to these spiritual pioneers, but also serves as a reproof for our uncritical judgment of the past. The darkness that we ascribe to these early years of Christian history may, at times, reflect our failure to perceive the radiant, faithful contributions of the saintly men and women who preceded us.



Luke Drake is a doctoral student of ancient Mediterranean religions in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Further Reading

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Notes

1. The earliest surviving building that was exclusively used for Christian worship dates to the middle of the third century and is located in Syria (Dura-Europos). See Susan B. Matheson, *Dura-Europos: The Ancient City and the Yale Collection* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Art Gallery, 1982), 28–31. For a brief discussion of other early Christian archaeological remains, see Frank Trombley, “Overview: The Geographical Spread of Christianity,” in *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Origins to Constantine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 304.
2. Though we have in our possession several dozen “texts” from the second century, we should be clear that in most cases these texts are preserved in manuscripts that, in fact, date to periods much later than the second century. In other words, while certain surviving literary evidences date to the second century (these are mostly scraps of old papyrus), most of these texts are preserved in documents that are later copies of earlier second-century originals. For instance, the *Letter to Diognetus* is an important text written in the second century that gives us insight into how some second-century Christians defended themselves against their intellectual opponents (see discussion on apologetics below). The earliest surviving copy of this text, however, is a handwritten manuscript that was made in the thirteenth century—over one thousand years after the original was written!
3. As we see represented in the first-century witnesses of the New Testament, though perhaps to a lesser degree.
4. Several erudite scholars have attempted to tackle this question over the last several decades. Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* (Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), offers an effective overview of the question and addresses the work and assumptions of previous scholars. Stark's work has not been without its critics. See, for instance, a few sample critiques and Stark's response to these in the *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 161–267.
5. The history of Christianity in Rome can be dated to the middle of the first century, as evidenced in both the New Testament (Romans 16) and Roman history (e.g., Emperor Nero's persecution of Roman Christians in AD 64 as recorded in the works of the Roman historians Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44, and Suetonius, *Nero* 61.1–2). Later evidences indicate that Christians continued to thrive in the city, as seen in early Christian texts such as *1 Clement*, the Shepherd of Hermas, and Ignatius's *Letter to the Romans*.
6. The classic work on Marcion's biography and theology was written in German by Adolf von Harnack in 1924. It has been translated into English on multiple occasions, such as in *Marcion: The Gospel of the Alien God* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007). For a subtle and recent treatment of Marcion, see Judith Lieu, *Marcion and the Making of a Heretic: God and Scripture in the Second Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
7. In addition to repudiating Jewish scripture, Marcion seems to have advocated a Christian canon that exclusively comprised edited versions of the Gospel of Luke and ten of the letters of Paul. Marcion's editions of

these texts apparently omitted positive references to Jewish scripture and to the Jewish God—literary details that Marcion attributed to the errors of later copyists. Furthermore, Marcion seems to have removed the first two chapters of the Gospel of Luke (Jesus’s birth narrative) on account, perhaps, of his belief that Jesus only *appeared* to have a physical body.

8. Later Christians who were vehemently opposed to Valentinus’s thought nonetheless conceded that he was a “brilliant mind” (Jerome, *On Hosea* 2.10) (Tertullian, *Against the Valentinians* 4).
9. For introductory material on Valentinus and translated works, see Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures: A New Translation with Annotations and Introductions* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 267–80; Ismo Dunderberg, “The School of Valentinus,” in *A Companion to Second-Century Christian “Heretics,”* ed. Antti Marjanen (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2008), 64–100; Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 292–318. See also the excellent interview with Einar Thomassen in Miguel Conner, *Voices of Gnosticism: Interviews with Elaine Pagels, Marvin Meyer, Bart Ehrman, Bruce Chilton and Other Leading Scholars* (Dublin: Bardic, 2011), 103–17.
10. Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, fragment 3, 239.
11. However, for an alternative interpretation of this fragment’s meaning from one of the premiere scholars on the subject, see Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the ‘Valentinians’* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2006), 457–60.
12. In the Christian tradition, and in academic works, Justin is frequently referred to as “Justin Martyr,” not because “Martyr” is a surname but because it indicates that he died as a martyr, around AD 165.
13. See Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 48, trans. Thomas B. Falls (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press, 2003), 73: “Christ existed as God before all ages, and then he consented to be born and become man.”
14. Again, it is important to remember that relatively little ancient material actually survives from this period. In other words, the diversity that we see is the product of a highly fragmentary historical record. Imagine all that has been lost!
15. Even some Christians in the second century maintained this view in light of the diversity of Christian belief and practice. See, for instance, Hegesippus (ca. AD 110–80): “Until then the church remained a pure and uncorrupted virgin, for those who attempted to corrupt the healthful rule of the Savior’s preaching, if they existed all, lurked in obscure darkness. But when the sacred band of the Apostles and the generation of those to whom it had been vouchsafed to hear with their own ears the divine wisdom had reached the several ends of their lives, then the federation of godless error took its beginning through the deceit of false teachers,” as cited in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.32.7–8, trans. Kirsopp Lake (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926).
16. Many introductory textbooks on early Christian history employ a set of terms to distinguish these “varieties” of early Christianity: those who subscribed to the belief system espoused by Marcion are referred to as “Marcionites,” those who subscribed to the belief system of Valentinus are referred to as “Valentinians,” those who subscribed to the belief system espoused by Justin Martyr are referred to as “proto-orthodox” and so forth. I have chosen not to use these terms for a handful of reasons, one of which is that they are not ancient and would have been foreign to the Christians that they describe: no ancient “Marcionite” would have thought of herself as a “Marcionite,” but rather as a Christian.
17. The letters of Paul represent an early attempt to unify the thoughts and practices of faraway Christian assemblies. Similar letters and texts were written in the second century with the same purpose in mind. Nothing, however, was done on the same scale anciently as contemporary Latter-day Saint correlation efforts.
18. Romans 16 is evidence of this phenomenon in the first century. At the end of this letter, Paul sends his greetings to several individuals who appear to represent multiple house churches in Rome.
19. For discussions on early Christian views on baptism, see Andrew B. McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship: Early Church Practices in Social, Historical, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 135–82; and David Brakke, *The Gnostics: Myth, Ritual, and Diversity in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 74–82.

20. Bart D. Ehrman, trans., *The Apostolic Fathers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).
21. *Apostolic Tradition* 21.3. For third- and fourth-century witnesses, see *Acts of Xanthippe and Polyxena* 21 and Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogical Catecheses* 2.2. For a fuller discussion that addresses both early Christian literature and artwork, see Robin M. Jensen, *Baptismal Imagery in Early Christianity: Ritual, Visual, and Theological Dimensions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 167–69. Conversely, Laurie Guy has argued that Christian “nakedness” in these texts probably refers to wearing undergarments that afforded modesty but that were otherwise inappropriate for normal public interactions. See Guy, “‘Naked’ Baptism in the Early Church: The Rhetoric and the Reality,” *Journal of Religious History* 27, no. 2 (2003): 133–42.
22. Tertullian, *On the Soldier’s Crown* 3.3; *Against Marcion* 1.14.3.
23. The Christian tradition of giving one another a holy kiss can be traced back to the letters of Paul (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26; see also 1 Peter 5:14). Interestingly, Paul and the author of 1 Peter see no need to justify or explain this ancient activity, and so we can assume that it was a relatively common practice by the middle of the first century within the communities to whom these letters were sent. By the second century, we see this practice continued in the writings of a few prominent Christian authors. For more on this, see Michael Philip Penn, *Kissing Christians: Ritual and Community in the Late Ancient Church* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).
24. See Tertullian, *On Baptism* 6–8.
25. See Acts of Thomas 26–27, 49, 120–21.
26. Tertullian, *On Baptism* 8.
27. See Adela Y. Collins, “The Origins of Christian Baptism,” in *Living Water, Sealing Spirit*, ed. Maxwell E. Johnson (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 35–57.
28. The term *Eucharist* comes from the Greek word for “thanksgiving” (*eucharistia*). Originally this term probably referred to the prayer of thanksgiving that one offered before a meal. As Christianity spread, it came to signify the Christian ritual practice of eating and drinking together in memory and celebration of Jesus (what Latter-day Saints refer to as “the sacrament”).
29. It is tempting to suppose that “memoirs of the apostles” is a reference to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Ultimately we cannot be certain of the texts to which Justin is referring, since in the second century there was no fixed Christian canon. Were these memoirs the canonical Gospels as we know them today? Were they ancient variations of these texts? Something else altogether? The “writings of the prophets,” on the other hand, is taken to be a clear reference to texts from the Old Testament.
30. A few of these early sermons survive to this day. For a sense of what a second-century sermon might have sounded like, see 2 *Clement* and Melito of Sardis’s “On the Passover.”
31. An early manuscript of Justin’s *Apology* omits the phrase “and [a cup] of wine mixed with water” in the description of the eucharistic meal. This has led some scholars to believe that the original reading was simply “bread and water.” Several ancient texts likewise mention eucharistic meals consisting of bread and water, including Acts of Paul 25–27 (with vegetables), the Vercelli Acts of Peter 2, and the Acts of Thomas 121, 152. For further discussion and more examples (Eucharists of milk, cheese, and fish), see Andrew McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists: Food and Drink in Early Christian Ritual Meals* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), 89–250.
32. See Elizabeth A. Clark, “Devil’s Gateway and Bride of Christ: Women in the Early Christian World,” in *Ascetic Piety and Women’s Faith: Essays on Late Ancient Antiquity* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1986), 23–60.
33. See, for instance, the multiple roles that women play within Christian communities in the Acts of Paul and Thecla. For a compelling account of female martyrs from AD 202, see The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity. For a discussion of an early Christian group in which women participated in public prophecy and church office, see Christine Trevett, *Montanism: Gender, Authority, and the New Prophecy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
34. There were three empire-wide edicts of Christian persecution issued by three Roman emperors—Decius (AD 249–50), Valerian (AD 257–60), and Diocletian (AD 303–13)—though each of these differed in their methods and aims. Decius, for instance, simply required that all citizens of the empire demonstrate that

they had offered sacrifices to the gods before authorized officials. Diocletian, on the other hand, appears to have believed that Christians were inhibiting communication between the empire and the gods and ordered that Christian books and churches be destroyed, that Christian meetings be banned, and that all citizens be required to offer sacrifice under penalty of death. Much has been written about these persecutions. A pithy overview of the persecutions in the context of early Christian history can be found in Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968).

35. According to Tacitus, “Therefore, to scotch the rumour, Nero substituted as culprits, and punished with the utmost refinements of cruelty, a class of men, loathed for their vices, whom the crowd styled Christians. . . . Vast numbers were convicted, not so much on the count of arson as for hatred of the human race. And derision accompanied their end: they were covered with wild beasts’ skins and torn to death by dogs; or they were fastened on crosses, and, when daylight failed were burned to serve as lamps by night.” *Annals* 15.44, trans. John Jackson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937).
36. The same might be said of the persecutions of Christians in Asia Minor under the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian (AD 90s), as well as later regional persecutions, which we will discuss below.
37. See Athenagoras, *Plea Regarding the Christians*.
38. See Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*.
39. Tertullian, a brilliant and pugnacious Christian from North Africa, wrote the following, most likely at the very end of the second century: “As a justification of their hatred, . . . they [pagans] consider that the Christians are the cause of every public calamity and every misfortune of the people. If the Tiber rises as high as the city walls, if the Nile does not rise to the fields, if the weather will not change, if there is an earthquake, a famine, a plague—straightway the cry is heard: “Toss the Christian to the lion!”” *Apology* 40.1–2, trans. Rudolph Arbesmann (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press, 1977).
40. See Pliny’s letter to Trajan, and Trajan’s response, in Bart D. Ehrman, *After the New Testament 100–300 CE: A Reader in Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 29.
41. All of that being said, it should be remembered that for as many who had problems with Christians and their beliefs in the second century, there were just as many (and probably many more) in the empire who had either never heard of the burgeoning Christian cult, or that knew too little to have an opinion about them.
42. Bart D. Ehrman, trans., *The Apostolic Fathers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).
43. The term *martyr* comes from the Greek word *martus*, which anciently meant “witness,” such as in a legal sense or with respect to anyone who can testify of something. For Christians in the second century, *martus* came to mean one who dies for the faith. This use of the term is remarkable, since it seems to gesture both toward the spectacle of execution (wild beasts, gladiators, executioners, etc.), as well as to the testimony being offered by the one being willingly executed.
44. The classic compendium of early and later Greek and Latin accounts of Christian martyrs is Herbert Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000). This type of literature was not exclusive to Christians. See, for instance, 4 Maccabees, a Jewish text with similar themes and concerns.
45. The passage in question can be found in The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas 13. This remains one of the most interesting martyr narratives to survive from antiquity.
46. Unsurprisingly, it is likewise clear in our early literature that not all Christians chose the path of martyrdom when faced with violent persecution. Those who denied the faith in the face of suffering were referred to by some early Christians as the “lapsed.” The question of the status of a Christian who compromised his or her religious values in order to avoid being slaughtered became one of great importance, particularly in the third century AD.
47. Other foreign cults, which were often vilified by Greek and Latin elites, included the mystery cults of Isis (Egyptian mother goddess), Mithras (Persian God of Light), and Cybele (mother goddess of Anatolia, i.e., in modern-day Turkey). It is important to note, however, that while these cults were often disparaged by elite figures, they likewise enjoyed great popularity in certain elite and non-elite pagan circles.

48. Christians did not invent this mode of argumentation. Before the emergence of Christianity, we have examples of apologetic literature written by Jews in defense of Judaism, and pagans in defense of their philosophical traditions.
49. Hence, when Justin defends Christians against the charge of atheism, he notes that five hundred years earlier the Greeks had charged Socrates with the same crime before his execution. Justin argues, in essence, that Socrates was a sort of proto-Christian because he lived according to the “word/reason” (*logos*), and the word (*logos*) is Christ. Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 46.
50. See, for instance, the *Letter to Diognetus* 5: “Christians are right to keep their distance from the thoughtlessness and deception common to both groups, and from the fussiness and pride of the Jews. But as for the mystery of the Christians’ own religion, don’t expect to be able to learn this from a human. . . . [Christians] live in their own countries, but only as aliens; they participate in everything as citizens, and endure everything as foreigners. Every foreign country is their fatherland, and every fatherland is foreign. . . . They live on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven.”
51. For a more detailed introduction to the Greek apologetic tradition, see Robert M. Grant, *Greek Apologists of the Second Century* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988). For the Latin West, see Nicholas L. Thomas, *Defending Christ: The Latin Apologists before Augustine* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2011).
52. See Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 48; and Tertullian, *On the Flesh of Christ* 5.
53. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “What Is Truth?,” Church Educational System devotional, January 2013. Consider also the remarks of John Taylor: “We are open to truth of every kind, no matter whence it comes, where it originates, or who believes in it.” *The Gospel Kingdom: Selections from the Writings and Discourses of John Taylor*, ed. G. Homer Durham (Salt Lake City: Improvement Era, 1941), 93, as cited in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001), 213.
54. Recent efforts by some Latter-day Saint authors have begun to demonstrate shared traditions and the collective debt that Latter-day Saints owe to some of these ancient figures. See Fiona and Terryl Givens, *The Christ Who Heals: How God Restored the Truth That Saves Us* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2017). See also the recent efforts to reexamine Latter-day Saint notions of apostasy in Miranda Wilcox and John D. Young, *Standing Apart: Mormon Historical Consciousness and the Concept of Apostasy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).