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Welcome to the BYU New Testament Commentary, a project by a group of Latter-day Saint specialists offering to readers a careful, new look at the biblical records that witness the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and the first generation of his church. The commentary series seeks to make the New Testament more accessible to Latter-day Saint general readers and scholars by employing much of current biblical scholarship while reflecting important LDS insights. At the same time, this effort may also be helpful to interested readers of other faiths who want to learn how a group of Latter-day Saint scholars understands the Bible. A fundamental article of faith for Latter-day Saints (Mormons) affirms the Bible “to be the word of God” while adding, understandably, that it needs to be “translated correctly” in order for it to be accurately comprehensible to modern language speakers.

These objectives have helped shape the purposes and parameters of this commentary series. Serious LDS readers of the Bible search the scriptures, looking for depth and breadth in passages whose meanings and mandates may ultimately be plain but not shallow. Such readers and interpreters are served by treatments that unite faith and research, reason and revelation, in prayerfully confronting profound and difficult issues that arise in the texts and affect one’s path of progression. The New Testament has served as an influential guide to western civilization for centuries. As such, its records have long been studied by lay people and scholars alike, resulting in a rich reservoir of information that illuminates the New Testament era culturally, historically, and linguistically. Selectively, the BYUNTC builds upon this vast body of knowledge, resting on the Greek texts of the New Testament and connecting helpful elements of linguistic, literary, historical, and cultural research and traditional scholarship together with LDS scriptures and doctrinal perspectives. The combination of all these features distinguishes the BYUNTC from other commentaries, which are readily
available elsewhere and which readers may also want to consult for more encyclopedic or specialized discussions.

The tone of the BYUNTC aims to be informative rather than hortatory, and suggestive rather than definitive in its interpretation. The opinions expressed in this series are the views of its contributors and should not necessarily be attributed to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Brigham Young University, where many of those involved here are headquartered; or anyone else, though these works have benefited from input and guidance from a number of colleagues, advisors, editors, and peer reviewers.

Each volume in this series sets in two parallel columns the King James Version (KJV) and a new working translation of the New Testament. Calling this a new “rendition” clarifies that it does not seek to replace the authorized KJV adopted by the Church of Jesus Christ as its official English text. Rather, it aims to enhance readers’ understanding conceptually and spiritually by rendering the Greek texts into modern English with LDS sensitivities in mind. Comparing and explaining the New Rendition in light of the KJV then serves as one important purpose for each volume’s notes, comments, analyses, and summaries. This effort responds in modest ways to the desire President J. Reuben Clark Jr. expressed in his diary in 1956 that someday “qualified scholars [would provide] . . . a translation of the New Testament that will give us an accurate translation that shall be pregnant with the great principles of the Restored Gospel.”

Depending on their personal skills and interests, the authors of these volumes approach their scholarly sources and LDS materials differently but always with careful exposition and engaging perspectives. In several ways, they employ various interpretive tools, including semantic considerations of Greek vocabulary; cultural, historical, critical, literary, and structural analyses; and intertextual comparisons with other biblical passages, the Book of Mormon, and other scriptural works including the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. Observations are also proffered about the doctrinal and spiritual reception of New Testament teachings and practices in the broad LDS religious tradition.

# Contents

Abbreviations xi
Preface xiii

## Introduction 1

The Relevance of Paul’s Writing for the Modern Disciple 1
The Integrity of the Work 2
Structure and Organization 5
Paul’s Understanding and Use of the Old Testament 9
The Historical, Geographical, and Cultural Background to the Epistle 13
Paul’s Relationship with the Corinthian Church 19
A Note on the Greek Manuscripts, Translation Methods, and Use of Secondary Scholarship 37
The Use of 2 Corinthians among the Latter-day Saints 42

## Paul’s Outreach to the Corinthian Saints 63

Introduction 63
Salutation (1:1–2) 64
Excursus on Paul’s Relationship with the Twelve Apostles 75
Thanksgiving for Godly Comfort in Suffering (1:3–7) 79
The Harrowing Experience in the Province of Asia (1:8–11) 90
Paul Explains the Reason for His Confidence in the Correctness of His Dealing with the Corinthian Saints (1:12–14) 98
Excursus on Pride and Boasting in the Writings of Paul 107
Why He Defends His Actions (1:15–20) 112
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Saving Work of God, Christ, and the Holy Ghost (1:21–22)</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Paul Postponed His Visit (1:23–24)</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ministers of the New and Glorious Covenant</strong></td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Paul Postponed His Visit <em>(continued)</em> (2:1–4)</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgiveness for the Sinner (2:5–11)</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul’s Anxiety in Troas (2:12–13)</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Components of an Authentic Ministry</strong></td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministers of the New Covenant (3:1–3)</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God Made Us Capable (3:4–6)</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Glory of the New Covenant (3:7–11)</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ministry of the New Covenant (3:12–18)</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Components of an Authentic Ministry, Continued</strong></td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul’s Perseverance in the Ministry (4:1–6)</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasures in Clay Jars (4:7–12)</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Eternal Weight of Glory (4:13–15)</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renewal through Suffering (4:16–18)</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Ministry of Hope and Reconciliation</strong></td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Our Heavenly Dwelling (5:1–5)</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excursus on Paul’s Understanding of the Resurrection</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We Labor That We May Be Accepted of Him (5:6–10)</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers Together with Christ (5:11–7:4)</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing the Fear of God (5:11–15)</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The New Creature in Christ (5:16–17)</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message of Reconciliation (5:18–21)</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“I Will Be a Father to You” 337

Introduction 337
“Now Is the Day of Salvation” (6:1–2) 339
The Condition and Character of Paul’s Mission (6:3–10) 345
Paul’s Appeal to the Corinthian Saints (6:11–13) 359
A Warning against Too-Familiar Association with Unbelievers (6:14–18) 362

Godly Sorrow for Sin Leads to Repentance 371

A Warning against Too Familiar Association with Unbelievers (continued) (7:1) 371
The Appeal Based on Titus’s Report (7:2–16) 377
“Receive Us”: The Plea Resumed (7:2–4) 378
Joy in the Report of Titus (7:5–7) 385
The Positive Effects of Paul’s Harsh Letter (7:8–12) 393
“I Have Complete Confidence in You” (7:13–16) 410

The Gentile Collection 419

Introduction 419
The Macedonian Church’s Abundance of Generosity (8:1–7) 422
Encouragement to Be Generous (8:8–15) 437
The Mission of Titus (8:16–24) 456

The Gentile Collection, Continued 475

Introduction 475
Further Instructions Concerning the Collection (9:1–5) 476
On Sowing Generously (9:6–15) 487

Paul Confronts His Detractors 511

Introduction 511
Paul’s Intent to Use His Apostolic Authority If Necessary (10:1–2) 516
Paul Discloses His Battle Plan (10:3–6) 523
Paul’s Threat to His Detractors (10:7–11) 534
Paul’s Mission (10:12–18) 548
Excursus on Self-Praise and Boasting 564

**Paul Confronts His Detractors** 571

Introduction 571
Paul’s Foolishness (11:1–6) 572
Paul’s Defense Continued (11:7–15) 590
Paul’s Suffering as an Apostle (11:16–27) 610
The Apostle’s Major Burden (11:28–29) 637
Boasting of Weakness (11:30–33) 641

**Paul’s Vision and Its Aftermath** 649

Introduction 649
Visions and Revelations (12:1–10) 651
Proof of Apostleship (12:11–13) 684
Promise to Not Be a Burden (12:14–18) 693
Fears about the Corinthians’ State (12:19–21) 706

**Final Warnings and Conclusion** 721

Introduction 721
Warning of Impending Discipline (13:1–4) 722
A Plea for Self-Examination (13:5–10) 733
Conclusion (13:11–13) 744

**Selected Bibliography** 753

**Scripture Index** 777

**Subject Index** 786
WHY PAUL POSTPONED HIS VISIT  (1:23–24)

In these last two verses of this chapter, Paul clearly picks up his defense and explains precisely why he did not come directly to Corinth from Ephesus. His argument continues through 2:4.

Greek Text

23 ἔγνω δὲ μάρτυρα τὸν θεὸν ἐπικαλοῦμαι ἐπὶ τὴν ἐμὴν ψυχήν, ὅτι φειδόμενος ὑμῶν οὐκέτι ἠλθὸν εἰς Κόρινθον. 24 οὐχ ὅτι κυριεύομεν ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως, ἀλλὰ συνεργοὶ ἐσμεν τῇς χαρὰς ὑμῶν, τῇ γὰρ πίστει ἐστήκατε. [SBLGNT]

King James Version

23 Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth. 24 Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

New Rendition

23 Now I call upon God as a witness upon my soul that it was to spare you that I did not come again to Corinth. 24 Not that we would lord it over your faith, but rather we are workers with you for your joy, because you stand firm in the faith.

Translation Notes and Comments

1:23 Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul / Now I call upon God as a witness upon my soul: Having illustrated his rightness with God as one whom the Father has established for, sealed upon, and guaranteed eternal life, Paul returns to his defense. The verb ἐπικαλέω (epikaleō), “to call upon,” carries the nuance of appealing to a higher power to settle an issue (see Acts 25:11–12, 21). Since the ultimate power is that of the Divine, the word carries heavy religious overtones and is thus often found, as here, as a means of invoking an oath.253 Paul’s invocation shows just how serious he is. The noun μάρτυς (martys), “witness,” carries legal connotations referring to one who testifies to or affirms the truth of something.254 Since God is all knowing, he is the ultimate witness.

253. BDAG, 373; Paul uses the same language in Rom. 1:9; Philip. 1:8; and 1 Thes. 2:5, 10. 254. BDAG, 619–20.
The pronoun ἐπὶ (epi), “for,” has a wide range of meanings, including making reference in behalf of or against something. The noun ψυχή (psyché), “soul,” in the present context refers to the very center or essence of a person, the seat of his or her emotions, desires, affections, and aversions. Thus, the whole phrase, τὴν ἐμὴν ψυχήν (tēn emēn psychēn), could be rendered as “upon my life” or “against my life.” The nuance is that Paul is willing to put his life on the line to show that he is not lying.

that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth / that it was to spare you that I did not come again to Corinth: The noun φείδωμαι (pheidomai), “to spare,” means to save someone from pain or hurt. Paul gives this as the main reason why he did not stop at Corinth after leaving Ephesus.

1:24 Not for that we have dominion over your faith, / Not that we would lord it over your faith: The verb κυριεύω (kyrieuō), “rule, have dominion, lord over,” denotes the act of exercising authority, and though it often refers to rulership and governance, it carries a strong negative nuance that includes ruling harshly as well as exercising unrighteous dominion by the unjust use of power. In this context, it carries the tinge of a showy displaying of airs and the oppressive use of authority, specifically dominance over the faith of the Corinthian Saints.

but are helpers of your joy / but rather we are workers with you for your joy: The noun συνεργός (synergos) pertains to two or more parties working together for a common goal. In that context, it denotes a helper or fellow worker. The noun χαρά (chara), “joy,” refers to what brings sustained pleasure and more specifically rejoicing. It suggests a deep-rooted, even rapturous, emotion.

by faith ye stand / because you stand firm in the faith: The conjunction γάρ (gar), “for, because,” in the present context points to the reason why Paul and his companions act toward the Saints the way they do. The verb ἰστήμι (histēmi), “to stand,” carries the nuance of being firm in one’s

255. BDAG, 366.
256. BDAG, 1098–1100. The word has a wide range of meanings including life itself as well as the immortal portion of a person. In some respects, it is that portion of a person that can be most attuned to the Divine. For a study, see NID, 4:725–34.
257. Guthrie, 2 Corinthians, 121.
258. BDAG, 1051.
259. BDAG, 576; Louw-Nida, §37.50.
261. BDAG, 969; Louw-Nida, §42.44.
262. BDAG, 1077; NID, 4:644–49.
faith.\textsuperscript{263} It is found here in the perfect tense, suggesting that these people were and still are firm in their trust in the Savior. It is for this reason that Paul and his associates can work with them toward the same end—namely, joy. The noun πίστις (pistis), in the present context, refers to the whole of the gospel in both principle and doctrine.\textsuperscript{264}

\textbf{Analysis and Summary}

Working to drive home the reason why he changed his travel plans, Paul makes what amounts to a solemn oath invoking God as his witness (1:23). The verb he uses, “to call” (ἐπικαλέω, epikaleō), carries strong civil and religious overtones. It connotes calling upon a higher authority to verify a fact or position. Paul’s calling upon God to do so shows his absolute sureness of his position, for as the scriptures make clear, God knows the “reins and the heart” (Jer. 20:12; see also Jer. 17:10 and Rev. 2:13)—that is, everything about the person, including his or her most inner secrets. So certain is Paul of his position that, in taking the oath, he also puts his own life on the line. By means of such a solemn declaration, the Apostle assures his readers of the truthfulness of what he is about to say.\textsuperscript{265} He likely designed this rather bold act to have a considerable sobering effect upon his target audience.

Having made his declaration, Paul gives the major reason why he adjusted his travel plans (1:23). He had already caused some of these people quite a bit of grief due to both his harsh letter and their initial support of one of his major antagonists. Further, whenever he came, he would have to confront and likely discipline any he felt were out of the correct way.\textsuperscript{266} He was hoping that by biding his time, he would give them a chance to repent if necessary and determine where they stood in relationship to him. The

\textsuperscript{263} BDAG, 482–83. The imagery Paul uses looks to both court and the battlefield where both testing and trial take place. Standing means victory while falling means defeat. The verb therefore carries a reminder that the Christians are at war with this world and must not only endure through faith but push forward the cause of Christ. Seifrid, \textit{Second Letter}, 72.

\textsuperscript{264} Louw-Nida, §§31, 43, 102, 104.

\textsuperscript{265} Martin, \textit{Second Corinthians}, 171.

question was, then, not one of the purpose or appropriateness of his visit, but of its timing.\textsuperscript{267} In the next verse he explains further why he changed his itinerary.

Paul’s words do raise a question: How can he say that he wants to spare the Saints pain but deny any intent to lord it over them? The answer is likely because what he wants to spare them from is specifically the need for apostolic reproof and correction (13:2), albeit even here he would use “the meekness and gentleness of Christ” (10:1–2). His objective is not, however, to dictate, demand, or impose faithfulness and trust in Christ.\textsuperscript{268} Indeed, Paul fully understands that true faith in the Lord can be neither coerced nor result from fear. “Instead, it has right relationship as its source and ‘joy’ as its outcome.”\textsuperscript{269} It is the latter to which the Apostle joins with the Saints to produce, for it is the ultimate aim of Christian living.\textsuperscript{270}

In sum, the Apostle wants his readers to encourage and gladden his heart, but that could not happen if Paul’s actions among them only resulted in further hurt and alienation. By waiting, he believes they will get their house fully in order such that when he does come, they will all share in a common joy because they now stand firm in the covenant (1:24). In sum, his choice to not visit them “was not an act of refraining from love,” of which some may have accused him, “but an act of love.”\textsuperscript{271}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{267} Guthrie, \textit{Corinthians}, 121.
  \item \textsuperscript{268} Barnett, \textit{Second Epistle}, 115–16.
  \item \textsuperscript{269} Guthrie, \textit{Corinthians}, 123.
  \item \textsuperscript{270} As 2 Ne. 2:25 teaches, the purpose of life is that people might obtain joy. This is a major thrust of the gospel. See Matt. 25:21, 23; John 15:11; 16:24; 17:13; Rom. 14:17; 15:13; 1 Pet. 1:8; 4:13; 1 John 1:4; 2 Ne. 27:30; Alma 33:23; 3 Ne. 28:10; and D&C 11:13; 42:61; 51:19; 70:18.
  \item \textsuperscript{271} Witherington, \textit{Conflict and Community}, 364 with n. 13.
\end{itemize}
Subject Index

A
Aaronic Priesthood, 182n83
Abraham, seed of, 618, 633–34
absence. See also presence
“but being absent am bold toward you,” 518
“such as we are in word by letters when we are absent . . . ,” 541
“Therefore I write these things being absent,” 739
abundance
“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you,” 492, 504–5
“Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness,” 496–97, 503
“But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want,” 445–46, 448–49, 450, 455
“but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God,” 498, 507–8
“in this abundance which is administered by us,” 461
“that their abundance also may be a supply for your want,” 446
“that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly,” 555
“That ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work,” 492–93, 505
Achaia, 68, 478–79, 484, 485, 595–96, 605
actions, 541
adelphos/adelphoi (brother/brethren), 91, 911n18, 458–59, 625. See also brother/brethren
adikia (injustice), 689
advantage, taking, 379, 698–99, 700, 704–5
advice, 441, 449
affection, 360, 413
afflictions. See also persecution; suffering; thorn in the flesh; trials; tribulation; weakness
“but we were troubled on every side/rather we were afflicted in every way,” 387
“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment,” 260–61
“For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears,” 135
“How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality,” 424–26, 432
“in afflictions/in tribulations,” 348
life as full of, 249
agape/agapao (love), 136, 141, 145, 351, 430, 697, 746, 747. See also love
gathos (good), 289
agency, 53
agnoeo (to be unaware), 91, 353
agreement
“be of one mind/agree with one another,” 745, 749
“what concord hath Christ with Belial,” 364
agricultural imagery, 494–96, 502, 506
aiōn (world), 220
aischynē (shame), 215–16
alarm, 400, 407–8
alla (but), 150–51
aliteration, 493
alms. See Jerusalem collection
“ambassadors, Now then we are, for Christ,” 328, 334
amen, 117–18
Ammon, 108
anaginōsko (to read), 167–68
anakalyptō (to uncover), 200–201, 204
anangellō (to report), 390
anastrephō (conduct), 102, 105
Anderson, Neil L., 58
Andronicus, 77
“angel of light, For Satan transformed himself into an,” 599, 609
anger, 710
anointing, 66, 121–22, 222
antagonists, 28–35
attacks of, 512–13
groups of, 511–13
and mission of Paul, 548–63
Paul’s battle plan against, 523–34
Paul’s confidence in dealing with, 98–106
Paul’s confrontation of, 571–72
Paul’s defense against, 513–15, 590–609
Paul’s reaction to accusations of, 566–69
Paul’s threat to, 534–48
pride of, 312–14, 316
use of Paul’s apostolic authority against, 516–23
Anti-Nephi-Lehies, 432883
apeiron (to disown, forbid), 215
aphormē (occasion, pretext), 597, 606
aphroynē (foolishness), 573
apollyymi (to perish), 219
apologeomai (defend oneself), 707. See also self-defense
aporeō (perplexed, uncertain), 242
apostasy, 24, 286, 545, 607, 608, 636
Apostle(s). See also apostleship; apostolic authority; Church leaders; false apostles; ministration/ministry; super-apostles
as ambassadors of Christ, 54
“For such are false apostles,” 598, 607–8
New Testament men called as, 26162
Paul’s relationship with, 75–78
Paul’s suffering as, 610–37
primary function of, 559
qualification of, 75
restoration of, 77
Titus and campanions called, 465–66
tokens of, 687
“transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ,” 598–99, 608–9
“Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience,” 686–88
use and connotation of term, 71
apostleship. See also Apostle(s); apostolic authority; Church leaders; false apostles; ministration/ministry; super-apostles
proof of, 684–93
weakness as sign of, 676, 678
apostolic authority. See also Apostle(s); apostleship; Church leaders; false apostles; ministration/ministry; super-apostles
“For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority,” 536–38, 544
“I should not be ashamed/I will not be ashamed of it,” 539, 544–45
Paul’s intent to use, 516–23, 533
and reconciliation to God, 405–6, 409
“which the Lord hath given us/that the Lord gave us,” 538
apostoloi (apostles), 465–66. See also Apostle(s)
appearance
“but his bodily presence is weak/but when he is here in person he appears weak,” 540
“Do ye look on things after the outward appearance?/Look at what is before your eyes!,” 535
judgment based on, 291–92, 521, 530, 546
and opposition to Paul, 312–13, 521
of Paul, 546191
“that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance,” 503
“transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ,” 598–99
“transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ/who disguise themselves as apostles of Christ,” 608–9
visible and invisible things, 262–63
Aquila, 602
archaia (former things), 321–22
Aretas IV Philopatris, 643–45
Aristarchus, 472
arkeō (to be enough), 664
“armour, by the, of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,” 352
“arrogant, if a man exalt himself/if someone is, with you,” 616, 629–30
Asia, harrowing experience in, 90–97
asymptend, 583
atimia (dishonor, humiliation), 616. See also humiliation; shame
Atonement
“Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus,” 243–44
“And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves,” 308
“but unto him which died for them, and rose again,” 308–9
comfort through, 87
empowerment through, 334–35
as fulfillment of Mosaic law, 186–87
impact of, 323, 330
liberation through, 316–17
reconciliation through, 330, 331–33
and resurrection, 97, 317
“that if one died for all/that one man died for all humankind,” 306
Atonement (cont.)
“then were all dead/Thus, in a figurative sense, all died,” 306–8
transformation of, 321, 323–24
vicarious nature of, 334–35
augazō (to see, shine), 220–21
Augustine, 285–86
authority. See apostolic authority

B
Baal, 58–59
backbiting, 711
Barnabas, 76, 77
basket, 644–45, 646–47
bear/bearing
bearing persecution, 667
“indeed bear with me/indeed, do bear with me,” 574
“Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly,” 573
“ye might well bear with him/you bear it readily enough,” 578
beatings, 349, 619–20, 621–22, 635
Bednar, David A., 44–45, 323
Belial/Beilari, 58–59, 364
belief
“hath blinded the minds of them which believe not,” 220
“we also believe, and therefore speak,” 254
Benson, Ezra Taft, 59–60
betrothal, 574–75, 584
Beza, Theodore, 38
blame, 346–47, 461
blindness, 200, 220
boasting. See also pride; self-commendation; self-promotion
acceptable and unacceptable, 565–66, 567–68
“and not to boast in another man’s line of things made ready to our hand,” 556, 562
“but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us,” 551–52
“but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth,” 412–13, 416
“But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord,” 556, 562
“but now I forbear/But I will refrain from boasting,” 659
“But we will not boast of things without our measure,” 551
excursus on, 564–69
foolish, 571–89
“For if I have boasted any thing to him of you,” 412
“For our rejoicing is this/Now the reason for our pride is this,” 99–100
“For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority,” 536–38, 544
“For though I would desire to glory/For even if I wanted to boast,” 658–59
“for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia,” 478
and gospel promotion, 557–58
“I am become a fool in glorying,” 684–85, 689–90
“If I must needs glory,” 641
“in this confidence of boasting/in undertaking this boasting,” 613, 628
“It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory/It is necessary to boast,” 652–53, 668
and Jerusalem collection, 475–76
in Jesus Christ, 567–69, 628
“lest any man should think of me above that whereof he seeth me to be,” 659–60, 678
“lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf,” 480, 485
as means for overcoming opposition, 668
“a measure to reach even unto you,” 552
“Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities,” 665–66, 682–83
“no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia,” 595–96, 605
“Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men’s labours,” 554, 561
“Of such an one will I glory/I will boast about this person,” 657–58
of Paul, 559, 560
and Paul’s reaction to his detractors’ accusations, 566–69
Paul’s teachings on, 107–11, 515
in Saints’ readiness to complete Jerusalem collection, 484
“Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also,” 613–14, 628–29
“that I may boast myself a little,” 612, 628
“that the power of Christ may rest upon me,” 666
“that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we,” 597–98, 606
“That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord,” 612–13
ture versus false, 560
“we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting,” 482, 485–86
“Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love,
and of our boasting on your behalf,” 466–67, 473
“yet of myself I will not glory / but about myself, I will not boast,” 658, 675–76
body. See also appearance; flesh
“Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus,” 243–44
“but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day,” 260, 263–64
clay jars as metaphor for, 248
earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven,” 273
“For in this we groan / For indeed in this earthly body we groan,” 272
“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved,” 271
“For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened,” 274
“If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked,” 273–74
“knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord,” 284–85
“not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon,” 274
“our flesh had no rest / our body found no rest at all,” 386–87
Paul’s views on, 655, 673–74
physical versus spiritual, 279–80
preressurrected, 279
and rapturous experiences, 654–55, 673–74
resurrected, 272, 273–74, 276–77, 279, 280–81
“that every one may receive the things done in his body,” 288–89
“that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body / mortal flesh,” 244, 245–46
“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body,” 287
“We have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,” 271–72
“whether in the body, I cannot tell,” 654–55, 656
boldness, 380, 518–20, 617
bondage. See slaves/slavery
bountifulness. See abundance
brokerage relationship, 921, 140
brother/brethren. See also adelphos / adelphoi
(brother/brethren)
“among false brethren,” 625–26, 636–37
“And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches,” 458–59, 472
“And we have sent with them our brother,” 402, 469
“Finally, brethren, farewell! / Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice,” 744–45, 748
identity of, handling Jerusalem collection, 471–72
“I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother,” 699–700
“or our brethren be inquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ,” 465–66, 473
“Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you,” 482–83, 486
“Yet have I sent the brethren / Nevertheless I am sending these brothers,” 479–80
building. See heavenly dwelling
burden
“and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you,” 594–95, 604
“and I will not be burdensome to you,” 695, 702
“And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man,” 593–94
“But be it so, I did not burden you,” 697, 703
“except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you?,” 689, 692–93
“For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened,” 444–45
Paul’s promise not to be, 693–705
“burn, who is offended, and I, not?,” 639, 640

C
Callister, Tad R., 47
capability, 174–83
captivity, 527, 615–16, 629. See also slaves/slavery
care/carefulness, 399–400, 456–57
celestial kingdom, 24, 49, 208, 272, 282, 309, 672, 673. See also degrees of glory; paradise; third heaven
chairo (to rejoice), 354, 745. See also rejoicing
change. See also transformation
“are changed into the same image from glory to glory,” 205
of heart, 173–74, 202–3
through Spirit of the Lord, 208–9
character, judged by appearance, 291–92, 521, 530, 546
charis (grace), 69, 102, 113, 154–55, 340, 429. See also grace; gratitude
charizomai (to forgive), 354, 140, 142. See also forgiveness
chestening, 354
cheerful giving, 475, 490–92, 504
chiasmus, 493
children
“for the children ought not to lay up for the parents . . . ,” 695, 702
“I speak as unto my children,” 360
children of God, 367–68, 369

Christos
(christ, Christ), two, two, eight, two, three, six, one, five, three, five, nine, five, two, zero, four, six

cilicium,
chraomai

790

Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians

Codex Sinaiticus, three, seven

Christians
affliction suffered by, 265
as belonging to God, 126
coining of designation, 66
judgment of, 293–94
life and death as way of, 383
riot against, in Ephesus, 96
unity among, 143
use and connotation of term, 73
Christofferson, D. Todd, 47

Christos (Christ), 222, 228, 236n153, 595
Church discipline, 145–46, 722–32
Church leaders, authority of, 56. See also Apostle(s)
“church of God,” 67–68
cilicium, 20146
circumcision, 29–30, 117, 150, 512
city, 625
clay jars, 55–56, 240–41
cleansing, 372–73, 375
Clement, 23
clothed/clothing
“and nakedness and lack of clothing,” 627
“earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven,” 273
“If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked,” 273–74
“not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon,” 274
Codex Sinaiticus, 37
Codex Vaticanus, 37
cold, 627

comfort
“And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you,” 389
“be of good comfort be comforted,” 745, 748
giving and receiving, 384–85
“I am filled with comfort,” 381, 383
“knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation,” 86
“Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus,” 388–89
regarding death, 57
“So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him,” 140
in suffering, 79–89
“Therefore we were comforted in your comfort,” 410–11

“commandment, I speak not by,” 438
condemnation. See also self-condemnation
“but whom the Lord commendeth,” 556–57, 562–63
characteristics of true and valid, 356
“commending ourselves to every man’s conscience,” 218
“Do we begin again to commend ourselves,” 165
“for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles,” 685–86, 690, 692
“for I ought to have been commended of you,” 685, 690
“For we commend not ourselves again unto you,” 302
“or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you . . . ?,” 165–66
of Paul, 171, 230
“Ye are our epistle, You are our letter,” 166
“communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all,” 747, 750

comparison
“but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves,” 550–51
“make ourselves of the number or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves,” 549–50
as smear tactic of Greek orators, 558
competence, 174–83
completion
“Now therefore perform the doing of it/But now also finish what you started,” 442
“that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have,” 442–43
“conclusion, because we have come to this,” 305

“concord, what, hath Christ with Belial,” 364
condemnation
“For if the ministration of condemnation be glory,” 188, 191
“I speak not this to condemn you,” 379

condescension of God, 453–54
confidence
“And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before,” 113
“And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward,” 174–75
“Great is my boldness of speech toward you/I have great confidence in you,” 380
“having confidence in you all,” 134
“I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all things,” 414–15
of Paul, 178, 289–90
of Paul in Corinthian Saints, 410–17
“Therefore we are always confident,” 284
“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord,” 287
“with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold,” 519–20

conscience
appealing to, 312
“commending ourselves to every man’s conscience,” 218
“I trust also are made manifest in your consciences,” 302
of Paul, 105, 230
Paul’s redefinition of, 230
“testimony of our conscience,” 100
contention, 710, 716–17
contrary-to-fact conditional clause, 304
conversion
impact of, 322
of Paul, 23–24, 181n80, 309
Corinth
advantages of, to spread of gospel, 17
challenges of social conditions in, for Church, 17–19
geographical, political, social, and economic background of, 13–17
Paul’s authority in, 561
Paul’s postponed visit to, 127–30, 132–37
Corinthian Saints. See also Jerusalem collection
fear about state of, 706–19
“For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches,” 688, 692–93
generosity encouraged in, 437–55
Paul’s appeal to, 359–61
Paul’s confidence in, 410–17
Paul’s harsh letter to, 22, 23, 63, 105, 129, 134, 135, 136–37, 150, 391, 393–409
Paul’s outreach to, 63–74
Paul’s relationship with, 421
spiritual battle of, 533–34
corruption, 379, 576, 585, 588
“countrymen, by mine own,” 624–25
covenant, 499–500
Cowdery, Oliver, 48
craftiness, 216–17, 698
Crispus, 20
critics. See antagonists
crucifixion, 306–9, 727, 731–32
Cynics, 71

D
“damage, that ye might receive, by us in nothing,” 398
Damascus/Damascenes
“And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall,” 644–45, 646–47
“In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city . . . ,” 643–44
daring, 617. See also boldness
darkness
“and what communion hath light with darkness,” 364
“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness,” 226
of heart, 237
day of salvation, 339–44
day of the Lord Jesus, 104
dearly beloved/dear friends,” 372, 708
death
“Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus,” 243–44
“and in them that perish/and among those who are perishing,” 156
“And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves,” 308
“as chastened, and not killed/as scourged, yet not put to death,” 354
“as dying, and, behold, we live/as dying, yet we are alive,” 353
“but in God which raiseth the dead,” 93–94
“but the sorrow of the world worketh death,” 399
“But we had the sentence of death in ourselves,” 92–93
comfort regarding, 57
death unto death,” 57–58
“for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you,” 379–80
“For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake,” 245
“in deaths oft/often in danger of death,” 621
intermediate state following, 277, 278, 281, 287
“Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus,” 254
“ministration of death/the ministry of death,” 184–85, 191
Paul’s positive view of, 292
Paul’s preparation for, 25
“So then death worketh in us, but life in you,” 246–47
and suffering in discipleship, 250–51
“that if one died for all/that one man died for all humankind,” 306
“then were all dead/Thus, in a figurative sense, all died,” 306–8

Subject Index
Subject Index
Subject Index

791
791
791
death (cont.)
“...we are the savour of death unto death,” 157
“trust in God’s power over, 97 as way of Christian, 383
“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord,” 287
“Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver,” 94
debasing, 591, 601
debates, 710, 716–17
debt, 695, 702
Decalogue, 181, 184–85, 202
decimation
“as deceivers, and yet true/viewed as deceivers, yet honest,” 353
“being crafty, I caught you with guile,” 698
“deceitful workers,” 598, 608
“For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached,” 576–77
“not walking in crafiness/neither practic- ing deception,” 216–17
“transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ,” 598–99
dechomai (to receive), 578
decision, 305
dedication, 428
deeds, mighty, 688, 691–92
defense, 400. See also self-defense
defilement, 372–73, 375
degrees of glory, 48–49, 672. See also celestial kingdom; paradise; third heaven
dei (it is necessary), 652–53
deliverance, 94, 245
demetrius, 22
democracy, 452
Derrick, Royden G., 50
desire
“what vehement desire/what longing,” 401
“when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me,” 390
despair, 92, 242
destruction
“and in them that perish/and among those who are perishing,” 156
“and not to destruction/and not for tearing down,” 740
“cast down, but not destroyed,” 243
“for edification, and not for your destruc- tion,” 538
detractors. See antagonists
devotion, 456–57
dia (because of’), 225
dialkoneo (to minister), 168–69, 460
diakonia (ministry, service), 184, 325, 347,
427, 477–78, 497. See also ministration/ ministry; service
diakonos (minister, servant), 176, 179–80, 600
diathēkē (covenant), 176
Didachē (“Teachings of the Twelve Apostles”), 76, 630–32
didōmi (to give), 325, 346, 424, 457
dikaiosynē (righteousness), 188, 194–95, 494, 495. See also righteousness
diligence. See also eagerness; zeal
“but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you,” 463
“in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us,” 429–30
“whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things,” 462–63
Dioikos, 15
discipline, 145–46, 722–32
discouragement, 215, 260, 263
disgrace, 215–16
dishonesty, 215–16
dishonor, 352
disobedience, 528
disorder, 711. See also tumults
distress, 348. See also afflictions; trials; tribulation
Docetists, 586
dokimē (trial, test), 141, 424, 499
doloō (deliberately falsifying), 217
“door, and a, was opened unto me of the Lord,” 149
doulos (servant), 225, 235
“Do we begin again to commend ourselves,” 165
doxa (glory), 186, 187, 194, 205, 222, 223,
227–28, 352. See also glory
doxazō (to glorify), 189
doxology, 80
dualism
body/spirit, 263, 281
eschatological and anthropological, 252
dwell, 365–66, 369

E

eagerness. See also diligence; zeal
“but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you,” 458, 468–69
“but by occasion of the forerunners of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love,” 438–39
and cheerful giving, 475
in Jerusalem collection, 485
“that Achaias was ready a year ago,” 478–79
earnest, 123–24, 275
earnestness, 390, 399–400, 406–7
earthen vessels, 55–56, 240–41
Ebionites, 586

echō (to have), 253, 372, 444
Eden, 672
edification, 538, 708, 714, 740
eidos (appearance), 287. See also appearance
eikōn (image), 205, 223, 233
eilikineia (sincerity), 101. See also sincerity
eirene (peace), 70, 746. See also peace
ete (if), 84, 85
ekdapanoō (to spend completely), 696
ekdemeo (to leave an area), 285
ekdikeo (to punish), 528
ekklesia (church), 67–68
elpis (hope), 85–86
enabling power, 102, 178, 682
encouragement, 140, 388–89, 410–11
endemeo (to be at home), 285
endurance
“As it is written, . . . his righteousness remaineth for ever,” 493–94, 505
“For ye suffer/for you endure,” 615, 629
“in much patience/with great endurance,” 348
through faith, 88
through tribulations, 384
endysamenoi (to put on), 273
enkakeō (to be discouraged), 215
envoy, 224,488
envy, 710. See also jealousy
epairo (to raise up), 527
Éphesus, 20, 22, 96
epibareō (to overcharge, exaggerate), 139
epichorēgeō (to provide), 495
epieikēia (gentleness), 517
epipotheō (to yearn), 273, 501
epistle of Christ
“but in fleshy tables of the heart,” 170
“but with the Spirit of the living God,” 169
“Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ,” 168
“ministered by us/delivered by us,” 168–69
“not in tables of stone/not on stone tablets,” 169–70
“written not with ink,” 169
epistolē (letter), 395–96. See also letter(s)
epistrephō (to return), 202
epitelēō (to complete), 373
equality. See also fairness
“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers,” 363, 369
“But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want,” 445–46, 448–49, 450, 455
“But by an equality/but it is a matter of fairness,” 445, 448–49
in Greek versus Roman philosophies on friendship, 452
Paul’s understanding of, 451, 474
as principle of democracy, 452n194
“that there may be equality/so that there will be fairness,” 446
“that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we,” 597–98, 606
Erasmus, 38
erethizō (giving an encouraging example), 479
eternal life. See also salvation
“and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts,” 123–24
Holy Ghost as guarantee of, 277
“Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus,” 254
Paul’s knowledge of, 257–58
preparation for, 277
and repentance, 405
through Jesus Christ, 182–83
temporal things, focusing on, 262, 266–67
euangelion (gospel), 149, 221–22, 578. See also gospel
euchomai (to pray), 735–36. See also prayer
eulogia (praise), 483, 489
Eunice, 117
Eve, 575–76
evil
“Now I pray to God that ye do no evil,” 735–36, 742
Paul’s views on, 741–42
evil report, 353
exaggeration, 139
exaltation
“And lest I should be exalted above measure,” 661
and God’s work and glory, 123
“Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted,” 591, 601
“if a man exalt himself/if someone is arrogant with you,” 616, 629–30
exapatāo (to mislead), 576
exchange, 360
existēmi (to be out of one’s mind), 303–4, 313
exousia (authority), 537–38, 740
expectations, 427–28
exploitation, 615, 629–30
“eyes, Look at what is before you,” 535
Eyring, Henry B., 48
F
date
“if a man smite you on the face,” 616, 629–30
“in the face of Jesus Christ/in Christ’s face,” 228
Subject Index
Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians

794  Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians

faint, 215

fear

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers,” 363, 369

“But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want,” 445–46, 448–49, 450, 455

“But by an equality/but it is a matter of fairness,” 445, 448–49

in Greek versus Roman philosophies on friendship, 452

Paul’s understanding of, 451

“that there may be equality/so that there will be fairness,” 446

false apostles, 2, 8, 13, 17, 19–21, 23, 27, 29, 31, 33, 35, 37, 39, 41, 43, 45

Augustine on, 285–86

and boasting, 108

“but having hope, when your faith is increased,” 554–55, 562

early Christians’ understanding of, 286

endurance through, 88

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith,” 734, 740

“for by faith ye stand,” 128–29

“For we walk by faith, not by sight,” 285–87, 290–91

as guard against pride, 108

“in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us,” 429–30

in Jesus Christ, 286

in mortality, 53

of Paul, 289–90

Paul on, 740–41

reliance on, 53

salvation through, 30–31

“we also believe, and therefore speak,” 254

“We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken,” 253

Fall of Adam, 315

false apostles, 28, 153, 512, 597–99, 606, 607–9, 617–37. See also false prophets

false brethren, 625–26, 636–37

false doctrine

and Corinhtian critics of Paul, 28–29, 30–31, 32, 33

and hidden shameful deeds, 229–30

and new converts, 171–72

and spiritual warfare of Corinthian Church, 533–34

of super-apostles, 587–88

false prophets, 630–31, 636n382. See also false apostles

famine, 419–20

fasting, 350, 627

fault, 346–47, 461

Faust, James E., 51, 56

fear

about Corinthian Saints’ state, 706–19

“For his letters, say they/Because some say,” 539–40

“how with fear and trembling ye received him,” 413–14, 417

“That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters,” 539, 547–48

“what fear/what alarm,” 400, 407–8

“without were fightings, within were fears/struggles on the outside, fears within,” 387–88

fear of God, 298–317, 373–74, 375–76

fellowship

“and what communion hath light with darkness,” 364

“communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all,” 747, 750

with northern branch, 603–4

“Praying with us much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints,” 426–27

of sinner, 146, 147

“what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness,” 363–64

fickleness, 114, 115, 119

“fightings, without were, within were fears,” 387–88

filthiness, 372–73, 375. See also uncleanness

financial support. See payment and financial support

finishing, 442–43, 449

1 Corinthians, 21

flesh. See also body

“against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh,” 520

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh,” 524–25, 530

“let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit,” 372–73, 375

“not with fleshly wisdom/not with human wisdom,” 101

“or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh,” 115

“our flesh had no rest/our body found no rest at all,” 386–87

“Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also,” 613–14, 628–29

“that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh,” 245–46

“Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh,” 318–19

“yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh,” 319

foolish boasting, 571–89
fool(s)/foolishness
“but as it were foolishly/but as a fool,” 613, 628
“for I ought to have been commended of you,” 685, 690
“For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise,” 614–15, 629
“Howbeit whereinoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly), I am bold also,” 617
“I am become a fool in glorying,” 684–85, 689–90
“if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me,” 612, 627
“I say again, Let no man think me a fool,” 611–12, 627
“I shall not be a fool/I will not be a fool,” 659, 676
“(I speak as a fool),” 618, 632–33
and self-boasting, 670
footsteps, 701
forbearance, 532–23
foreigners, 625
forgiveness, 55, 138–47, 408, 689, 692–93
fornication, 715, 719
“forsaken, Persecuted but not,” 243
fortresses, 525–26
freedom
through Mosaic law, 207
through Atonement, 316–17
through Holy Ghost, 59–60
through Spirit of God, 208
“where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,” 204
“friends, dear,” 372
friendship, 452
fundraising. See Jerusalem collection
G
gain, making, 698–99, 700, 704–5
Gallo, L., Junius, 20
generosity
encouraged in Corinthian Saints, 437–55
of Macedonian Saints, 422–37, 454
sowing generously, 487–509
Gentile collection. See Jerusalem collection
Gentile converts, 18, 29–30, 150, 451, 512
Gentiles, brought under covenant, 670
gentleness, 516–17
gesenrushawah, 237n160
gift, unspeakable, 502
gifts of the spirit, 691
giņósiko (to comprehend), 167–68, 319. See also knowing/knowledge
giving, Paul’s theology of, 469–70. See also cheerful giving; Jerusalem collection
gladness, 738, 743. See also happiness; joy; rejoicing

glory. See also degrees of glory
“and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us,” 117–18
“are changed into the same image from glory to glory,” 205
“but give you occasion to glory on our behalf,” 302–3
“But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord,” 556, 562
“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord,” 204–5
“By honour and dishonour/through glory and dishonor,” 352
degrees of, 48–49, 672
“For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth,” 189
“For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious,” 189–90
“For if the ministration of condemnation be glory,” 188
“For though I would desire to glory/For even if I wanted to boast,” 658–59
of God, 123, 233, 238–39
of God and Jesus Christ, 233, 326n260
“great is my glorying of you/I have great pride in you,” 380–81
“hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God,” 226–28
“How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?,” 187–88, 192
“I am become a fool in glorying,” 684–85, 689–90
“If I must needs glory,” 641
“It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory,” 652–53, 668
“I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities,” 642
“light of the glorious gospel of Christ,” 221–23
of Moses’s countenance, 185–86, 194, 206
“Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities,” 665–66, 682–83
“much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory,” 188
of new covenant, 184–95
“Of such an one will I glory/I will boast about this person,” 657–58
“or our brethren be inquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ,” 465–66
in resurrection, 266
“Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also,” 613–14, 628–29
“that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God, 255–56, 258–59
“that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we,” 597–98, 606
“that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance,” 303
“they glorify God/they will glorify God,” 499, 508 through suffering, 264–65, 267
to the glory of the same Lord,” 460 in tribulations, 384
“which glory was to be done away,” 186–87
“worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,” 261–62
“yet of myself I will not glory but about myself, I will not boast,” 658, 675–76
 Gnōsis (knowledge), 350, 430
Gnosticism, 317, 585
God. See also Spirit of God/Spirit of the Lord; will of God; word of God
“And all things are of God,/Now all these things are from God,” 325
“and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God,” 526–27, 530–31
“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you,” 492, 504–5
“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee,” 664, 680, 683
“And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward,” 174–75
“and the God of love and peace shall be with you,” 746, 749
“and unto us by the will of God,” 428
“And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty,” 367–68, 369
“as though God did beseech you by us/as if God himself were encouraging you through us,” 328–29
as author of human letter, 173–74 becoming like, 208–9
as benefactor, 451, 190
“Blessed be God/Blessed be the God,” 80
“but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ,” 157–58
“but by the grace of God,” 102
“But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord,” 556, 562
“But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God,” 347–48
“but in God which raiseth the dead,” 93–94
“but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God,” 498–99, 507–8
“but is mighty in you/but is powerful among you,” 726–27, 731
“but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you,” 402–3
“but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you,” 728–29
Christians as belonging to, 126
and comfort in suffering, 79–89
condescension of, 453–54
as co-victor with Jesus, 158–59
“Father of mercy/Father of mercies,” 81
“Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” 80–81
fear of, 298–317, 373–74, 375–76
“For all the promises of God in him are yea,” 117
“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness,” 226
“for God loveth a cheerful giver,” 491–92, 504
“For this thing I besought the Lord thrice,” 663–64
“For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God,” 303–4
“for ye are the temple of the living God,” 365–66, 369
“from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ,” 70–71
glorying and praising, 107, 108
glory of, 123, 233, 238–39
“God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore,” 642
“God of all comfort,” 81–82
“hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God,” 226–28
integrity of, 117, 119
“in the sight of God,” 218
“in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us,” 94
“knoweth that I lie not/knows that I do not lie,” 642–43
“knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord,” 284–85
“light” as associated with, 233
love of, 70
mercy and comfort of, 87
“Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul,” 127–28
“my God will humble me among you,” 712, 714–15, 719
“Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God,” 275
“Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food,” 494–95, 506
“Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ,” 154–55
Paul acts according to will of, 178–79
Paul’s praise of, 158
and Paul’s thorn in the flesh, 661–62
“perfecting holiness in the fear of God,” 373–74, 375–76
pleasing, 292–93
power of, 93–94, 97, 267, 352
prepares us for eternal life, 275, 277
presence of, 186, 255, 284–85, 287, 290, 292, 301, 376, 746, 749
reconciliation to, 54–55, 324–36, 337–38, 405–6, 409
saving work of, 120–26
seeing, 300
“Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift,” 502
“that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God, 255–56, 258–59
“that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us,” 241–42
“that we might be made the righteousness of God in him,” 329–30, 335–36
“they glorify God/they will glorify God,” 499, 508
“to the glory of the same Lord/for the glory of the Lord himself,” 460
“To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself,” 326–27
trustworthiness of, 115, 119
“we are made manifest unto God/we are well known to God,” 301
“we do you to wit of the grace of God/we are making you aware of God’s grace,” 424
“we speak before God in Christ,” 708, 714, 715
“Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth,” 596, 605–6
“whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth,” 654–55, 656
“which causeth through us thanksgiving to God,” 497, 508
“who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ,” 325
“who is the image of God,” 223, 233
as witness, 127–28, 129
work and glory of, 123
“yet he liveth by the power of God,” 727–28, 731–32
zeal of, for his children, 584
Godhead
individuals in, 750
saving work of, 120–26
godly sorrow, 49–50, 381, 554, 397–99, 404–5, 406
“god of this world,” 52, 219–20, 231–32
good report, 353
goodwill, 113
good work, 492–93, 505
gospel. See also ministration/ministry
“And who is sufficient for these things?,” 157
“because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely?,” 592, 602–3
“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost,” 218–19
“for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ,” 553
“for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ,” 499–500
as hidden, 231–32
internalizing, 58
“light of the glorious gospel of Christ,” 221–23
“or another gospel, which ye have not accepted,” 578
Paul’s reflections on effects of, 153–62
qualification to preach, 160, 211, 247
and reason, 531
as received through revelation, 531, 670
receiving, 59
rejection of, 233–34
and right thinking, 533
simplicity of, 588
as source of Saints’ pride, 104
“to preach Christ’s gospel,” 149
“To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you,” 555
as unifying force, 109
veil preventing people from seeing, 231
gossip, 711
grace
“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you,” 492, 504–5
“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee,” 664, 680, 683
“bestowed on the churches of Macedonia,” 424
“but by the grace of God,” 102
“But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you,” 456–57
embracing, 340–41, 343–44
“for the exceeding grace of God in you,” 501
“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,” 439, 448
“grace be to you and peace/Grace to you and peace,” 69–70
“grace of the Lord Jesus Christ . . . , be with you all,” 747, 750
healing and transformation through, 146
of Jesus Christ, 292–93, 295
“Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ,” 154–55
grace (cont.)
  rejection of, 343–44
  “see that ye abound in this grace also,” 430–31
  sharing, 506
  “that the abundant grace might through the
  thanksgiving of many redound to the
  glory of God, 255–56, 258–59
  “that ye might have a second benefit,” 113
  through unity, 421
  “we do you to wit of the grace of God/we
  are making you aware of God’s grace,”
  424
  “We then, . . . beseech you also that ye
  receive not the grace of God in vain,”
  340–41
  at work among Macedonian and Corinthian
  Saints, 452
gramma (letter), 166, 177, 181. See also
letter(s)
Grant, Jedediah M., 56
graphō (to write), 477
gratitude. See thanks/thanksgiving
Greek, spoken by Paul, 38
grieve, 712–15, 718
guile, 698
Guthrie, George H., 145, 151, 173, 291, 434, 732
  gymnōs (naked), 274, 280
H
hagios (sacred, holy), 68, 72, 383n67. See also
holiness
hagiotēs (holiness), 100
Hales, Robert D., 59
“hand, by the armour of righteousness on
the right, and on the left,” 352
happiness, 134. See also gladness; joy;
rejoicing
harmozō (betrothal), 574–75
harsh letter, 22, 23, 63, 105, 129, 134, 135, 136–
37, 150, 391, 393–409, 410–17
“heard, I have, thee in a time accepted/At a
favorable time I, you,” 341
heart(s)
  “and given the earnest of the Spirit in our
  hearts,” 123–24
  anointing and gift of, 122
  and apostolic authority of Paul, 35
  “but with the Spirit of the living God,” 169
  “communion of the Holy Ghost, be with
  you all,” 747, 750
  denial of, 295
  effect of, 69n27
  epistle of Christ written by, 169
  freedom through, 59–60
  influence of, 356, 700–701
  and law of Moses, 192–93
  and new covenant, 193–94
  as purifying agent, 277
and reconciliation of God and Jesus Christ, 
326n260
saving work of, 120–26
as sealing agent of Godhead, 125–26
holy kiss, 746, 749
homologia (expression of allegiance), 500
honesty, 353, 462, 470–71, 736, 742
honor, 352. See also shame
hope
“And this they did, not as we hoped,” 427–28
“but having hope, when your faith is increased,” 554–55, 562
“in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us,” 94
“our hope of you is steadfast,” 85–86
of resurrection, 269
“Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech,” 196–97
human nature, 115
human wisdom, 101
humiliation. See also shame
“if a man smite you on the face,” 616, 629–30
“I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak,” 616–17
of Paul’s flight from Damascus, 646–47
“we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting,” 482, 485–86
humbility
“For we also are weak in him,” 728, 732
“Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted,” 591, 601
“my God will humble me among you,” 712, 714–15, 719
“Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ,” 516–17
of Paul, 18–19, 179, 234, 512, 521–23, 547
“though I be nothing/even though I am nothing,” 686, 690–91
“who in presence am base among you/I who am “humble” when face to face with you,” 517–18
hunger, 350, 626–27
Hyde, Orson, 56
hyper (for), 306, 315
hyperballo (surpass), 501
hyperbole (state of exceeding excellence), 241, 262
hyperlian (superlative, chiefest), 578–79, 580
hypomoné (patience, endurance), 687
hypotagé (subordination), 500

/idiótēs (unskilled person), 581, 589
idolatry, 22, 365, 368–69
imaginations, 526
immortality, 9, 713, 719
imprisonment, 349, 620–21, 644, 645
impurity, 713
indebtedness, 695, 702
indecisiveness, 114, 115, 119
indignation, 400, 407, 639, 640
inequality, 363, 369
inferiority, 685–86, 688, 690, 692–93
infirmities. See weakness
injustice, 689, 692–93
“ink, written not with,” 169
innocence, 401
integrity, 117, 119
invisible things, 263, 291. See also visible things
Israelites
“Are they Israelites? so am I,” 618, 633
“But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart,” 202
“But their minds were blinded,” 200
“that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished,” 197–99
Isthmian Games, 16

J
James, son of Zebedee, 77
James the Just, 586
jealousy, 574, 584, 710
Jehovah. See also Jesus Christ
connection between Jesus and, 236n154
of glory of, 186n94
Israelites as cut off from, 199
Jerusalem collection, 4, 419–21, 475–76
“Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you?,” 698–99, 704–5
further instructions concerning, 476–87
generosity encouraged in Corinthian Saints, 437–55
generosity of Saints in Macedonia, 422–37
mission of Titus, 456–74
and Paul’s teachings on sowing generously, 487–509
reasons for, 420–21, 469–70
Jesus Christ. See also Atonement; crucifixion; epistle of Christ; Jehovah; light of Christ; Second Coming; Spirit of God/ Spirit of the Lord
“Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus,” 243–44
“and a door was opened unto me of the Lord,” 149
Jesus Christ (cont.)

“and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ,” 527

“And I knew a man in Christ/I know a person in Christ,” 654, 669–70

“and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us,” 117–18

“And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward,” 174–75

“And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves,” 308

“And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty,” 367–68, 369

anointing of, 66, 121–22, 222

Apostles as ambassadors of, 54

appearance of, 52–53

“Are they ministers of Christ?,” 618, 634–35

“As the truth of Christ is in me,” 595, 604–5

attributes of, 516–17, 521

as basis of Paul’s confidence and ministry, 178

becoming like, 265

belonging to, 535–36, 542–43

boasting in, 567–69, 628

“but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ,” 157–58

“but first gave their own selves to the Lord,” 428

“But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord,” 556, 562

“but unto him which died for them, and rose again,” 308–9

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord,” 204–5

“but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you,” 728–29

and caring for needy, 431

“Christ Jesus the Lord/Christ Jesus as Lord,” 224

condescension of, 453–54

connection between Jehovah and, 236n154

as content of gospel, 235–36

as covictor with God, 158–59

“even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus,” 104

faith in, 286

“For all the promises of God in him are yea,” 117

“Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ,” 168

“For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us,” 83–84

“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin,” 329

“For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached,” 576–77

“for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ,” 574–75, 584

“for Jesus’ sake,” 225–26

“For the love of Christ constraineth us,” 305

“For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us,” 116

“For though he was crucified through weakness,” 727, 731–32

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ,” 288

“For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake,” 245

“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,” 439, 448

“for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ,” 142

“from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ,” 70–71

glory of, 233

God’s glory as revealed through, 238–39

grace of, 292–93, 295

“grace of the Lord Jesus Christ . . . be with you all,” 747, 750

“If any man trust to himself that he is Christ’s,” 535–36

“in Christ,” 320, 323, 654

“in the face of Jesus Christ/in Christ’s face,” 228

judgment by, 293–94

“Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus,” 254

“Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you,” 734, 741

law of Moses done away in, 11–12, 183, 186–87, 193, 201

“light” as associated with, 233

“light of the glorious gospel of Christ,” 221–23

limited human viewpoint of, 322–23

love of, 70, 314–15

as Master, 235

“Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, . . . is God,” 121–22

“Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ,” 516–17

“Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ,” 154–55

“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ,” 328, 334

in Old Testament, 10–12

overcoming evil through, 741–42
perfection of, 750n170
philosophical views on, 585–86
poverty of, 453–54
prayer of, in Americas, 657n41, 674–75
prophecy on coming of, 238
reconciliation through, 324–36
salvation through, 120–26, 182–83, 315–16, 317
in 2 Corinthians, 7–8, 9
seeing, 300
and service, 180
“Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in
me,” 725–26, 730
“so our consolation also aboundeth by
Christ,” 84
“so your minds should be corrupted from the
simplicity that is in Christ,” 576, 585, 588
spiritual rebirth through, 318–24
strength through, 681–82
suffering for/with, 96–97, 667
suffering of, 88, 247, 704
“that, as he is Christ’s, even so are we
Christ’s,” 516
“that if one died for all/that one man died
for all humankind,” 306
“that the life also of Jesus might be made
manifest in our body/mortal flesh,”
244–46
“that the power of Christ may rest upon
me,” 666
“that we might be made the righteousness
of God in him,” 329–30, 335–36
“that ye through his poverty might be rich,”
440, 448, 452–53, 454–55
“then were all dead/Thus, in a figurative
sense, all died,” 306–8
“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a
new creature,” 320–21
“though he was rich, yet for your sakes he
became poor,” 439–40, 448, 452–53
titles of, 66–67, 70–71, 222, 224
“to the glory of the same Lord/or the glory
of the Lord himself,” 460
“To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling
the world unto himself,” 326–27
transformation into image of, 252
trust in, 235
understanding nature of, 155–56
unity under, 27
visits spirit prison, 673
“we speak before God in Christ,” 708, 714,
715
“Wherefore we labour, that, whether present
or absent, we may be accepted of
him,” 287–88
“which veil is done away in Christ,” 201
“who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus
Christ,” 325
“who is the image of God,” 223, 233
workers together with, 296–98, 340
“yea, though we have known Christ after
the flesh,” 319
“yet he liveth by the power of God,” 727–28,
731–32
“yet now henceforth know we him no
more,” 319–20
Jews
“by mine own countrymen,” 624–25
“desirous to apprehend me/in order to
arrest me,” 644, 645
“Of the Jews five times received I forty
stripes save one,” 621–22, 635
“once was I stoned,” 622–23
Paul’s criticism of, 108
self-aggrandizement of, 234
“journeymings, In, often/On frequent journeys,”
624. See also sea and sea travel
joy. See also gladness; happiness; rejoicing
“but are helpers of your joy,” 128
“How that in a great trial of affliction the
abundance of their joy and their deep
poverty abounded unto the riches of
their liberality,” 424–26, 432
“I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation,”
382
“that my joy is the joy of you all,” 135
through tribulations, 382, 384, 424–26, 432
in Titus’s report, 385–93
“yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for
the joy of Titus,” 411
Judaizers, 29–30, 512, 586–87. See also
super-apostles
Judas, 77
judgment
based on appearance, 291–92, 521, 530, 546
“because we thus judge/because we have
come to this conclusion,” 305
“but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the
sight of God speak we in Christ,” 157–58
and fear of God, 300–301
“For we must all appear before the judg-
ment seat of Christ,” 288, 293–96
in LDS theology, 42–44, 258n270
as motivation for Paul and associates, 8
“my God will humble me among you,” 712,
714–15, 719
and reconciliation to God, 331, 333–34
steps of, 331
“that every one may receive the things done
in his body, according to that he hath
done,” 288–89
“justice, what desire to see, done,” 401

K
kai (and), 152
kaine kisis (new creature), 321. See also new creature
kakos (evil, harm, wrong), 736
kalos (good), 736
kalymma (veil), 219n47
kardia (heart), 124, 135, 202, 227, 490. See also heart(s)
katakrisis (condemnation), 188, 194–95. See also condemnation
katallagē (reconciliation), 325–26, 330. See also reconciliation
katallassō (to reconcile), 325. See also reconciliation
katanarkao (to be a burden), 689. See also burden
katargetō (to abolish), 186, 187, 189, 195, 198, 201
katarizō (to put in order), 745
data sarka (according to the flesh), 118, 520, 614
kauchaomai (to boast), 537. See also boasting
kauchēsis (pride, praise, boasting), 99, 380–81. See also boasting; pride
keryssō (to proclaim, preach), 224
keryx (envoy, herald), 224n88
Kimball, Spencer W., 43, 44
kindness, 350–51
King James Version, 38–39
kiss, holy, 746, 749
knowing/knowledge
“as unknown, yet well known,” 353 and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, 526–27, 530–31
“in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us,” 429–30
“knowledge,” 350
“Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh,” 318–19
“yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh,” 319
“yet not in knowledge/nevertheless I am not unskilled in knowledge,” 582
“yet now henceforth know we him no more,” 319–20
koinōnia (sharing), 500–501
kopos (hard work), 626
kosmos (world), 102, 399
ktisis (creature), 320–21
kyrieuō (to rule/have dominion), 128
kyrios (lord, master), 70–71, 203–4, 224, 460, 642, 654

L
labor
“But be it so, I did not burden you,” 703
“in labours more abundant,” 619
“Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men’s labours,” 554, 561
performed by Paul, 349
upper-class disdain for physical, 602
“Therefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him,” 287–88
lampō (to shine), 226. See also shine lamps, 248
lasciviousness, 713, 719
Last Supper, 180
law, spirit versus letter of, 51–52, 177, 181, 192
law of Moses, 10–13
“But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart,” 202
within Christianity, 171
as done away in Christ, 11–12, 183, 186–87, 193, 201
“for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament,” 200–201
freedom from, 207
gramma as referring to, 177n64
Holy Ghost and, 192–93
and Judaizers, 29–30, 190
as “ministry of death,” 184–85
versus new covenant, 163–64, 173, 177, 181–83, 190–92, 194–95, 206–7
“that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished,” 197–99
leadership, Corinthian views on, 18–19
Lee, Harold B., 46, 56–57
left hand, 352
leitourgia (service, help, assistance), 498. See also service
letter of the law, versus spirit of the law, 51–52, 177, 181, 192
letter(s). See also harsh letter
“are weighty and powerful/His letters are weighty and forceful,” 540
as communication method, 545
“For his letters, say they/Because some say,” 539–40
“for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life,” 177–78, 182
“not of the letter, but of the spirit,” 177, 181
of Paul, 545–46, 547–48, 567
“such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such will we be also in deed when we are present,” 541
“That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters,” 539, 547–48
“Ye are our epistle, / You are our letter,” 166 letters of commendation, 165–67, 171–72
“let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit,” 372–73
liberty. See freedom licentiousness, 713, 719
life. See also eternal life; living; mortality “and to the other the savour of life unto life,” 157
as full of affliction, 249
“life unto life,” 57–58
“So then death worketh in us, but life in you,” 246–47
“that mortality might be swallowed up of life,” 274–75
as way of Christian, 383
light/lightness
“and what communion hath light with darkness,” 364
“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness,” 226
“For Satan transformed himself into an angel of light,” 599, 609
“hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God,” 226–28
“lest the light . . . should shine unto them,” 220–21
“light of the glorious gospel of Christ,” 221–23
Paul’s use of term, 232–33, 237
receiving divine, 238
social weight placed on, 119
“that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay?” 115
“When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness?” 114
light of Christ, 187–88, 203–4
living. See also eternal life; life; mortality “but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you,” 728–29
“for ye are the temple of the living God; . . . ,” 365–66, 369
to live and die with someone,” 380
“live in peace,” 745, 749
logos (word), 115, 328, 351, 429–30
longing. See desire longsuffering, 350
loss, 398
love “among false brethren,” 626
“and the God of love and peace shall be with you,” 746, 749
“but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love,” 438–39
“but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you,” 135–36
and condensation of God, 453
“For the love of Christ constraineth us,” 305 of God, 70, 747, 750
of Jesus Christ, 70, 305, 314–15
“love of God . . . , be with you all,” 747, 750
“love unfeigned/genuine love,” 351
as motive for obedience, 300
for sinner, 140–41, 145
“though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved,” 697, 702
“Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth,” 596, 605–6
“Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him,” 140–41
“Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf,” 466–67, 473
lypê (sorrow), 395. See also sorrow

M
Macedonia
“And to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you,” 114
“For, when we were come into Macedonia,” 386
“for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied,” 594, 603–4
“for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia,” 478
generosity of Saints in, 422–37, 454
“I went from thence into Macedonia,” 151
“Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me,” 481
Paul’s anxiety in Troas, 148
made manifest, 301, 302
martyrion (testimony), 100
marvel, 599
Matthias, 77
Maxwell, Neal A., 53, 192
McConkie, Bruce R.
commentary on 2 Corinthians, 42
on godly sorrow, 404–5
on law of Moses, 191
on money and giving, 509
on mortality, 53, 290
on new converts, 171–72
McConkie, Bruce R. (cont.)
on simplicity of gospel, 588
on suffering and glory, 266
on thought and belief, 533
measure/measuring
“but according to the measure of the rule
which God hath distributed to us,”
551–52
“but they measuring themselves by them-
selves, and comparing themselves
among themselves,” 550–51
“But we will not boast of things without our
measure,” 551
“For we stretch not ourselves beyond our
measure/For we are not overextending
ourselves,” 553, 560–61
“measure to reach even unto you,” 552
“Not boasting of things without our measure,
that is, of other men’s labours,” 554, 561
meekness, 516–17
Melchizedek Priesthood, 182n83
menô (remains), 189–90
mercy, 81, 87, 214–15, 228
metamorphoō (to be transformed), 205. See
also transformation
metaschematizō (to change/disguise oneself),
598, 599, 600
mind
“be of one mind/agree with one another,”
745, 749
“For if there be first a willing mind/For if
the willingness is present,” 443
“For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to
God,” 303–4
“hath blinded the minds of them which
believe not,” 220
“or whether we be sober, it is for your
cause,” 304–5
Paul’s use of term, 232
“so your minds should be corrupted from the
simplicity that is in Christ,” 576, 585, 588
ministers, 179–80
“Are they ministers of Christ?,” 618, 654–35
“But in all things approving ourselves as
the ministers of God,” 347–48
“I am more,” 619
“Who also hath made us able ministers of
the new testament,” 176–77
ministration/ministry
“and hath given to us the ministry of reon-
ciliation,” 325–26, 333
“and not to boast in another man’s line of
things made ready to our hand,” 556, 562
“And when I was present with you, and
wanted, I was chargeable to no man,”
593–94
“because I have preached to you the gospel
of God freely?,” 592, 602–3
“But he that glorieth, let him glory in the
Lord,” 556, 562
“But in all things approving ourselves as the
ministers of God,” 347–48
“But what I do, that I will do,” 596, 606
components of authentic, 209n96
condition and character of Paul’s, 338,
345–59
as following scriptural pattern, 257
“For as touching the ministering to the
saints, it is superfluous for me to write
to you,” 477–78
“For if he that cometh preacheth another
Jesus, whom we have not preached,”
576–77
“For if the ministration of condemnation be
glory,” 188
“for we are come as far as to you also in
preaching the gospel of Christ,” 553
“Have I committed an offence in abasing
myself that ye might be exalted,” 591,
602–3
“I am more,” 619
“in labours more abundant,” 619
“I robbed other churches,” 592, 603, 604
means, content, and manner of, 235–36
“ministered by us/delivered by us,” 168–69
“ministration of death/the ministry of
death,” 184–85, 191
and mission of Paul, 548–63
motive in, 683
“much more doth the ministration of righ-
teousness exceed in glory,” 188
nature of authentic, 355–57
of new covenant, 196–209
“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ,”
328
paradoxes in, 249, 267
Paul’s defense of, 357
Paul’s motivation in, 310–11, 315
Paul’s perseverance in, 213–39
“Praying us with much entrey that we
would receive the gift, and take upon us
the fellowship of the ministering to the
saints,” 426–27
qualification for, 160, 211, 247
suffering in, 239–51, 269–70
“taking wages of them, to do you service,”
592–93, 603–4
“that I may cut off occasion from them
which desire occasion,” 596–97, 606
“that the ministry be not blamed,” 346–47
“that we shall be enlarged by you according
to our rule abundantly,” 555
"Therefore seeing we have this ministry," 213
threat of violence in, 249–51
"To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you," 555
validity of Paul's, 310–11
"we persuade men/we keep trying to per-
suade people," 301
"Whiles by the experiment of this minis-
tration," 499
mirror(s), 204–5
mobbings, 349. See also persecution
mochthos (hard work), 626
Monson, Thomas S., 52
"Mormon," 66n10
mortality. See also life
agency and faith in, 53
"For we walk by faith, not by sight," 285–87,
290–91
"knowing that, whilst we are at home in
the body, we are absent from the Lord," 284–85
and presence of God, 290
purpose of, 8–9
"that mortality might be swallowed up of
life," 274–75
tribulation in, 384
Mosaic law. See law of Moses
Moses. See also law of Moses
"And not as Moses, which put a veil over his
face," 197
glory of countenance of, 185–86, 194, 206
"that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is
abolished," 197–99
veil worn by, 197, 206–7
mourning, 390
"mouth, our, is open unto you," 359–60
N
Nabateans, 644
nakedness, 273–74, 277, 280, 627
narkao (to become numb), 593
natural man, 205, 308, 508–9, 524
needy. See poor/poverty
Nehor, 161
Nelson, Russell M., 58
"new, behold, all things are become," 322
new covenant
glory of, 184–95
Holy Ghost and, 193–94
versus law of Moses, 163–64, 173, 177, 181–
83, 190–92, 194–95, 206–7
ministry of, 164–74, 196–209
"Who also hath made us able ministers of
the new testament," 176–77
new creature, 318–24. See also spiritual
rebirth
noëma (mind), 220, 232. See also mind
"nothing, even though I am," 686, 690–91
nous (mind), 232. See also mind
nyn (now), 343
O
Oaks, Dallin H., 49
obedience
"and bringing into captivity every thought
to the obedience of Christ," 527
"And having in a readiness to revenge all
disobedience," 528
"And his inward affection is more abundant
toward you whilst he remembereth the
obedience of you all," 413
"for your professed subjection unto the gos-
pel of Christ," 499–500
love as motive for, 300
partial, 145
and reconciliation to God, 335
and right thinking, 533
"that I might know the proof of you,
whether ye be obedient in all things," 141
"when your obedience is fulfilled," 528
offense, 346, 639, 640
oida (to know), 271, 299, 318, 642. See also
knowing/knowledge
oikodomē (edification), 538. See also
edification
oiktirmos (mercy), 81. See also mercy
Old Testament, 9–13, 366, 446, 723
"old things are passed away," 321–22
"opinion, And I am giving you my, on this
matter," 441, 449
oratory, 532–33, 581, 589
osmē (scent), 156, 157
overextending, 553, 560–61
P
paideuō (to scourage), 354
pain/painfulness, 135, 626
palin (again), 133
panourgia (craftiness), 576
panourgos (uncrulpulous), 698
parade imagery, 155, 156, 158–60
paradise, 11, 48, 656, 671, 672–73. See also
celestial kingdom; degrees of glory;
third heaven
paradoxes, 249, 267
parakaleō (to encourage), 482
paraklēsis (comfort), 81–82, 381. See also comfort
parakōē (disobedience), 528
parents, 695, 702
parissotēros (far greater, even more), 136
paristēmi (to cause to be present), 255
parousia (coming), 389
parrésia (confidence), 380. See also confidence
parthenos (virgin), 575
pathēma (suffering), 84. See also suffering
patience, 348, 350, 686–88, 691
See also payment and financial support
Paul. See also antagonists
on apostasy and Second Coming, 24–25
as Apostle/apostolic authority of, 25–26,
175–76, 229, 337–38, 512–13, 558–59, 561
appearance of, 546n191
authenticity of, as apostle, 7, 21–22
commendation of, 171, 230
condition and character of ministry of, 338,
345–59
confidence of, 178
conscience of, 105, 230
conversion of, 23–24, 181n80, 309
on effects of gospel, 153–62
on evil, 741–42
on faith, 740–41
faith of, 289–90
forgiving nature of, 408
Greek spoken by, 38
humility of, 18–19, 179, 234, 512, 521–23, 547
influences on, 23–24
intention and writings of, 102–3
letters of, 545–46, 547–48, 567
methodology of, 35–36
mission of, 548–63
motivation and dedication of, 310–11, 315
opposition to, 229, 337
oratorical skills of, 581, 589
perseverance of, 213–39
pride and boasting in writings of, 107–11
relationship with Apostles, 75–78
revelatory experiences of, 24
trials of, 211, 228, 239–51, 347, 348–50,
357–59, 610–37, 704
trustworthiness of, 115, 119, 125
understanding and use of Old Testament
by, 9–13
visions of, 668–69, 670–75
weakness of, 8, 45–47, 513, 540, 546–47,
632–33, 649–50, 728, 732
zeal of, 584–85
Paulus, 546n191
payment and financial support. See also Jeru-
salem collection; patronage
“and in all things I have kept myself from
being burdensome unto you, and so will
I keep myself,” 594–95, 604
“And when I was present with you, and
wanted, I was chargeable to no man,”
593–94
“because I have preached to you the gospel
of God freely?,” 592, 602–3
“except it be that I myself was not burden-
some to you?,” 689, 692–93
“forgive me this wrong/Forgive me for this
injustice,” 689, 692–93
“for that which was lacking to me the breth-
ren which came from Macedonia sup-
plied,” 594, 603–4
“For what is it wherein ye were inferior to
other churches/In what respect, then,
were you made to feel less important
than the other churches,” 688, 692–93
“I robbed other churches,” 592, 603, 604
Paul’s refusal of, 592–96, 601–6, 689,
692–93
for Sophists, 602
“taking wages of them, to do you service/
by taking their support to serve you,”
592–93, 603–4
“Wherefore? because I love you not? God
knoweth,” 596, 605–6
peace, 70, 745, 746, 749
peddlars, 160
peithō (confidence), 134. See also confidence
penēs (poor), 493, 506. See also poor/poverty
Penrose, Charles W., 54
pepoithēsis (confidence), 174–75. See also
confidence
perfection
“and this also we wish, even your perfec-
tion/Indeed this is what we pray for:
your inner strength,” 738–39, 743
“Be perfect/mend your ways,” 745, 748
“for my strength is made perfect in weak-
ness/for my power is brought to perfec-
tion in weakness,” 665, 680–81
of Jesus Christ, 750n170
“perfecting holiness in the fear of God,”
373–74, 375–76
peripateō (to walk around, comport oneself),
217, 520, 700
perish/perishing, 156. See also death
perisseuō (to abound), 84, 188
persecution. See also afflictions; suffering; tri-
als; tribulation
bearing, 667
“by mine own countrymen,” 624–25
“in deaths oft/often in danger of death,” 621
“in prisons more frequent/with far more
imprisonments,” 620–21
“in stripes above measure/with severe beat-
ings,” 619–20
"In stripes/with beatings," 349
"Of the Jews five times received I forty
stripes save one," 621–22, 635
"once was I stoned," 622–23
of Paul, 348–50, 357–59, 619–25, 635
"Persecuted, but not forsaken," 243
"Thrice was I beaten with rods," 622
perseverance, 213–39
persuasion, 301
Peter, 579–80, 586, 670
Petersen, Mark E., 73
phanerōsis (open proclamation, manifesta-
tion), 217–18, 230–31
phaulos (bad), 289
Philippi, 603, 604
phōs (light), 226, 232–33. See also light/
fear
phōtos (light, enlightenment), 221, 227,
232–33, 237. See also light/lightness
phronēō (to think/hold an opinion), 745
physiognomy, 291–92, 521, 530, 546
Pingree, Anne C., 58
pistis (faith), 129, 253, 285, 291. See also faith
plainness of speech, 196–97
pleading, 426–27
pledge, 123–24
plousios (rich), 439, 448. See also riches
ploutizō (to be made rich), 496. See also
riches
pneuma (spirit), 177, 187, 192, 203–4, 577. See also
spirit
Pneumatics, 317
pollūn (many), 95
pompa triumphalis, 155, 156, 158–60
poor/poverty. See also Jerusalem collection
“As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad;
he hath given to the poor: his righteous-
ness remaineth for ever,” 493–94, 505
“as poor, yet making many rich,” 354–55,
507
Ebionites on, 586
of Jesus Christ, 453–54
in Jewish society, 506–7
“that ye through his poverty might be rich,”
440, 448, 452–53, 454–55
“though he was rich, yet for your sakes he
became poor,” 439–40, 448, 452–53
possessions, 355, 695, 702
power
“according to the power which the Lord
hath given me to edification,” 740
“but is mighty in you/but is powerful
among you,” 726–27, 731
“but we shall live with him by the power of
God toward you,” 728–29
enabling power, 102, 682
“for my power is brought to perfection in
weakness,” 665, 680–81
“For to their power, I bear record, yea, and
beyond their power they were willing of
themselves,” 426, 432
of God, 93–94, 97, 267, 352
“I will glory of the things which concern
mine infirmities,” 642
“power of God/by God’s power,” 352
“that the excellency of the power may be of
God, and not of us,” 241–42
“that the power of Christ may rest upon
me,” 666
“Who is weak, and I am not weak?,” 638–39,
640
“yet he liveth by the power of God,” 727–28,
731–32
praise, 353, 483
Pratt, Orson, 45, 48, 51–52
praus (gentle friendliness), 517
prautēs (humility), 516–17. See also humility
pray/prayer
“And by their prayer for you, which long
after you,” 501, 508
“Indeed this is what we pray for: your inner
strength,” 738–39, 743
of Jesus Christ in Americas, 657
74, 674–75
“Now I pray to God that ye do no evil,”
735–36, 742
“Praying us with much entreaty that we
would receive the gift, and take upon us
the fellowship of the ministering to the
saints,” 426–27
“that for the gift bestowed upon us by the
means of many persons thanks may be
given by many on our behalf, 95
“Ye also helping together by prayer for us,”
94–95
premortal life, 290
preparation
“and find you unprepared,” 481
“And make up beforehand your bounty,
whereof ye had notice before,” 483
for eternal life, 277
“Now he that hath wrought us for the self-
same thing is God,” 275
prescripts, 64
presence. See also absence
“and the God of love and peace shall be
with you,” 746, 749
“but being absent am bold toward you,” 518
“But I beseech you that I may not be bold
when I am present,” 518–19
presence (cont.)
of God, 186, 255, 284–85, 287, 290, 292, 301, 376, 746, 749
“lest being present I should use sharpness,” 739
“such as we are in word by letters when we
are absent, such will we be also in deed
when we are present,” 541
pressure, 638, 640
pride. See also boasting
“And lest I should be exalted above mea-
sure,” 661
“but give you occasion to glory on our
behalf,” 302–3
of Corinthian Saints, 711
“great is my glorying of you/I have great
pride in you,” 380–81
mutual, between Paul and Corinthians, 106
“Now the reason for our pride is this,” 99–100
in Paul’s writings, 107–11
in Saints’ readiness to complete Jerusalem
collection, 484
“that we are your rejoicing,” 104
“that ye may have somewhat to answer
them which glory in appearance,” 303
priestcraft, 161
Prisca, 602
prisoners, 333
prison/imprisonment, 349, 620–21, 644, 645
proeipon (to tell beforehand), 724
“promises, having therefore these,” 372
proof, 141, 725–26, 730
propemō (to send), 114
prophecy, 193–94, 630–31
prosanaplerō (to fill up), 498
pseudomai (to lie), 642–43
psychē (soul), 128
punishment
“And we are ready to punish all disobedience,” 528
“In stripes/with beatings,” 349, 619–20
of sinner, 145
“Sufficient to such a man is this punish-
ment,” 139
“which was inflicted of many/imposed by
the majority,” 139
purity, 350, 372–73, 375, 576, 585, 588. See also
impurity
Q
gal wā homer argument, 191–92, 209n196
qualification
“And who is sufficient for these things?,” 157, 179
of Apostles, 75
“but our sufficiency is of God,” 175–76
“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to
think any thing as of ourselves,” 175
to preach gospel, 160, 211, 247
Quorum of Apostles, 26–27, 75–78, 579
R
raised up, 254
reach, 553
readiness
“Behold, the third time I am ready to come
to you,” 694, 701
to complete Jerusalem collection, 484
“that, as I said, ye may be ready,” 480–81
“that Achaia was ready a year ago,” 478–79
reaping, 489
reason, 531
rebirth, spiritual, 44–45, 124n245, 318–24
reciprocity, 451n190
recompense, 360
reconciliation, 33–34, 35, 54–55, 324–36,
337–38, 374–75, 393, 405–6, 409
regret, 396
rejoicing. See also gladness; happiness; joy
“As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing,” 354
“Finally, brethren, farewell/Finally,
brothers and sisters, rejoice,” 744–45,
748
“For our rejoicing is this/Now the reason
for our pride is this,” 99–100
“For we are glad, when we are weak,/For
we rejoice when we are weak,” 738, 743
“I rejoice therefore that I have confidence
in you in all things,” 414–15
“lest, when I came, I should have sorrow
from them of whom I ought to rejoice,” 134
“Now I rejoice, not that ye were made
sorry,” 397
“so that I rejoiced the more,” 390–91
in suffering, 108
“that we are your rejoicing,” 104
relief, 444–45
renewal, through suffering, 259–68
repentance
“but that ye sorrowed to repentance,” 397
and dwelling with God, 376
and forgiveness of sinner, 145
“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to
salvation not to be repented of,” 398
and godly sorrow, 8, 49–50, 405, 406
“I do not repent/I do not regret it,” 396
“I shall bewail many which have sinned
already and have not repented,” 712–15,
718
in Paul’s writings, 404
“though I did repent—even though I initially regretted it,” 396
representatives of Christ, 328, 334
reprobates, 734–35, 737, 741
reputation, and generosity, 433–34
rest, 149, 386–87
Restoration, of Twelve Apostles, 77
restraint, 360, 361
resurrection
and becoming “new creature,” 321
“but in God which raiseth the dead,” 93–94
“but unto him which died for them, and rose again,” 308–9
and faith in God, 97
glory in, 266
hope and assurance of, 269
“Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus,” 254
liberation through, 317
“Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God,” 275
Paul’s knowledge of, 257–58, 271, 276, 278–82
“that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body,” 244
revelation. See also vision(s)
gospel as received through, 531, 670
“I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord,” 653–54
Paul’s experiences with, 24
“through the abundance of the revelations,” 660–61, 678–79
revenge, 401, 528
reverence, 373–74, 375–76
rhyomai (delivered), 94
Richards, Franklin D., 57–58
Richards, LeGrand, 49
riches
“as poor, yet making many rich,” 354–55, 507
“Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness,” 496–97, 503
Ebionites on, 586
“How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberalty,” 424–26, 432
seeking after, 508–9
“that ye through his poverty might be rich,” 440, 448, 452–53, 454–55
“though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor,” 439–40, 448, 452–53
right, doing, 462, 470–71, 736, 742
righteousness
“by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,” 352
“his righteousness remaineth for ever,” 493–94, 505
“much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory,” 188
“multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness,” 495–96, 503
sowing, 507
“that we might be made the righteousness of God in him,” 329–30, 335–36
“Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness,” 599–600, 609
and tribulation, 384
wealth through, 440
“what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness,” 363–64
right hand, 352
ring-composition, 211
robbers, 624
Roman citizenship, 622
“rule, but according to the measure of the, which God hath distributed to us,” 551–52
S
Sabin, Gary B., 46
saints, 68, 73–74. See also Corinthian Saints
salvation. See also eternal life
“and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee,” 341–42
“And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves,” 308
Augustine on faith and, 285–86
“behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation,” 342–43
“but unto him which died for them, and rose again,” 308–9
divine promises regarding, 120
false doctrine concerning, 30–31
“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of,” 398
“in them that are saved,” 156
and new covenant, 207
“now is the day of salvation,” 339–44
“or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation,” 85
Paul’s knowledge of, 257–58
philosophical views on, 585–86
and repentance, 405
saving work of Godhead, 120–26
and suffering in discipleship, 265
“that if one died for all—that one man died for all humankind,” 306
through Jesus Christ, 182–83, 315–16, 317
sanctification, 373–74, 375–76
sarx (body, flesh), 115, 373, 386, 524. See also body; flesh
Satan
“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty,” 575–76
detecting, 56–57
forgiveness as protection against, 146–47
“For Satan transformed himself into an angel of light,” 599, 609
“for we are not ignorant of his devices,” 143
“god of this world,” 219–20, 231–32
“hath blinded the minds of them which believe not,” 220
“Lest Satan should get an advantage of us,” 143
“messenger of Satan,” 662–64
Paul on, 588
“Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness,” 599–600, 609
“what concord hath Christ with Belial,” 364
satire, 564, 588, 689
saving resources, 695, 702
Scott, Richard G., 46
scourged, 354
sea and sea travel, 152, 623, 625, 636
sealing/sealed, 123, 125–26
2 Corinthians
audience of, 72–73
authenticity and integrity of, 2–5
background to, 19–23
closing of, 744–51
as composition of separate fragments, 2–3
context of, 13–19
impact of, 35, 750–51
important Greek manuscripts and variants, 37–38
LDS leaders’ use of, 42–60
modern relevance of, 1–2
Old Testament used in, 9–13, 366, 446, 723
Paul’s methodology for, 35–36
purpose of, 23–27, 34
scholarship on, 61
structure and organization of, 5–9
translation of, 38–40
Second Coming, 24–25, 278, 280–82
Secundus, 472
seed
“multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness,” 495–96, 503
“Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food,” 494–95, 506
self-aggrandizement, 234, 316
self-commendation. See also boasting;
self-promotion
“No we begin again to commend ourselves,” 165
“For not he that commendeth himself is approved,” 556, 562–63
“make ourselves of the number or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves,” 549–50
of Paul, 171, 311, 314, 559
self-defense
“Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you?” 706–7
“yea, what clearing of yourselves/indeed what eagerness to defend yourselves,” 400, 407
self-examination, plea for, 733–44
selfishness, 711
self-praise. See boasting
self-promotion, 234, 549–50. See also boasting;
self-commendation
self-sacrifice, 426, 428, 432
sémeion (sign, token), 686–87, 688
Septuagint, 9–10
serpent, 575–76
servants, 225, 235. See also slaves/slavery
service
in Christianity, 176, 180–81
“For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints,” 497–98
purpose of, 602
“Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him,” 287–88
“While by the experiment of this ministration,” 499
sexual immorality, 9, 713, 719
shame. See also honor; humiliation
“But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty,” 215–16
“I am not ashamed/I have not been put to shame,” 412
“I should not be ashamed/I will not be ashamed of it,” 539, 544–45
“I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak,” 616–17
“we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting,” 482, 485–86
shared experience, suffering as, 88–89
sharing
“and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men,” 500–501
grace, 506
sharpness, 739
shine
“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness,” 226
“hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God,” 226–28
shipwreck, 623, 636
signs, 688, 691–92
Silas, 20, 116, 119
simplicity, 100–101, 576, 585, 588
sincerity, 100–101, 438–39, 576, 585, 588
sinner
forgiveness for, 138–47
“I shall bewail many which have sinned already and have not repented,” 712–15, 718
“I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other,” 724–25, 729
sin(s)
“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin,” 329
“Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted,” 591, 601
“I shall bewail many which have sinned already and have not repented,” 712–15, 718
and judgment and reconciliation, 331–33 and law, 182
“not imputing their trespasses unto them/not counting their transgressions against them,” 327
skandalizó (to cause to sin/to give offense), 639
skēnopoios (tent maker), 1946
skolops (stake, splinter, thorn), 662, 679
slander, 353
slap, 616, 629–30
slaves/slavery, 225, 2361155, 450, 615, 629–30. See also captivity
sleep, 626
smell, 156, 159–60
smite, 616, 629–30
Smith, Joseph, 48, 49, 186992, 294, 672, 673
Smith, Joseph F., 48, 50, 59
Smith, Joseph Fielding, 41
Snow, Lorenzo, 54
social status and mobility, 564–65
Sopater, 472
Sophistry, 30–31, 526, 531–32, 565, 602, 669, 670
sorrow
“As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing,” 354
“but that ye sorrowed to repentance,” 397
“but the sorrow of the world worketh death,” 399
“For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort,” 399
“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of,” 398
“For if I make you sorry/For if I cause you sorrow,” 133–34
“for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry,” 396
“For though I made you sorry with a letter,” 395–96
“for ye were made sorry after a godly manner,” 397–98
godly, 49–50, 38154, 397–99, 404–5, 406
“lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice,” 134
“lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow,” 140
“not that ye should be grieved,” 135
“Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry,” 397
“that I would not come again to you in heaviness,” 133
“who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?,” 134
sōtēria (salvation), 85
soul. See spirit
sowing generously, 487–509
“spare, that, if I come again, I will not,” 725, 730–31
speak
“That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord,” 612–13
unspeakable gift, 502
unspeakable things, 11, 48, 657, 674–75
“we also believe, and therefore speak,” 254
“we speak before God in Christ,” 708, 714, 715
speech
“and his speech contemptible,” 540–41
“Great is my boldness of speech toward you,” 380
plainness of, 196–97
spend/spent, 696, 703, 704
spice peddlars, 160
spirit
“And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you,” 696, 703, 704
“because his spirit was refreshed by you all,” 411–12
bodiless, 277
“indeed this is what we pray for: your inner strength,” 738–39, 743
through Jesus Christ, 681–82
through weakness, 731
stretching, 553, 560–61
strife, 711
stripes (beatings), 349, 619–20, 621–22, 635
suffering. See also afflictions; persecution;
thorn in the flesh; trials; tribulation;
weakness
for Christ’s sake, 667
“For ye suffer/ford ye endure,” 615, 629
glory through, 264–65, 267
of Jesus Christ, 88, 247, 704
“knowing, that as ye are partakers of the
sufferings, so shall ye be also of the con-
solation,” 86
in ministry, 239–51, 269–70
of Paul, 211, 239–51, 610–37, 704
purpose of, 265
as redemptive, 90–97
rejoicing in, 108, 110
renewal through, 259–68
self-imposed, 683n101
as shared experience, 88–89
thanksgiving for godly comfort in, 79–89
sufficiency, 175–76, 492–93, 505
super-apostles, 512, 571–72, 578–81, 685–86,
690, 692, 700, 716. See also Judaizers
synechô (to urge), 305
syneidēsis (conscience), 100, 218, 302. See also
conscience
synegô (to work together with), 340
synistēmi (to commend), 230, 302. See also
commendation
synoché (anguish), 135
systatikai epistolai (letters of recommen-
dation), 165–67
T
taking advantage, 379, 698–99, 700, 704–5
tapeinos (humble), 517–18
Taylor, John, 45, 52, 55–56, 57
teleô (tor bring to completion, perfection),
665
telos (end, outcome), 198–99
temple, 51, 365–66, 369
terrestrial kingdom, 296n119
test
“But I trust that ye shall know that we are
not reprobates,” 735
“except ye be reprobates/unless, of course,
you fail the test,” 734–35, 741
“not that we should appear approved/not so that we will appear to have passed
the test,” 736, 742
“though we be as reprobates/even if we
seem to have failed the test,” 737
Textus Receptus, 38, 653, 697
thanatos (death), 243, 246. See also death
thanks/thanksgiving
“but is abundant also by many thanksgiv-
ingS unto God,” 498–99, 507–8
for godly comfort in suffering, 79–89
“Now thanks be unto God, which always
causeth us to triumph in Christ,” 154–55
“Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable
gift,” 502
“that for the gift bestowed upon us by the
means of many persons thanks may be
given by many on our behalf, 95
“that the abundant grace might through the
thanksgiving of many redound to the
glory of God, 255–56, 258–59
“which causeth through us thanksgiving to
God,” 497, 508
tharreō (to be confident), 284. See also
certainty
theophany, 300, 309
theosis, 208–9
thesaurōs (treasure), 240–41
Thessalonian Saints, 607, 636n382
thieves, 624
third heaven, 48–49, 656, 671–72. See also
celestial kingdom; paradise
third person, Paul’s use of, 654, 669–70, 675–76
third time
“Behold, the third time I am ready to come
to you,” 694, 701
“This is the third time I am coming to you,” 732–23, 739
thirst, 626–27
thlipsis (tribulation), 82–83, 88, 135. See also
tribulation
thorn in the flesh, 8, 45–47, 546–47, 649–50, 661–64, 676, 679–81
thought
“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to
think any thing as of ourselves,” 175
right thinking, 533
time. See also year
“behold, now is the accepted time; behold,
now is the day of salvation,” 342–43
“I have heard thee in a time accepted/At a
favorable time I heard you,” 344
“though it were but for a season,” 396
“who have begun before, not only to do, but
also to be forward a year ago,” 441–42, 449
Timothy, 67
circumcision of, 117, 150
as co-sender of 2 Corinthians, 72
joins Paul in Corinth, 20
as Paul’s companion in Corinth, 116–17, 119
trying and comforting of, 93, 84–85, 88–89
Titus
“And his inward affection is more abundant
toward you whilst he remembereth the
obedience of you all,” 413
“And not by his coming only, but by the
consolation wherewith he was com-
forted in you,” 389
“And we have sent with him the brother,
whose praise is in the gospel throughout
all the churches,” 458–59, 472
“because his spirit was refreshed by you
all,” 411–12
“because I found not Titus my brother,” 150
“but as we spake all things to you in truth,
even so our boasting, which I made
before Titus, is found a truth,” 412–13, 416
“but being more forward, of his own accord
he went unto you,” 458, 468–69
and delivery of harsh letter, 415
desire to return to Corinth, 421
“Did I make a gain of you by any of them
whom I sent unto you?,” 698–99, 704–5
“Did Titus make a gain of you?,” 700, 704–5
“For if I have boasted any thing to him of
you,” 412
“For indeed he accepted the exhortation,” 458
“how with fear and trembling ye received
him,” 413–14, 417
“I desired Titus, and with him I sent a
brother,” 699–700
“Insomuch that we desired Titus/So we
encouraged Titus,” 428
and Jerusalem collection, 4, 428–29, 434
joy in report of, 385–93
mission of, 456–74
“Nevertheless God, that comforteth those
that are cast down, comforted us by the
coming of Titus,” 388–89
“or our brethren be inquired of, they are
the messengers of the churches, and the
glory of Christ,” 465–66, 473
Paul’s relationship with, 473–74
plea based on report of, 377–85
“that as he had begun, so he would also fin-
ish in you the same grace also,” 428–29
Titus (cont.)
in Troas, 150, 152
visits Corinthian Saints, 337
“Whether any do inquire of Titus, he is my
partner and fellowhelper concerning
you,” 463–64, 473
“who was also chosen of the churches to
travel with us with this grace, which is
administered by us,” 459–60
“yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for
the joy of Titus,” 411
toil, 626. See also work
tokens of an apostle, 687
tolerance, 55
tolmao (to be bold), 519. See also boldness
trade, in Corinth, 15–16
transformation. See also change
into Christ’s image, 252
through Atonement, 323–24
“transforming themselves into the apostles
of Christ,” 598–99, 608–9
transgressions, 327. See also sin(s)
transparency, 470–71
travel, 624. See also sea and sea travel
treasures in earthen vessels, 55–56, 240–41
“trembling, how with fear and, ye received
him,” 413–14, 417
trials, 46–47, 228, 347, 619–27, 632, 634–37,
681–82. See also afflictions; persecution;
suffering; thorn in the flesh; tribulation;
weakness
tribulation. See also afflictions; persecution;
suffering; thorn in the flesh; trials;
weakness
“I am exceeding joyful in all our tribula-
tion,” 382
“in afflictions/in tribulations,” 348
“in distresses/in difficulties,” 348
joy through, 382, 384, 424–26, 432
in mortality, 384
“without were fightings, within were fears/
struggles on the outside, fears within,”
387–88
tris (three times), 663–64. See also third time
triumphal parade, 155, 156, 158–60
Troas, Paul’s anxiety in, 147–52, 391
tromos (trembling), 414
troubled
“but we were troubled on every side/rather
we were afflicted in every way,” 387
“We are troubled on every side, yet not dis-
tressed,” 242
trust and trustworthiness. See also faith
“and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by
us,” 117–18
“And such trust have we through Christ to
God-ward,” 174–75
of God and Paul, 115, 119, 125
in God’s power over death, 97
in Jesus Christ, 235
“that we should not trust in ourselves,” 93
truth(s)
“As the truth of Christ is in me,” 595, 604–5
“but as we spake all things to you in truth,
even so our boasting, which I made
before Titus, is found a truth,” 412–13,
416
“but by manifestation of the truth,” 217–18
“but for the truth/but for the sake of truth,”
738, 743
“By the word of truth/by truthful speech,”
351
“for I will say the truth/for I will speak the
truth,” 659, 676
“For we can do nothing against the truth,”
737–38, 743
“knoweth that I lie not/knows that I do not
lie,” 642–43
Paul as proclaimer of, 229
unspeakable, 11, 48, 657, 674–75
tumults, 349, 711
Twelve Apostles. See Apostle(s); Quorum of
Apostles
U
Uchtdorf, Dieter F., 50, 52–53
unbelievers, warning against too familiar
association with, 362–69, 371–76
uncleanness, 366–67, 713. See also filthiness
understanding
“and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to
the end,” 103–4
“are not wise/they lack understanding,” 551
“As also ye have acknowledged us in part,”
104
“For we write none other things unto you,
than what ye read or acknowledge,”
102–3
unity, 27, 109, 143, 421, 745, 749
unjust treatment, 379
unrighteousness, 363–64
unspeakable gift, 502
unspeakable things, 11, 48, 657, 674–75
V
veil, 197–203, 206–7, 231
violence, threat of, in ministry, 249–51. See
also beatings
“virgin, for I have espoused you to one hus-
band, that I may present you as a chaste,
to Christ,” 574–75, 584
visible things. See also invisible things
“for the things which are seen are temporal,”
203
importance of, 291
“While we look not at the things which are seen,” 262
vision(s), 649–84
“and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter,” 657
“And I knew a man in Christ/I know a person in Christ,” 654, 669–70
“For though I would desire to glory/For even if I wanted to boast,” 658–59
given to Peter, 670
“How that he was caught up into paradise/that he was taken up into paradise,” 656
“I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord,” 653–54
of Paul, 668–69, 670–75
“such an one caught up to the third heaven/who was taken up to the third heaven,” 656
“through the abundance of the revelations/because of the extraordinary nature of the revelations,” 660–61, 678–79
“whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth,” 654–55, 656
“yet of myself I will not glory/but about myself, I will not boast,” 658, 675–76

W
walk/walking, 700–701
warfare, language of, 352, 514–15, 523–34
waters, dangers of, 624, 636
weakness. See also suffering; thorn in the flesh; trials
and apostolic authority, 170, 513
and enabling power, 102, 682
“for my strength is made perfect in weakness,” 8, 665, 680–81
“For though he was crucified through weakness,” 8, 727, 731–32
“For we also are weak in him,” 728, 732
“For we are glad, when we are weak,/For we rejoice when we are weak,” 738, 743
“for when I am weak, then am I strong,” 667–68
and humility of Paul, 234
“I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak,” 616–17
“I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities/I will glory in my weakness,” 642
as sign of apostleship, 676, 678
strength through, 731

Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities/
Therefore I delight in weaknesses,” 666–67
“Therefore will most gladly boast in my weaknesses,” 665–66, 682–83
tolerance for, 55
“which to you-ward is not weak/who is not weak in dealing with you,” 726, 730–31
“Who is weak, and I am not weak?,” 638–39, 640
wealth. See riches
weapon(s). See also warfare, language of
“but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds,” 525–26
“by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,” 352
“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal,” 525
God-empowered, 525–26, 530
“weariness, In, and painfulness/with hard work and toil,” 626
welfare. See Jerusalem collection
whipping, 349, 619–20, 621–22, 635
whisperings, 711
wilderness, 625
willingness
“and declaration of your ready mind/as well to show our willingness to help,” 460–61
“but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you,” 458, 468–69
“For if there be first a willing mind/If the willingness is present,” 443
“For indeed he accepted the exhortation,” 458
“I know the forwardness of your mind/I know your willingness,” 478
will of God, 178–79, 428, 718
Wirthlin, Joseph B., 47–48
wisdom
“are not wise/they lack understanding,” 551
“For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise,” 614–15, 629
“not with fleshly wisdom/not with human wisdom,” 101
witness(es)
God as, 127–28, 129
“In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established,” 723–24, 729
law of, 47–48, 723–24, 729
“Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul,” 127–28
wonder(s), 599, 688, 691–92
word of God
abuse of, 229
“For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God,” 157
Word of God (cont.)
“nor handling the word of God deceitfully/
    nor distorting the word of God,” 217
peddling, 160–61, 163
smell of, 160
words, unspeakable, 11, 48, 657, 674–75
work, 626
workers, 340
works, 492–93, 505, 601, 609
world, 219–20, 231–32
worldly standards/worldly things, 58–59, 355–
    520, 524–25, 530, 613–14, 628–29
wrath, 710
wrong, doing, 735–36, 742
wronging others, 379, 688, 689, 692–93. See also burden

Y
year
“that Achaia was ready a year ago,” 478–79
“who have begun before, not only to do, but
    also to be forward a year ago,” 441–42, 449
yearn
“And by their prayer for you, which long
    after you,” 501, 508
“earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with
    our house which is from heaven,” 273
“yoked, Be ye not unequally together with
    unbelievers,” 363, 369
Young, Brigham, 24836, 43, 52, 53, 54–55, 57, 59, 278

Z
zeal, 401, 479, 584–85. See also eagerness
zēloō (to be jealous), 574, 584