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The Epistle to the Ephesians



BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY
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S. Kent Brown

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About the Brigham Young University New Testament Commentary Series

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 benefitted 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 LDS Church 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.

The format also varies moderately from volume to volume regarding introductory materials and the style of commentary. Throughout, Greek and Hebrew terms appear in transliterated form in conformity with standards adopted by the Society of Biblical Literature. In some cases, a volume reproduces the Greek New Testament text based on the Greek text published by the Society of Biblical Literature (2010) or draws upon the twenty-eighth edition of the Nestle-Aland text in *Novum Testamentum Graece* (2012).

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“I BOW MY KNEES” (3:14–21)

King James Translation

14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; 17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. 20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, 21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

New Rendition

14 For this reason, I kneel before the Father 15 (from whom every family in the heavenly realms and on earth derives its name) 16 so that according to the wealth of his glory he may grant that you be strengthened with power in the inner person through his Spirit. 17 I pray that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, you being rooted and grounded in love, 18 so that you may be able to grasp with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

20 Now to the one who is able, above all, to do more abundantly whatever we ask or consider thoughtfully, according to the power acting in us—21 to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations of time and forevermore, Amen.

Notes on 3:14–21

3:14 For this cause: This phrase connects back to the same phrase in 3:1 (τούτου χάριν, *toutou charin*). It is evident that Paul began to write one thing, and then, when his thoughts were interrupted by the memory of his vision of Jesus, he digressed for a few lines before resuming his original train of thought.¹³¹

I bow my knees: This action forms the ultimate gesture of submission. In this case, Paul submits himself in prayer to God on behalf of his readers. In the Septuagint, the verb κάμπω (*kampō*), “to bow,” always joined to the term “knee,” refers to the act of praying or petitioning for a blessing

131. Larkin, *Handbook*, 60; Merkle, *Guide*, 103.

(see LXX 4 Kgs. 1:13 [2 Kgs. 1:13 KJV]; LXX 1 Chr. 29:20; and LXX 2 Chr. 6:13; 29:29). The only exception appears in LXX Isaiah 45:23–24, where we read God’s words: “By myself I swear . . . that to me every knee shall bend, and every tongue shall swear by God.”¹³² In this case, God utters an oath that, at the end-time, the peoples of the earth will acknowledge him as their Lord and King. We find a similar sentiment in the New Testament at Romans 14:11 and Philippians 2:10–11, wherein Jesus Christ is to be the object of veneration. In a different vein, one observes that kneeling in worship occurs infrequently in the Old Testament and therefore may point to this kind of action as a rarity in ancient worship rather than the rule. Even in Jesus’ story about the Pharisee and the publican, both stood as they prayed (see Luke 18:11, 13; see also Mark 11:25 and Rom. 5:2).¹³³

With one exception (see Heb. 12:12, “the feeble knees”), throughout the New Testament, the noun for “knee” (γόνα, *gonu*) appears only in instances of kneeling down or prostrating oneself. Such an act may occur when praying (see Luke 22:41 and Acts 7:60), when seeking a blessing (see Matt. 17:14 and Mark 1:40; 10:17), or when paying homage, whether sincere or not (see Matt. 27:29; Rom. 14:10–11; and Philip. 2:10).¹³⁴

the Father: According to 2:18, steadfast believers, both Jew and Gentile, enjoy “access by one Spirit unto the Father.” This unspeakable opportunity to approach the God of the universe, to make of him one’s counselor and guide, paints a most inviting picture for mere humans. Now, in 3:14–15, readers learn that the fatherhood of God reaches far beyond the earth, embracing what is called “the whole family in heaven and earth” (better, “every family”). Furthermore, it is worth noting that Paul does not identify “the Father” with “the Lord,” a title reserved for Jesus (κύριος, *kyrios*). Nor is God called anyone’s “master” (δεσπότης, *despotēs*).¹³⁵

The textual evidence leaves the words “the Father” isolated, omitting the later-added phrase “of the Lord Jesus Christ” and preparing for the line that he is the one for “whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named” (3:15). As already noted, the phrase “of the Lord Jesus Christ” appears to be a later scribal addition (see the Note below) and limits the fatherhood of God to just Jesus Christ, effectively diminishing his relationship to humankind

132. Heinrich Schlier, *TDNT*, 3:594–95; BDAG, 507.

133. Barth, *Ephesians*, 1:377–79; Best, *Ephesians*, 336–37; Fowl, *Ephesians*, 118–19.

134. Heinrich Schlier, *TDNT*, 1:738; BDAG, 205.

135. Schrenk and Quell, *TDNT*, 5:1009.

and those who inhabit heaven.¹³⁶ Not incidentally, the title “Father” (πατήρ, *patēr*) prepares us to meet the noun “family” in 3:15, which is spelled similarly and sounds much the same (πατριά, *patria*).

Thus, this passage and 2:18 set “the Father” by himself. Elsewhere in the epistle, we find this title tied to the term for God (θεός, *theos*; see 1:2; 4:6; 5:20; 6:23) or to the “Lord Jesus Christ” (1:3). In its isolated state, as here, it relates to two personality traits that emerge in the New Testament. First, we notice that it has to do with his absolute sovereignty, his lordship, a characteristic that is often emphasized by pairing the titles God and the Father. As our sovereign, he demands our obedience, which, generously, leads to our sanctification (see 2 Cor. 7:1; Heb. 12:9–10; and 1 Pet. 1:2) and, of course, brings celestial rewards in the next life (see 1 Thes. 3:13). Christ is the one who has introduced us to his Father, the Ruling One, “the Father of glory” (1:17), and will, in that distant day, yield up all things into the hands of the Father (see 1 Cor. 15:24–28). Second, it is from the Father that saving grace rolls forth into our lives. This gift is joined most often with other gifts, such as mercy, comfort, hope, and love (see 2 Cor. 1:3–4; 2 Thes. 2:16–17; 1 Pet. 1:3; and Jude 1:1–2). Direct “access . . . unto the Father” is one of those gifts (2:18; see also Rom. 5:2). Moreover, the Holy Spirit is always the one who leads us to him, whether we come as individuals or as a broader community, marking us as God’s children (see Rom. 8:14;¹³⁷ the Notes on 2:18; 3:6; 5:1; 6:2; and the Analysis of 3:14–21).

of our Lord Jesus Christ: The manuscript evidence is split, though not evenly, on whether this expression was original; it is missing from a lot of important texts, including the earliest, \mathfrak{P}^{46} (c. AD 200). It appears to be a gloss by a scribe who thought that, in the rhythm of the passage’s language, this worshipful line should be added. One point is that purposely omitting this line would make no sense if it was really a part of the text. Hence, the texts that do not preserve this phrase are original.¹³⁸

3:15 Of whom: This prepositional phrase bears on the origin or source of the naming, not on the action of giving a name. That is to say, we are not talking about the Father as the giver of the names whereby he effectively confers a reality or existence on those in heaven and on earth, as did Adam

136. Best, *Ephesians*, 337.

137. Schrenk and Quell, *TDNT*, 5:1010–11.

138. Barth, *Ephesians*, 1:367; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 196; Best, *Ephesians*, 337; Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 535.

when he gave names to the animals (see Gen. 2:19–20 and Moses 3:19–20). Rather, we take our names from him as from an easily accessible source and without compulsory means.¹³⁹ He is our father, after all, and we derive our existence and meaning from him.

the whole family: A better translation is “every family” (NR). The expression “the whole family” would require the definite article in the Greek text, which is not present.¹⁴⁰ Hence, “every family” or “each family” are better renditions.¹⁴¹ This seemingly small distinction impacts how we see family life in heaven.

family: All commentators notice the obvious connection between the term for “father” (πατήρ, *patēr*) and “family” (πατριά, *patria*). This similarity, both in sound and spelling, surely emphasizes the inner link between the Father and families. On a very connected level, he is intimately bound to the existence of and the enduring, sacred qualities of families. That has been the case since the days of Adam and Eve and will continue to be so, as Jesus himself declared. For him, the first marriage pointed decisively to the eternal continuation of marriage and, by extension, to everlasting family relationships. We hear his words spoken to the Pharisees in response to their question about divorce. The matter reposed in the Father’s involvement in the creation of Adam and Eve, followed by their marriage under his hand. To the Pharisees, Jesus declared, “He which made [Adam and Eve] at the beginning made them male and female . . . and they twain shall be one flesh. . . . What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matt. 19:4–6; see also Mark 10:6–9).

On the other side of this relationship, families themselves owe their character of holiness to the special ceremonies that inaugurate family units in marriages. This sanctified sense started when God performed the first marriage, that of Adam and Eve, as we have just established (see Gen. 2:18, 21–24; Moses 3:18, 21–24;¹⁴² and the Notes on 2:18–19). In this case, the family is not the church or the body of Christ. Rather, Paul envisions a real family with everlasting family ties. And all is made possible through Christ. For, as we were taught earlier in this letter, God will “gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth” (1:10; see also

139. Best, *Ephesians*, 338; Merkle, *Guide*, 104; contra Fowl, *Ephesians*, 119.

140. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 202; Best, *Ephesians*, 338.

141. Schrenk and Quell, *TDNT*, 5:1018.

142. The First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.” *Ensign* 25, no. 11 (November 1995): 102.

Rom. 8:14, “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God”; and the Note on 5:1).¹⁴³

in heaven: Do we detect more than a whiff of eternal family relationships? Part of that relationship, of course, rests in the kinship of all humankind with the Father. But this verse invites readers, including Paul’s readers, to think of family ties that persist into heaven, especially in light of the preceding words, “every family.” This possibility has sent commentators scrambling to find reasons to deny such bonds. It is almost comical to see them bobbing and weaving and running for cover behind Jesus’ words quoted in Mark 12:25: “They neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels . . . in heaven” (see also Matt. 22:30 and Luke 20:35). For example, Helmut Traub confidently assures us that “the families in heaven are angels.”¹⁴⁴ In a straining attempt to claim that family units cannot exist in heaven, G. B. Caird writes, “There can be no families in heaven, where they neither marry nor are given in marriage (Mark 12:25).”¹⁴⁵ Traub and Caird are not alone.

Andrew Lincoln writes tepidly of “family groupings” but quickly qualified these words with “classes of angels” and “spirit powers.”¹⁴⁶ Ernest Best spreads out a number of possible meanings for “family in heaven,” including a sort of “(social) grouping” and “angels . . . in groups with leaders.” He rejects “groups in heaven . . . of dead believers.”¹⁴⁷ Pheme Perkins only admits to “the one clan” as the meaning of this verse, without further elaboration.¹⁴⁸ Yet the plain sense of Paul’s language is that “every family” in some way bears God’s divine name “in heaven” as well as on the earth. What is simpler than the notion of eternal families? Obviously, these scholars do not understand that marriage is an earthly ordinance that does not occur in heaven. Further, they have little sense about the eternal character of families, which is hinted at strongly in this phrase.

Let us examine two New Testament passages that buttress this teaching. The first is simpler and more direct. In the First Epistle of Peter, we find a discussion of husbands and wives. Among other items, Peter wrote that couples will be “heirs together of the grace of life” (1 Pet. 3:7). The

143. Traub and von Rad, *TDNT*, 5:517–18 and n. 158; Schrenk and Quell, *TDNT*, 5:1017–19; Best, *Ephesians*, 633.

144. Traub and von Rad, *TDNT*, 5:518 n. 159.

145. Caird, *Letters*, 68.

146. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 202.

147. Best, *Ephesians*, 338–39.

148. Perkins, *Ephesians*, 89.

noun “life” in this context, and in almost all contexts in the New Testament, revolves around eternal life, God’s life.¹⁴⁹ Hence, this line is about husbands and wives, indeed “families,” becoming “heirs together” in the eternities. We come upon the second passage in John’s Gospel in the scene of Jesus interacting with the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well. Near the middle of their conversation, Jesus offered to the woman “living water.” When the woman responded, “Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not,” Jesus said, “Go, call thy husband.” We all know her answer: “I have no husband.” To this Jesus said, “Thou has had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband.” Most commentators focus on Jesus setting the woman up for his unexpected reply about her five husbands and her paramour, all of which led her perceptively to say, “Thou art a prophet” (John 4:10–19). But the key element is Jesus’ directive, “Go, call thy husband.” Plainly stated, the water of life that Jesus was offering to her is not available except in a married state, a status that will continue into the next life. Why? Because it was Jesus, the eternal Lord, who was offering an enduring gift to her (see the Notes on 1:10; 3:6; 4:10; 5:1, 22; 6:9).

is named: The passive verb of ὀνομάζω (*onomazō*) centers on God’s action. The force of the phrase “of whom” tilts away from God’s role as the one who granted names and instead onto him as the source of names (see Isa. 40:26).¹⁵⁰ In other words, our identity derives from him,¹⁵¹ a fact that subtly frames our relationship with him in the premortal world as well as in this world and especially the next. Thus, the entire, everlasting span of our lives, from premortality to immortality, spreads out an affirmation of his fatherhood and our childhood. That relationship is not confined to a one-time naming event but forms an eternal and intimate bond between father and child (see Jer. 31:1, 9; and the Notes on 1:21; 5:3).

3:16 the riches of his glory: This expression almost repeats the language of 1:18, “the riches of the glory of his inheritance.” Though the language is similar, the meanings of the two expressions differ notably. In the earlier passage, the emphasis falls on the *eschaton*, the end-time, wherein a believer is to receive an everlasting inheritance. In our case, the expression “the riches of his [the Father’s] glory” centers on the here and now because it points to strengthening “the new person” (4:24 NR), “the inner person” (3:16 NR; see also Rom. 9:23). This empowering of the individual “by his

149. Hermann Hanse, *TDNT*, 2:825.

150. Schrenk and Quell, *TDNT*, 5:1017; Best, *Ephesians*, 337–38.

151. Winger, *Ephesians*, 391.

Spirit” stands close to the notion of the enabling power of the Atonement (see the Notes on 1:9, 16, 21; 2:7, 16; 4:30).¹⁵² Elsewhere in this letter, we read of “the riches of [God’s] grace” (1:7; 2:7). The two concepts sit close together. Grace, of course, emphasizes the surpassingly generous gift that is conferred on us by Jesus’ Atonement, opening the door into the sunlit expanse of eternal life. Glory has to do both with God’s very nature and with the opportunity that he warmly extends to us to share in his life in the eternities, though in a way his glory is already with us, “for the spirit of glory and of God [now] resteth upon you” (1 Pet. 4:14; see also 2 Cor. 4:6).¹⁵³

Whereas the Gospels portray Jesus shunning wealth because of its debilitating effects, as we see, for instance, in the parable of the sower (see Matt. 13:22; Mark 4:19; and Luke 8:14), Paul attributes real riches to God and Christ. In Romans 2:4, he wrote about “the riches of [God’s] goodness” and, in Romans 11:33, about “the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God.” The Son, too, is a possessor and distributor of celestial wealth in the mortal world. Paul could declare that “the same Lord [Jesus Christ] . . . is rich unto all that call on his name” (Rom. 10:12). Moreover, in an intriguing statement, Paul wrote that “our Lord Jesus Christ . . . was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor [in mortality], that ye through his poverty might be [eternally] rich” (2 Cor. 8:9;¹⁵⁴ for “riches,” see the Notes on 1:7, 18; 2:4, 7; 3:8; for “glory,” see the Notes on 1:6, 14, 17–18; 3:13, 21).

to be strengthened with might: The passive, as elsewhere, points to an agent or a person who performs the action. In this case, it is God’s Spirit. Such power or might (*δύναμις*, *dynamis*) stands on a continuum with the power released in Jesus’ Resurrection, which was brought about by God’s strong act (see 1:19–20) and will be the energizing element in our resistance against “the wiles of the devil” (6:10–11). This power, mediated to humans by God’s Spirit, is a means of revelation, illuminating “the inner person” (3:16 NR) by leading an individual where a human “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared.” It is this Spirit, infused into believers, which by revelation’s power “searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Cor. 2:9–10). It is this strengthening influence that empowers us by

152. Bednar, “In the Strength of the Lord,” 121–28; Rasmus, “Enabling Power of the Atonement,” 18–21; see also Eising, *TDOT*, 4:349, 353–55; Grundmann, *TDNT*, 2:313–16; Oepke, *TDNT*, 2:542–43; Braun, *TDNT*, 6:464, who discussed Elisabeth and Mary (see also Luke 1:25, 49).

153. Von Rad and Kittel, *TDNT*, 2:250–51.

154. Hauck and Kasch, *TDNT*, 6:327–29.

Gospels as “Verily” or “Verily, verily” (see Matt. 5:18, 26; Mark 3:28; Luke 4:24; John 1:51; etc.).²⁰⁴

Perhaps not surprisingly, the word “amen” also serves as a name for Jehovah and Christ. In Isaiah’s book, we read that “he who invokes a blessing on himself in the land shall do so by the God whose name is Amen, and he who utters an oath in the land shall do so by the God of Amen” (Isa. 65:16 NEB). Besides underscoring the enduring connection between a person’s sacred utterances and the holy character of God’s land, whereon the person speaks those words, this passage introduces one of Jehovah’s names—Amen, the trusted, steady One. In what must be an intentional tie to this passage, the Risen Christ dictated the following words to John the Revelator: “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: ‘The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation’” (Rev. 3:14 RSV).²⁰⁵ This title, with its meaning spelled out in the expression “the faithful and true witness,” signifies “that he is exactly true to his word, never misrepresenting himself either by exaggeration or suppression.”²⁰⁶

Analysis of 3:14–21

These last eight verses of chapter 3 (3:14–21) frame a second prayer in Ephesians, this time a plea that readers “be strengthened with might by [God’s] Spirit in the inner man” and “that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith” (3:16–17). And what is the chief object or main goal of Christ’s indwelling? The answer is knowledge, but a special knowledge. It is that they “may be able to comprehend . . . what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height . . . [of] the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge” (3:18–19). Similarly, the Apostle’s first prayer in this letter begged God to “give to you [readers] the spirit of wisdom and revelation in knowing him . . . with the eyes of your heart enlightened.” Once again, the goal is knowledge. But the nature of the knowledge is different—to “know what is the hope of his calling, [and] what is the wealth of his glorious inheritance among the saints” (1:17–18 NR). That is to say, believers were to come to grasp whom they were worshipping and what he was offering to them. A further objective beckons. For Paul’s readers, it rests in being “filled with all the fulness of God” (3:18–19). Let us parse some of these concepts.

204. The occurrences of “Verily” or “Verily, verily” number thirty in Matthew, thirteen in Mark, seven in Luke, and twenty-five in John.

205. Heinrich Schlier, *TDNT*, 1:335–38; Jepsen, *TDOT*, 1:322.

206. Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John the Apostle*, 185.

In his prologue (see 3:14–15), the Apostle has spiritually turned his gaze to “the Father” (3:14; as we have seen above, the phrase “of our Lord Jesus Christ” is not original). With this seemingly simple title, “the Father,” Paul has both drawn our attention to and undraped the one person in the universe to whom all believers turn and, like him, bow in prayer and adoration. By scratching this ordinary term, his pen has joyously transported us all the way to the heavenly throne and to the One who sits upon it. No one stands between us and him; no sin turns us aside from the corridors where he dwells; no agent blocks our path into his holy chamber; no blemish, physical or mental or emotional, holds us back from placing our petitions at his holy feet. There is more.

Paul next pulls our eyes to the most meaningful relationship in the cosmos, that of parent and child, which gains its celestial nourishment from a family kinship with God himself. The plain sense of “every family in the heavenly realms, and on earth” (3:15 NR) being “named” by the Father—that is, being given their identities²⁰⁷—lays before us God’s eternal fatherhood from our premortal days to our earthly lives and on into the expanses of eternity. But these words hint at far more than our divine childhood status in the family of the Father. The expression “every family” or “each family” points us directly at distinct, eternal family units that persist beyond the boundaries of our mortal lives. Distinguished commentators have clearly seen this possibility in Paul’s words and have made every effort to say that this eventual outcome could not be, twisting the idea of an eternal “family” into everything from “angels” to “spirit powers” to social “groupings” to even a vague clustering of “clans.”²⁰⁸ But the plain sense of Paul’s words about the Father giving “every family” an everlasting status by granting names to them plays better on the Broadway of eternal family units that persist “in heaven” than that of “angels” who hover in the ether (3:15; see the Note thereon).

Moving through the Apostle’s words we come upon the Spirit. One of “the riches of [God’s] glory” (3:16 KJV) is to “be strengthened with power in the inner person through his Spirit” (3:16 NR). Thus, the Spirit serves as a conveyor of God’s power, his might. For example, by the Spirit, we “have access . . . unto the Father” (2:18). Latter-day Saints are familiar with the prophet Moroni’s words that “by the *power* of the Holy Ghost [we] may

207. Winger, *Ephesians*, 391.

208. Traub and von Rad, *TDNT*, 5:518 n. 159; Caird, *Letters*, 68; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 202; Best, *Ephesians*, 338–39; Perkins, *Ephesians*, 89.

know the truth of all things” (Moro. 10:5, emphasis added). Likewise, on his part, Paul is not talking about the Spirit influencing believers in a gentle, almost imperceptible manner. No, he has raw power in mind, the kind that the Father wielded when he “created all things” and, later, “raised [Christ] from the dead, and set him at his own right hand” (3:9; 1:20). “The great passage in Eph. 3:14ff.,” writes Walter Grundmann, “is highly significant in this regard [of the operating power of the Holy Spirit].”²⁰⁹ Moreover, we must add, the Spirit is a revelator as hinted in Moroni’s words. It is he who makes it possible that the “eyes of your understanding [are] enlightened” (1:18). It is he who “revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets” the “mystery” of the heavenly door that is open to the Gentiles (3:4–6). It is he who assists us “to comprehend . . . what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ” (3:18–19). This is no soft or vague apprehension of truth. The Spirit is the agent for believers coming to know firmly and to grasp robustly God’s truths (see 1 Cor. 2:6–10).²¹⁰

Besides the Spirit serving as a medium of power and revelation, with his aid “Christ [shall] dwell in your hearts by faith” (3:17). On the human side, faith is the active ingredient that makes possible this welcome indwelling of Christ in people’s lives. But faith does not stand solitary by itself. In fact, it is joined by the elevating influence of love (*agapē*). For in another place, Paul has repeated in elegant detail the virtues of this love, including the sobering declaration that “though I have all faith, . . . and have not charity [*agapē*], I am nothing” (1 Cor. 13:2; see also Moro. 7:46). Hence, love is the constituent that threads itself through our lives such that we are “rooted and grounded in [that] love” (3:17). In this state, the Apostle avers, believers are “able to comprehend . . . and to know the love [*agapē*] of Christ” (3:18–19). But more than a lofty love coming to church members from Christ or the love that believers feel toward him, this Christlike love resides inside the true disciple (see 1 Thes. 3:12, “[may] the Lord make you to increase and abound in love”). For we can “be filled with this love, which [God] hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son” (Moro. 7:48). Clearly implied in Jesus’ words to the Eleven at the Last Supper is the notion that his disciples already possessed a measure of this love: “This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I [Jesus] have loved you” (John 15:12, taking up the verb form of *agapē*; see also 1 John 3:17; 4:12).

209. Grundmann, *TDNT*, 2:314.

210. Kleinknecht, Baumgärtel, Bieder, Sjöberg, Schweizer, *TDNT*, 6:425, 444.

The breathtaking news is that love does not fill up the volume in the container of God’s gifts. Love will be joined with God’s fulness—his majesty and grandeur—which he will infuse into believers, filling them “with all the fulness of God” (3:19). This eventuality will involve leading them from “grace to grace” as he did for his Son (D&C 93:13). It was in this way that Christ “received all power, both in heaven and on earth.” As a result, “the glory of the Father was with him” in full measure (D&C 93:17). Expressed another way, following Christ’s Resurrection, the Father “placed all things under his feet, and gave him . . . the fullness of the one filling all things in every way” (1:22–23 NR). According to the testimony of John the Baptist, believers can begin to enjoy God’s fulness in this life. As he declared, “As many as received [Christ], to them gave he power to become the sons of God,” for “of his fulness have all we received, grace for grace” (John 1:12, 16). With more clarity, and referencing a lost record written by the Baptist, Christ stated that those who “come unto the Father in my name . . . [will] in due time receive of his fulness” (D&C 93:19). The key expression is “in due time.” Then comes this crescendo: “If you keep my commandments you shall receive of [God’s] fulness, and be glorified in me as I am in the Father” (D&C 93:20). In addition to being bathed in God’s glory, a person who “keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things” (D&C 93:28). Indeed!

One added coloration: throughout chapter 3, where we are initially greeted with a reminiscence of Paul’s first experience with the Resurrected Jesus and his thoughtful analysis of it (see 3:2–9), the Apostle refrains from making reference to his status as a commissioned apostle or to highlighting some other familiar expressions that characterize him, features that we see in other letters.²¹¹ If this letter is not from the hand of Paul but from someone else, this restraint is puzzling. Why? Because a fabricator would surely want readers to believe that they were looking at a genuine missive from Paul’s hand; and this chapter is the perfect place to make this point, especially the way it begins. But such language is conspicuously absent. The natural conclusion? The silence points to Paul as the epistle’s author.²¹²

211. Rom. 11:13, “I am the apostle of the Gentiles”; 1 Cor. 9:1–2, “Am I not an apostle?”; 15:9, “I am the least of the apostles”; see also 2 Cor. 11:5; 12:11.

212. Muddiman, *Ephesians*, 146–47.

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