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## **The Power is In Them**

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# THE POWER IS IN THEM

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**Daniel C. Peterson**

*Abstract: The Interpreter Foundation has spent five years dedicated to publishing quality scholarship regarding the gospel, history, and scripture of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The result is a body of work both to be proud of and to stand upon as we move forward. Profound appreciation is given to those who have contributed to this effort, and an invitation is extended to be part of future explorations and exhortations of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*

By the time this introduction appears, the Interpreter Foundation, which was launched in late July 2012 and which was publicly announced (and offered its first publication) on 3 August 2012, will have celebrated its fifth birthday. It will have published twenty-six volumes of *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, comprising approximately 300 articles written by roughly 115 authors. It will have published at least one new article every Friday for nearly 270 consecutive weeks.

And that's to say nothing of the blog entries posted, the scripture roundtables recorded, the conferences and lectures sponsored, and the books published.

I use the inanimate pronoun *it* as if the Interpreter Foundation were a thing in and of itself. But in the most important sense, Interpreter isn't that at all: The Interpreter Foundation is a group of people, virtually all of them volunteers and none of them receiving a salary, who have come together in their free time, above and beyond the demands of their careers, the needs of their families, and the obligations of their church and other service, to do something that they — we — think needs to be done and consider worth doing.

This fact needs to be stressed and understood. It's true of this volume as it has been true of the over two-dozen volumes that preceded it and every other effort of Interpreter.

Such understanding is essential both to sensing the depth of the gratitude that I owe to all those who've contributed and to grasping the fundamental necessity of such generous offerings to the mission of the Interpreter Foundation — not only in the past but, even more, going into the future.

Without minimizing the worth of what has been accomplished thus far, the achievements of the past five years will, we hope, serve as a prelude to even greater accomplishments over the next half-decade and beyond.

As the apostle Paul expresses it in the King James translation of Galatians 6:9–11,

Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.

Or, as J. B. Phillips rendered the same passage,

Let us not grow tired of doing good, for, unless we throw in our hand, the ultimate harvest is assured. Let us then do good to all men as opportunity offers, especially to those who belong to the Christian household.

Look at these huge letters I am making in writing these words to you with my own hand!

With that last phrase — “Look at these huge letters I am making in writing these words to you with my own hand!” — Paul seems to be emphasizing how important it is, in his view, for Christians to persist in doing good things and not to “grow tired” or give up.

Already in a revelation given at Kirtland, Ohio, on 11 September 1831, the Lord was making the same exhortation to the very small number of baptized Latter-day Saints worldwide, whose community was centered there:

Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Doctrine and Covenants 64:33.

Few of those gathered at Kirtland could have conceived of today's Church, with members and temples on every inhabited continent. The dedication of the Kirtland Temple in then-frontier Ohio, which would be the first building ever constructed by what would later be formally called The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, was still nearly five years away, and such a project would have seemed impossible to most of them.

"The Church was too few in numbers," Brigham Young recalled in 1853, and too poor in purse to attempt such a mighty enterprise ... Joseph [labored] in the stone quarry, quarrying rock with his own hands, and the few then in the Church, follow[ed] his example of obedience, and diligence, wherever most needed; with laborers on the walls, holding the sword in one hand to protect themselves from the mob, while they placed the stone and moved the trowel with the other.<sup>2</sup>

But they did it, and the rewards they ultimately reaped were enormous:

"God was there," Elder Orson Pratt later testified regarding the dedication of the Kirtland Temple,

his angels were there, the Holy Ghost was in the midst of the people ... and they were filled from the crowns of their heads to the soles of their feet with the power and inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and uttered forth prophecies in the midst of that congregation, which have been fulfilling from that day to the present time.<sup>3</sup>

Eliza R. Snow concurred. "The ceremonies of that dedication may be rehearsed," she reminisced,

but no mortal language can describe the heavenly manifestations of that memorable day. Angels appeared to some, while a sense of divine presence was realized by all present, and each heart was filled with "joy inexpressible and full of glory."<sup>4</sup>

Now, the Interpreter Foundation isn't the Church. We who work with it and those of us who lead it are under no such illusions. But we are firmly convinced that its efforts can be beneficial to the Saints, to seekers of truth and righteousness, and even, in a modest way, to the Kingdom itself.

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2. *Deseret News* (16 April 1853), 42.

3. *Deseret News* (12 January 1876), 788.

4. Cited in Edward W. Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom* (New York: Tullidge & Crandall, 1877), 95.

Moreover, we believe that such initiatives as *Interpreter*, undertaken by ordinary members of the Church and not directed by the Church's leaders, have a legitimate and important place in the Restoration.

"For behold," explained the Lord in a revelation given on 1 August 1831,

it is not meet that I should command in all things;

for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward.

Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness; For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good they shall in nowise lose their reward.<sup>5</sup>

Many valuable efforts in Latter-day Saint history have begun as local and often even private initiatives. Some of them — the Scots convert Richard Ballantyne's 1849 Sunday School, for instance, and the welfare efforts of Harold B. Lee, who had been called as president of Salt Lake City's Pioneer Stake in 1930 — were eventually adopted as programs by the Church as a whole. Most others have not been, but they offer sometimes quite valuable supplemental service nonetheless. Examples of these might include such varied enterprises as the Mormon History Association, the Society for Mormon Philosophy and Theology, the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation, the Liahona Children's Foundation, Book of Mormon Central, and FairMormon.

The *Interpreter* Foundation has now, in my judgment, firmly established its place among such groups. It has arrived at that position through five years of dedicated effort by authors, editors, technical consultants, proofreaders, peer reviewers, and, yes — although the organization is lean, frugal, and operated almost entirely by volunteers, it still faces unavoidable expenses — generous donors of amounts large and small.

We're deeply appreciative of all this. We understand that nobody owes us or the *Interpreter* Foundation anything whatsoever. We have no claim on anybody else's time, effort, or money.

But isn't this a great effort? Isn't it exciting? What better news can there be than that of the atonement and resurrection of Christ and, now, of his reappearance in modern times and of the restoration of his

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5. Doctrine and Covenants 58:26–28.

ancient Gospel? Isn't that news worthy of sustained study and reflection? Doesn't this message deserve our best efforts to commend and defend it? The great eighteenth-century hymn writer Isaac Watts captures our sentiment well:

Sweet is the work, my God, my King,  
To praise thy name, give thanks and sing,  
To show thy love by morning light,  
And talk of all thy truths at night.<sup>6</sup>

Once again, I thank all those who have made the success of the Interpreter Foundation possible in whatever way they have contributed, whether prominently or humbly. For

the body is not made up of one part but of many.

Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor.<sup>7</sup>

And once again, I invite those who have been with this effort already to continue to support it according to their talents and abilities, and I invite those who may perhaps have been looking on but who are interested and wish it to succeed, to join us.

Now, what do we hear in the gospel which we have received?  
A voice of gladness! A voice of mercy from heaven; and a voice  
of truth out of the earth; glad tidings for the dead; a voice

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6. *Hymns*, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, No. 147.

7. 1 Corinthians 12:14–23 (New International Version).

of gladness for the living and the dead; glad tidings of great joy. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those that bring glad tidings of good things, and that say unto Zion: Behold, thy God reigneth! As the dews of Carmel, so shall the knowledge of God descend upon them!

Brethren [and sisters], shall we not go on in so great a cause? Go forward and not backward. Courage, brethren [and sisters]; and on, on to the victory! Let your hearts rejoice, and be exceedingly glad. Let the earth break forth into singing. Let the dead speak forth anthems of eternal praise to the King Immanuel, who hath ordained, before the world was, that which would enable us to redeem them out of their prison; for the prisoners shall go free.<sup>8</sup>

The cause of Christ and his Gospel, the Good News that it represents and that he is, deserve our very best efforts in every aspect of our lives and with every means at our disposal. After all, as the Lord stated, the power is in us to exercise our agency in this regard. For some of us, the Interpreter Foundation has proven to be a wonderful place in which to contribute and exercise that power.

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8. Doctrine and Covenants 128:19, 22.







