

DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS SECTION 1

HUGH NIBLEY

SEPTEMBER 10, 1978

...Remember, in the Wentworth Letter, in the 1842 version, which is in the Joseph Smith history, that is a brief recapitulation in which the Lord is quoted only indirectly. "He told me...", etc. But now we have the five versions of the first vision, one of them going way back to 1831-32, right between the two, much older than any of us thought. Ten years earlier than the others. When Joseph Smith was only 26 years old he dictated this to Fredrick G. Williams, it's reproduced here in the handwriting of Fredrick G. Williams, and here is one of the accounts, and there are others. Like the four gospels, they tell the story from different angles. There is no conflict between them but some are more complete. He would mention somethings in one that he left out in others. So, this one I'd like to read, the earliest version we have.

We sung the hymn this morning, "humbly kneeling, sweet appealing..." and that over simplifies it. That's like our Sunday School ideas of the Garden of Eden and the Ark of Noah, we get stuck with them all of our lives and we never change. We get this idea that Joseph Smith, the kid suddenly got the idea of going out to the grove and praying and asking the Father. It wasn't like that at all, he worked on the project for years ahead of time, he tells us so. When he went out there to the grove it was with the fixed determination not to come back again until he got an answer. It was a very serious affair.

Now, first I'll read this account. And you'll notice that many things are parallel with the introduction to the 1st section of the D&C. D&C 1 tells the whole story. He says here...notice here, it is very important that he begins without any cultural conditioning. He is kept far aloof from any kind of society. And a contemporary, writing at the time of the founding of the church, De Toquerville, describes life in this part of New York. He went through there in 1830-1831. His famous writing, DeToquerville's Journey, and he describes how they lived, and they did live in a remarkable degree of isolation. Even though you lived near a town you had to spend so much time working in the field, the economy was so close. Getting that land cleared and getting a paying crop was almost impossible. The people could never meet their payments. It was a brutal life, and one in which a boy like Joseph Smith working in the field would spend his days in almost total isolation. It was very hard. He says, "We were in New York, and being in indigent circumstances, were obliged to labor hard for the support of a large family." Talking about his father when they moved to New York. They moved out of Vermont because the English Land Company sold all of that high land stuff in Vermont, which is very poor farming country. They couldn't collect from anybody and they had overcharged them and so everybody had to move out. And we have a geographer up here at BYU who has done a very interesting study of that.

But, so he's "obliged to labour hard for the support of a large family having nine children and as it required the exertions of all that were able to render any assistance for the support of the family. Therefore we were deprived of the benefit of an education. Suffice it to say I was merely instructed in reading and writing and the ground rules of arithmetic which constituted my whole literary acquisitions," and the spelling of the document confirms what ~~is~~ he is talking about. Of course we mustn't judge too much on the spelling. They spelled in, what Bernard Shaw would call "in the grand manner...the way my grandmother spelled." Remember there was no Webster's Dictionary at this time. They were still rather free about how to

spell things. You spelled the way it was. The main thing was to communicate. And so he has not only been deprived of the benefit of an education but notice he is "tabula rosa", he is a pure unwritten tablet. Not stupid by any means, we'll see that. He spent his days in the deepest thought, but he doesn't receive any cultural conditioning. So you can't accuse him of having picked this up along the way. The only way they can explain Joseph Smith today, because of his phenomenal productivity and so forth, is to say, "Well, he's just a product of his time, he's one of the Yorkers, you know, the burned-over district. There's nothing that anybody else couldn't have done that Joseph Smith did. It was taken for granted by everyone else at the time." Yes, we know that he was taken for granted. But they overlook all that. You see that is a desperate last resort to try and explain him as just a natural product of his time and place.

"About the age of twelve years my mind became impress with regard to the all important concerns for the welfare of my immortal Soul which led me to searching the Scriptures believing as I was taught, that they contained the word of God. Thus applying myself to them and my intimate acquaintance with those of different denominations led me to marvel exceedingly."

So he did seek, and he thought all the time about it. And he did search the scriptures. And he asked anybody who could give him any light at all. His intimate acquaintance with those of different denominations "led me to marvel exceedingly for I discovered that they did not adorn their profession by a holy walk and Godly conversation agreeable to what I found contained in that sacred depository this was a grief to my Soul." Again, you notice that this story starts out as every dispensation, with an Abraham or an Enoch, or Moses, or Lehi, finding the world in a bad state. Being much worried and much upset about it. Remember, we are told Lehi prayed and worried about it all the time. Abraham the same thing, remember thy servant who has sought thee, how he was diligent and how he had to leave his father's home, he was driven out because all of the people had turned to idolatry. Enoch the same way. Every founder of every dispensation, because a dispensation is restored when the world is in darkness. And it is by a person who first asks and then receives. Joseph Smith has to make the first move. And he does. You will notice he is the one, his mind is disturbed and he is the one that makes the first move. As the Zohar says, there must be a stirring below before there can be a stirring above. You cannot ask a blessing on an empty table, you have to provide something first before you ask for the Lord to make a contribution. We're here to see if you are willing to do it. So much is written about Abraham in this way. You see, the marvel about Abraham is when the world had all gone astray, and no one believed in God anymore, how is it that Abraham desired to seek after Him? He says in the 12th verse of the second chapter, "Thy servant has sought thee earnestly; now I have found thee."

This is the same thing with Adam, right at the beginning. He prayed and prayed and after many days the angle came. But he had to do the praying for many days. And you will notice he did not pray over an empty table. He had to bring a sacrifice because the Lord had told him. Remember, he brought a sacrifice to the altar and he prayed for many many years. Then finally an angel came and brought him the gospel. And so it is here. And it's an angel that brings it first, the angel Moroni comes and ~~brings~~ brings the gospel. As it was an angel who came and brought the gospel in the fullness of times.

Remember we are told at the beginning of Luke that Zachariah and Elizabeth were good and diligent people and were perfect in keeping the law. They did everything, they belonged to the most pious group, the sectaries of the desert, where John the Baptist went, and why would they need more gospel? They were the very ones that the angel came to, and it was an angel that came. And when the angel came to Zechariah in the temple and scared the daylights out of him, what was it he said "Behold, I come to preach the

gospel to you." The gospel was brought by an angel. That's the way it was brought then and here the first vision prepares Joseph Smith for it. It prepares Joseph Smith for the fullness of the gospel which is brought by the angel Moroni. This is the confidential mission and assignment of Joseph Smith. It's like the call of Moses in the first chapter of the Book of Moses where the Lord says to Moses, I'm just going to tell you what you need to know for your mission. This is personal instruction for you and I will show you everything you need to know. And Moses asked Him, will you tell me the whole story. And the Lord says, No, I'm not going to tell you that now. That remaineth in me. But about the world on which you stand, where your mission is, I will tell you everything you need to know.

So this is personal to Joseph Smith. And that is why Joseph Smith doesn't go around telling the whole story. There are things told in this version which are not told in the other versions because somebody asked him on a special occasion for them. And again, when a Jew visited him, he told him another story, a different aspect about it. So it was. And then when the editor Townsend wrote and asked him for a description of it. This was a brief terse account, such as could be published in the public newspaper which was to be circulated everywhere. And that's the one that we publish to the world today because that is safe. That's as much as he wanted the world to know about it. It was a brief account and told in the person of course. He came to me and told me I should join none of them. Here are the actual words of Christ in quotations. So this is the personal calling of Joseph Smith.

Now, about Moroni coming and bringing the fullness of the Gospel, bringing the Book of Mormon, he comes and does just what the other angels did, what ~~xxx~~ Gabriel did when he came to Mary and Zecharias. He quoted the scriptures, four times he quoted it so that Joseph Smith remembered exactly what scripture it was, exactly what variation it was, how it varied from the King James and so forth. So this is something for all of us when the angel started bringing the gospel. This is the opening thing. It does reveal the nature of the Godhead, which is the most important thing of all.

So when he is 12 he already starts thinking about these things and he ~~thinks~~ thinks hard. A very precocious child. And he goes and asks everybody about it and he sees that things don't square. He sees the world that God created and the world that men have produced and he doesn't like it. He sees there is a very serious maladjustment there. He goes on, "This was a grief to my Soul thus from the age of twelve years to fifteen I pondered many things in my heart." For three years he thought about this, he pondered. And even his worst enemies, all the stories about Joseph Smith, they all remember him as a boy who kept his thought to himself, who was always thinking about things, always asking questions and so forth. therefore he was a "marose and grovelling nature always off by himself thinking up some new evil scheme." He gave this impression because he wasn't a typical boy, he was too much concerned with serious things. But they all talk about that though, that he did ponder, he was always thinking about things and always asking disturbing questions. That's what happened to Abraham. The story of Abraham as a boy, he had to leave because he was asking questions too much. He says 'my father utterly refused to listen to my voice. He wouldn't listen to me at all. I tried to protest and tried to ask questions about the religion they were practicing, the idolatry. And there is a great wealth of early Jewish legend about that boy Abraham asking too many questions and getting the family in trouble. They had to migrate.

Joseph Smith is involved in the same thing here. So I pondered for three years, concerning what? "The situation of the world of mankind the contention and divisions the sickness and abominations and the darkness which pervaded the minds of mankind my mind became exceedingly distressed," notice again the same thing with Noah. We forgot to mention his dispensation. He was rather upset about the world of his time. Every great patriarch of every dispensation goes through this, goes through this test, and asks the Lord who gives him the

answer. Then he preaches and his preaching is not accepted. It happened to everyone of them. And then destruction follows.

Well, the condition of the world annoys him. The darkness, the abominations, "my mind became exceedingly distressed for I became convicted of my Sins and by searching thr Scriptures I found that mankind did not come unto the Lord but that they had apostatized from the true and living faith and there was no society or denomination that built upon the Gospel of Jesus Christ as recorded in the new testament and I felt to mourn for my own Sins and for the Sins of the world," he was a precocious child, wasn't he? "For I learned in the Scriptures that God was the same yesterday, today and forever, that he was no respecter of persons." Now he looks upon the world around him which was one of sublime beauty, and describes that. This was the thing, the absurd disproportion between the world as God meant it to be the the world that men had produced. Remember, he has talked about the world of divisions and darkness and wickedness and abominations related to mankind, and then he says, "For I looked upon the sun. The glorious luminary of the earth and also the moon rolling in their majesty through the heavens and also the stars shining in their courses and the earth also upon which I stood and the beast of the field and the fowls of heaven and the fish of the waters." This is very interesting. Remember, this is exactly what was shown to Moses and to Abraham. This is the great vision... and to Enoch. They are always shown a picture of the earth upon which they stand. They use that formula; III Enoch and The Testament of Abraham, again and again refers to the world on which you stand. And remember the great dispensation of the human race, in the beginning. Adam was introduced to all things in the beginning, God showed him all. And it was his business since he was the first one there to give nomenclature and give a card catalogue and computerize the whole thing. He gave names to all the animals.

Joseph Smith took inventory of the world he was in and he was shown everything in it. Exactly as it tells us it happened to Moses and everyone of the great Patriarchs. They all see this great universal vision. But this is premature. This is before it happens here.

"The fowls of heaven and the fish of the waters and also man walking forth upon the face of the earth in majesty and in the strength of beauty whose power and intelligence in governing the things which are so exceeding great and marvelous even in the likeness of him who created them. And when I considered these things my heart exclaimed well hath the wise man said it is a fool that saith in his heart 'there is no God' my heart exclaimed all these bear testimony and bespeak an omnipotent and omnipresent power, a being who maketh Laws and decreeth and bindeth all things in their bounds who filleth Eternity who was and is and will be from all Eternity to Eternity and when I considered all these things and that that being seeketh such to worship."

And he wants to worship but they are paying no attention to what he is saying. Here is this wicked and perverse and apostate world he's living in and then he looks around at the world as God fixed it for man, and God is willing to be worshipped and our divine calling should be so obvious, but they pay no attention. "Seeketh such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth therefore I cried unto the Lord for mercy for there was none else to whom I could go." He had to go to the Lord. And that's why he went out to the grove.

In another version here he tells us when he went out there. I'm looking for one passage... Well, this comes out in nearly all of them, "After I retired to the place where I had previously designed to go." He had it all planned ahead of time. A specific spot he had chosen for this. "Having looked around me and finding myself alone I kneeled down and began to offer prayer," and immediately he was seized. I'm trying to find the one that

says he had gone there with such a determination. Oh yes. "Information was what I most desired at that time and with a fixed determination to obtain it I called upon the Lord." It was a fixed determination, he had been working on this project for years. And only as a last resort, he had talked with everybody he could find, he read the scriptures, he saw that everything was off the track and so there was no one else to whom he could turn. "There was none else to whom I could go and obtain mercy and the Lord heard my cry in the wilderness and while in the attitude of calling upon the Lord in the sixteenth year of my age a pillar of light above the brightness of the sun at noonday came down from above and rested upon me and I was filled with the spirit of God and the Lord opened the heavens upon me," remember he was clothed upon with glory therefore Moses could talk with the Lord, "and I saw the Lord and he spake unto me saying," "Now these are direct quotations, this is what He said," "Joseph, my son, thy sins are forgiven thee. Go thy way, walk in my statutes and keep my commandments. Behold I am the Lord of glory I was crucified for the world that all those who believe on my name may have Eternal life behold the world lieth in sin at this time and none doeth good, no not one. They have turned aside from the Gospel and keep not my commandments." Now that statement that there is none that doeth good no not one... Notice he does not say there is none that doeth well. You may do well in trying to... Well, a person has a broken leg and you do well in trying to help him, but you do no good because you don't know anything about it and you fix it up all wrong. You make a terrible bungle of the job. You do well in trying to help, but you do no good because you don't have the knowledge. To do good is to accomplish... there are plenty of people in the world who are good people, who do the best they can but they are doing no good. You say, I'm doing everything I can to save my soul but I'm not doing any good. You're doing well but you're not doing good, because you don't have the knowledge, you don't have the necessary preparation. There is no one that doeth good.

Now, how does the Book of Mormon end? The last of that dispensation ends, and remember it was Moroni who was to bring this back and to introduce the new dispensation, and right at the end of the last chapter of the Book of Mormon, Moroni says,

"And now I speak unto all the ends of the earth--  
that if the day cometh that the power and gifts  
of God shall be done away among you, it shall be  
because of unbelief."

The situation Joseph Smith has described here. And then he says,

"And wo be unto the children of men if this be the  
case; for there shall be none that doeth good among  
you, no not one."

The very same phrase with which the Lord opens the new dispensation, He closes the last. When this comes again it will be a time when the faith is denied, when no one doeth good among you, no not one. "For if ~~there be~~ there be one among you that doeth good he shall work by the power and gifts of God and these were the power and gifts which had been denied. So the Lord says there is none that doeth good among you, no not one. "They have turned aside from the Gospel and keep not my commandments. They draw near to me with their lips while their hearts are far from me and mine anger is kindling against the inhabitants of the earth to visit them according to this ungodliness."

This is your first section of the D & C, of course, the same thing.

"And to bring to pass that which hath been spoken by the mouth of  
the prophets and Apostles behold and lo I come quickly as it  
is written of me in the cloud clothed in the glory of my  
Father."

Then says Joseph, "my soul was filled with love and for many days I could rejoice with great joy and the Lord was with me but could find none that would believe the heavenly vision." No one would believe, but he was satisfied. You

see, it was a personal revelation to Joseph Smith. His soul was filled with love and for many days he could rejoice. Notice the same thing happened with Lehi when he prayed and he thought he saw God sitting on his throne. He said after that, he had been so distressed before, it came to pass, it says, he prayed with all his heart in behalf of his people and then when he thought he saw God sitting on his throne in this revelation, then after that he...

⊗ "And it came to pass that when my father had read and seen many great and marvelous things, he did exclaim many things unto the Lord; such as: Great and marvelous are they works, O Lord God Almighty! Thy throne is high in the heavens, and they power, and goodness, and mercy are over all the inhabitants of the earth, and, because thou art merciful, thou wilt not suffer those who come unto thee that they should perish!"

He rejoices mightily because of what he had seen. Then he goes out and preaches. Nobody would listen to him in Jerusalem. So now we turn to the first section and we see this.

Here we have a message, there are five things to notice more than anything else in this 1st section. The first is that it is a message to the entire world. Until this time it wouldn't have been so. It's a very interesting thing here. Until this time the earth was a complex, it was a number of separate worlds of various biospheres separated from each other and didn't even know of each other's existence. The people of Asia, the people of darkest Africa, the people of America, America was still unexplored, and so forth. Then all of a sudden up goes the curtain. It is so interesting that we have De Toquerville wandering through America right after this. A minute account, he spent three years all up and down the frontiers of America and described fully. A very shrewd observer of the scene. And he prophesied, his prophecies are quite remarkable of what was going to happen.

But all of a sudden, almost overnight, first it's a matter of 10 years, then it just covered everything. All of a sudden you could say 'all' as you couldn't before. It had been less than a generation before this that the islands of Samoa and Hawaii were discovered. This marvelous man Cook who sailed up and down these islands and all of a sudden it was all there. I was again referring to my great grandfather, I remember so well, it surprised me yesterday when I was taking notes on De Toquerville, I realized he was describing 1831, well my great grandfather was six years old at that time and he was describing utter wilderness in America. There was nobody there. A wild country. He was six years old at that time and I remember him very well. So it's just a small gap in time that all this has happened.

Well, notice how 'all' is used here: "Whose eyes are upon all men."

"For verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape; and there is no eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated."

Now this applies. What you say about one you say about all.

When I went on my mission it was in Germany, very sophisticated. They considered themselves by far the most civilized and educated country in the world. That may have been but I never saw a high rise there, I never rode in an automobile the whole time I was there. A car was a great rarity at that time. That's a short time ago. Now, where ever you go, you can go to Nairobi (at that time not a half dozen people had even visited Nairobi), now you see the same high rises that you see in South America, and in Central Africa you see it, in Australia and so forth.

In 1930, Sir John Phillip and Captain Bertrand Thomas were rivals to see who could be the first to cross the empty quarter. And it was a fierce rivalry, Bertrand Thomas won and gained the immortal fame of being the first man to cross the empty quarter. People thought man would not be able to cross

the empty quarter for another quarter century, the empty quarter of southeast Arabia. My cousin Preston Nibley was chief engineer for American Arabian Oil Company, Anoco, and he used to cross it a few years later, less than 20 years later. He would cross it every week in a jeep. Just like that. Not only across because he was inspecting for an oil pipeline, he would cross back and forth over the empty quarter and not even think anything of it. Now, that is how the world has changed.

In 1929 Major Cheesam claimed that he had visited Riyadh in Arabia. And everybody doubted it. He described the gardens and (inaudible) there very carefully and accurately so people finally decided, maybe he did really go there. But nobody could go to Riyadh. That's the end of the world. Now I think that a third of the faculty at BYU has spent several years in Riyadh as far as that goes. In the business school, in education, people go there and spend time. The thing is that just in 1929, when I was in college, they would doubt that any man had really been able to make that trip, he just couldn't have done it.

When you say 'all' you mean all now. You'll find the same people in Tahiti that you'll find anywhere else, and it wasn't so long ago, World War II, these things were inaccessible. So it is to all men and none shall escape. And then again in verse four.

"And the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days."

Again in verse six.

"Behold, this is mine authority, and the authority of my servants, and my preface unto the book of my commandments, which I have given them to publish unto you, O inhabitants of the earth."

That covers everything. Verse ten.

"Unto the day when the Lord shall come to recompense unto every man according to his work, and measure to every man according to the measure which he has measured to his fellow man."

"Wherefore the voice of the Lord is unto the ends of the earth, that all that will hear may hear:"

There's that 'all' again, to the ends of the earth. You see, ten years' earlier you couldn't come out with something like this, all of a sudden the world had opened up. The person who writes so dramatically about this is (inaudible), the great French paleontologist. He tells us how a net of life once it starts establishing itself reaches out with great rapidity and spreads. Everywhere life can exist life does exist, it wastes no time getting there so that it covers the earth with amazing speed. And now the last covering has taken place and where do we go from here? It's all just one world. You find the same high rise whether you go to Alaska or South America, whether you go to Paragana, you find the same cars, the same people, the same corporations. ☒

Do you know what's on the...in Mecca, you go to Mecca, you know, to go to Mecca, but in Mecca there is the sacred stone, a picture of it is in the national Geographic; it is very sacred, you make the pilgrimage and you are famous for life. You have actually made the pilgrimage to Mecca. But right on the foot on the sacred stone, what is written in bold letters? Coca-Cola. As the French call it, the 'Coca-Colanization' of the world.

Here again, verse 32,

"Nevertheless, he that repents and does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven;"

verse 34,

"And again, verily I say unto you, O inhabitants of the earth: I the Lord am willing to make these things known unto all flesh;"

No exceptions. Verse 35,

"For I am no respecter of persons, and will that all men shall know that the day speedily cometh; the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand, when peace shall be taken from the earth, and the devil shall have power over his own dominion."

We just saw within a month, here, a man who had been an administrator of education and economics from Ghana, darkest Africa, passing the sacrament in this ward here. Brother John Augustus. That finally completes the 'all' process, doesn't it? We'd thought it would be years before we included 'those people', the blacks of Africa. Now they're passing the sacrament. That's the first point, that it is for all the world. It's a new dispensation, the curtain has gone up.

Then the second point. It looks back to the old world which is now finished. He talks a lot about that. The old order is going to leave and don't try to cling to it. You don't pour new wine into old vessels. That's the old set. It's like the...I have some kids in the drama business, in various forms, one of them got his Master's as Art director, but on the last day of the play what do you do? All the cast has to stay until three or four o'clock in the morning because you have to strike the old set. It all comes down, but the new set has to be ready for the opening the next night. It's one of these high rent theaters. That means you have to be putting up the new set a few days or weeks ahead of time, getting ready for the new set.

Well, that's what we're doing. We're not interested in tearing down the old set; it's coming down fast enough, don't worry. That play is finished and they're striking the set. Our business is to make sure that the new set is standing when it needs to be. Brigham Young says we have to pick up the ball when they have dropped it. He doesn't use those particular terms, but ones like them. He says the world is going to lose a lot of valuable knowledge, what they possess now, because they lack the faith and organization to keep it. And he says when they lose that we are to be able to pick it up. And again, when the old set comes down, it comes down in pieces. We see it falling all over the stage. It's crumbling, it's not going to last. All you have to do is look in the newspaper today and just mark the negative news, how bad things are. And it's moving in one direction. A good example, of course, is world wide inflation. Things like that. But our business is to make the new sets. So you will find this is divided equally into looking back at the old world and looking forward to the new world.

And, the fourth point, it gives us instruction for these dangerous transitions. And the fifth point is, you can't have it both ways. Don't get the idea it is a compromise.

We'll start out now. Notice the prose here. This is marvelous, this first summarizes and tells the whole story. Oh, incidently, I want to read you the circumstances of it. It's in the DHC page 221, tells us how this section came to be. This is Joseph Smith writing in his journal.

"I returned from conference at Orange, to Hiram; and as Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer were to start for Independence, Missouri," (Already at that time, 1831, they were thinking in terms of the far frontier, way out in Independence.)

"a special conference was appointed for the first of November," (before the brethren scattered for the famous mission to Independence). "at which I received the following ~~xxxxxxx~~ revelation."

Now the footnote here:

"This special conference at Hiram on November 1st should receive larger notice. The number of copies in the edition of the Book of Commandments to be printed was considered, and the decision reached that ten thousand should be published."

Quite an ambitious undertaking. You can still get the Book of Commandments,



it's in the (inaudible) series. You can get it at the bookstore.

"In the afternoon of the first day of the conference, according to the minutes of the meeting, the preface to the Book of Commandments was 'received by revelation'. The same afternoon the following occurred: Brother Joseph Smith Junior, said that inasmuch as the Lord had bestowed a great blessing upon us in giving commandments and revelations, he asked the conference what testimony they were willing to attach to these commandments which would shortly be sent to the world."

Notice who has the inspiration. The Presidents of the Church have always told the Saints, 'live so that you will have the candle within yourself, so that you can know whether they speak the truth or not.' And Joseph Smith is asking them to vote on this revelation at the first conference before any of the revelations of the Book of Commandments were published. Joseph Smith asks for a vote for the people to give their testimony that they knew through the inspiration of the spirit that this was inspired.

So when that spirit speaks to you, then you know it is true, not because Joseph Smith handed it down to you. So he asked the conference what testimony they would attach to these commandments which would shortly be sent to the world.

"A number of the brethren arose and said that they were willing to testify to the world that they knew that they were of the Lord."

That means, if necessary, to go out on a mission and testify.

"For the second day's proceedings of the conference it is recorded: 'The revelation of last evening read by the moderator (Oliver Cowdery). The brethren then arose in turn and bore witness to the truth of the Book of Commandments, after which Brother Joseph Smith, Jun. arose and expressed his feelings and gratitude concerning the commandments and preface received yesterday.'"

So everybody bore a testimony to it the second day and Joseph Smith did too. But he didn't twist anybody's arm or oblige them to bear testimony and you are not obliged to. But if there is anything that hits with an impact it is this 1st section. It can hardly leave anyone undisturbed. If you were to devise a statement that would open this dispensation for the world, how could you possibly match this? It says it all, and with such power and directness, and no beating around the bush.