The Wentworth Letter

Joseph Smith

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THE WENTWORTH LETTER

Joseph Smith’s letter to Mr. John Wentworth was published in the March 1, 1842 issue of the *Times and Seasons* in Nauvoo, Illinois. Although the whole letter runs about three full pages, the rendition of the First Vision events is only one-half page long. The Prophet himself called it a “sketch,” a “brief history.” The conclusion of the letter is Joseph Smith’s statement of belief which has come to be known as The Articles of Faith. Ed.
called on the Lord devoutly because we had already come into the land of this idolatrous nation.

**CHURCH HISTORY.**

At the request of Mr. John Wentworth, Editor, and Proprietor of the "Chicago Democrat," I have written the following sketch of the rise, progress, persecution, and faith of the Latter-Day Saints, of which I have the honor, under God, of being the founder. Mr. Wentworth says, that he wishes to furnish Mr. Bastow, a friend of his, who is writing the history of New Hampshire, with this document. As Mr. Bastow has taken the proper steps to obtain correct information all that I shall ask of his hands, is, that he publish the account entire, unembarrassed, and without misrepresentation.

I was born in the town of Sharon Windsor co., Vermont, on the 23d of December, A. D. 1805. When ten years old my parents removed to Palmyra New York, where we resided about four years, and from thence we removed to the town of Manchester.

My father was a farmer and taught me the art of husbandry. When about fourteen years of age I began to reflect upon the importance of being prepared for a future state, and upon enquiring the plan of salvation I found that there was a great crash in religious sentiment; if I went to one society they referred me to one plan, and another to another; each one pointing to his own particular creed as the summum bonum of perfection; considering that all could not be right, and that God could not be the author of so much confusion I determined to investigate the subject more fully, believing that if God had a church it would not be split up into factions, and that if he taught one society to worship one way, and administer in one set of ordinances, he would not teach another principles which were diametrically opposed. Believing the word of God I had confidence in the declaration of James; "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not and it shall be given him." I retired to a secret place in a grove and began to call upon the Lord, where fervently engaged in supplication my mind was taken away from the objects with which I was surrounded, and I was enveloped in a heavenly vision and saw two glorious personages who exactly resembled each other in features, and likeness, surrounded with a brilliant light which eclipsed the sun at noon-day. They told me that all religious denominations were believing in incorrect doctrines, and that none of them was acknowledged of God as his church and kingdom. And I was expressly commanded to "go not after them," at the same time receiving a promise that the fulness of the gospel should at some future time be made known unto me.

On the evening of the 1st of ber, A.D. 1825, while I was in the midst of prayer, and endeavoring to the faith in the precious promises of the Ten Commandments, I was called into my secret place in a grove and saw a bright light and two personages who were like the Son of God and the Holy Ghost. One of them, who I was told was the Holy Spirit, declared to me that Christ was the true Head of the Church, and that we were to follow the word of God and not the traditions of men. I was also taught that we were to believe in the dictations of the Lord, and not in the teachings of men.

I joined the church and was confirmed a member. I was taught that we were to follow the example of Christ and serve the Lord. I was also taught that we were to believe in the dictations of the Lord, and not in the teachings of men.

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