

# LAST TESTIMONY OF SISTER EMMA

Saint's Herald, Vol. 26, No 19 p. 289

1 October 1879

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In a conversation held in the Herald office during the early days of the present year, between Bishop Rogers, Elders W. W. Blair, H. A. Stebbins and a few others, leading minds in the Church, it was thought advisable to secure from Mother Bidamon, (Sister Emma Smith), her testimony upon certain points upon which various opinions existed; and to do this, it was decided to present to her a few prominent questions, which were penned and agreed upon, the answers to which might, so far as she was concerned, settle these differences of opinion. In accordance with this understanding the senior editor of the Herald visited Nauvoo, in February last, arriving on the 4th and remaining until the 10th. Sister Emma answered the questions freely and in the presence of her husband, Major Lewis C. Bidamon, who was generally present in their sitting-room where the conversation took place. We were more particular in this because it had been frequently stated to us: "Ask your mother, she knows." "Why don't you ask your mother; she dare not deny these things." "You do not dare to ask your mother!"

Our thought was, that if we had lacked courage to ask her, because we feared the answers she might give, we would put aside that fear; and, whatever the worst might be, we would hear it. The result is given below; it having been decided to give the statements to the readers of the Herald, in view of the death of Sister Emma having occurred so soon after she made them, thus giving them the character of a last testimony.

It is intended to incorporate these questions and answers in the forthcoming history of the reorganization.

We apologized to our mother for putting the questions respecting polygamy and plural wives, as we felt we ought to do.

Question. Who performed the marriage ceremony for Joseph Smith and Emma Hale? When? Where?

Answer. I was married at South Bainbridge, New York; at the house of Squire Tarbell, by him, when I was in my 22d or 23d year.

We here suggested that Mother Smith's history gave the date of the marriage as January 18, 1827. To this she replied:

I think the date correct. My certificate of marriage was lost many years ago, in some of the marches we were forced to make.

In answer to a suggestion by us that she might mistake about who married father and herself; and that it was rumored that it was Sidney Rigdon, or a Presbyterian clergyman, she stated:

It was not Sidney Rigdon, for I did not see him for years after that. It was not a Presbyterian clergyman. I was visiting at Mr. Stowell's who lived in Bainbridge, and saw your father there. I had no intention of marrying when I left home; but, during my visit at Mr. Stowell's, your father visited me there. My folks were bitterly opposed to him; and, being importuned by your father, sided by Mr. Stowell, who urged me to marry him, and preferring to marry him (than) to any other man I knew, I consented. We went to Squire Tarbell's and were married. Afterward, when father found that I was married, he sent for us. The account in Mother Smith's history is substantially correct as to date and place. Your father bought your Uncle Jesse's (Hale) place, off father's farm, and we lived there until the Book of Mormon was translated; and I think published. I was not in Palmyra long.

Question. How many children did you lose, mother, before I was born?

Answer. There were three. I buried one in Pennsylvania, and a pair of twins in Ohio.

Question. Who were the twins that died?

Answer. They were not named.

Question. Who were the twins whom you took to raise?

Answer. I lost twins. Mrs. Murdock had twins and died. Brother Murdock came to me and asked me to take them, and I took the babes. Joseph died at 11 months. They were both sick when your father was mobbed. The mob who tarred and feathered him, left the door open when they went out with him, the child relapsed and died. Julia lived, though weaker than the boy.

Question. When did you first know Sidney Rigdon? Where?

Answer. I was residing at father Whitmer's when I first saw Sidney Rigdon. I think he came there.

Question. Was this before or after the publication of the Book of Mormon?

Answer. The Book of Mormon had been translated and published some time before. Parley P. Pratt had united with the Church before I knew Sidney Rigdon, or heard of him. At the time of Book of Mormon was translated there was no church organized, and Rigdon did not become acquainted with Joseph and me

till after the Church was established in 1830. How long after that I do not know, but it was some time.

Question. Who were scribes for father when translating the Book of Mormon?

Answer. Myself, Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, and my brother Reuben Hale.

Question. Was Alva Hale one?

Answer. I think not. He may have written some; but if he did, I do not remember it.

Question. What about the revelation on polygamy? Did Joseph Smith have anything like it? What of spiritual wifery?

Answer. There was no revelation on either polygamy or spiritual wives. There were some rumors of something of the sort, of which I asked my husband. He assured me that all there was of it was, that, in a chat about plural wives, he had said, "Well, such a system might possibly be, if everybody was agreed to it, and would behave as they should; but they would not; and besides, it was contrary to the will of heaven." No such thing as polygamy or spiritual wifery was taught, publicly or privately, before my husband's death, that I have now, or ever had any knowledge of.

Question. Did he not have other wives than yourself?

Answer. He had no other wife but me; nor did he to my knowledge ever have.

Question. Did he not hold marital relations with women other than yourself?

Answer. He did not have improper relations with any woman that ever came to my knowledge.

Question. Was there nothing about spiritual wives that you recollect?

Answer. At one time my husband came to me and asked me if I had heard certain rumors about spiritual marriages, or anything of the kind; and assured me that if I had, that they were without foundation; that there was no such doctrine, and never should be with his knowledge or consent. I know that he had no other wife or wives than myself, in any sense, either spiritual or otherwise.

Question. What of the truth of Mormonism?

Answer. I know Mormonism to be the truth; and believe the Church to have been established by divine direction. I have complete faith in it. In writing for your father I frequently wrote day after day, often sitting at the table close by him, he sitting with his face buried in his hat, with the stone in it, and dictating hour after hour with nothing between us.

Question. Had he not a book or manuscript from which he read, or dictated to you?

Answer. He had neither manuscript nor book to read from.

Question. Could he not have had, and you not know it?

Answer. If he had had anything of the kind he could not have concealed it from me.

Question. Are you sure that he had the plates at the time you were writing for him?

Answer. The plates often lay on the table without any attempt at concealment, wrapped in a small linen tablecloth, which I had given him to fold them in. I once felt of the plates, as they thus lay on the table, tracing their outline and shape. They seemed to be pliable like thick paper, and would rustle with a metallic sound when the edges were moved by the thumb, as one does sometimes thumb the edges of a book.

Question. Where did father and Oliver Cowdery write?

Answer. Oliver Cowdery and your father wrote in the room where I was at work.

Question. Could not father have dictated the Book of Mormon to you, Oliver Cowdery and the others who wrote for him, after having first written it, or having first read it out of some book?

Answer. Joseph Smith (and for the first time she used his name direct, having usually used the words, "your father" or "my husband") could neither write nor dictate a coherent and well-worded letter, let alone dictate a book like the Book of Mormon. And, though I was an active participant in the scenes that transpired, and was present during the translation of the plates, and had cognizance of things as they transpired, it is marvelous to me, "a marvel and a wonder," as much so as to anyone else.

Question. I should suppose that you would have uncovered the plates and examined them?

Answer. I did not attempt to handle the plates, other than I have told you, nor uncover them to look at them. I was satisfied that it was the work of God, and therefore did not feel it to be necessary to do so;

Major Bidamon here suggested: Did Mr. Smith forbid your examining the plates?

Answer. I do not think he did. I knew that he had them, and was not specially curious about them. I moved them from place to place on the table, as it was necessary in doing my work.

Question. Mother, what is your belief about the authenticity, or origin, of the Book of Mormon?

Answer. My belief is that the Book of Mormon is of divine authenticity - I have not the slightest doubt of it. I am satisfied that no man could have dictated the writing of the manuscripts unless he was inspired; for, when acting as his scribe, your father would dictate to me hour after hour; and when returning after meals, or after interruptions, he could at once begin where he had left off,

without either seeing the manuscript or having any portion of it read to him. This was a usual thing for him to do. It would have been improbable that a learned man could do this; and, for one so ignorant and unlearned as he was, it was simply impossible.

Question. What was the condition of feeling between you and father?

Answer. It was good.

Question. Were you in the habit of quarreling?

Answer. No. There was no necessity for any quarreling. He knew that I wished for nothing but what was right; and, as he wished for nothing else, we did not disagree. He usually gave some heed to what I had to say. It was quite a grievous thing to many that I had any influence with him.

Question. What do you think of David Whitmer?

Answer. David Whitmer I believe to be an honest and truthful man. I think what he states may be relied on.

Question. It has been stated sometimes that you apostatized at father's death, and joined the Methodist Church. What do you say to this?

Answer. I have been called apostate; but I have never apostatized nor forsaken the faith I at first accepted; but was called so because I would not accept their new-fangled notion.

Question. By whom were you baptized? Do you remember?

Answer. I think by Oliver Cowdery, at Bainbridge.

Question. You say that you were married at South Bainbridge, and have used the word Bainbridge. Were they one and the same town?

Answer. No. There was Bainbridge and South Bainbridge; some distance apart, how far I don't know. I was in South Bainbridge.

These questions and the answers she had given to them were read to my mother by me, the day before my leaving Nauvoo for home, and were affirmed by her. Major Bidamon stated that he had frequently conversed with her on the subject of the translation of the Book of Mormon, and her present answers were substantially what she had always stated in regard to it.

JOSEPH SMITH.