

# TESTIMONY OF EMMA SMITH

*Interview of Emma Smith by Joseph Smith III in Nauvoo, Illinois, 1879, Saints' Herald 26 (1 October 1879): 289–90*

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 [seer] stone in it, and dictating hour after hour with nothing between us.<sup>1</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

A. The plates often lay on the table without any attempt at concealment, wrapped in a small linen table cloth, 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.

Q. Where did father and Oliver Cowdery write?

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

Q. 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?

A. Joseph Smith [and for the first time she used his name direct, having usually used the words, “your father,” or “my husband”]<sup>2</sup> could neither write nor dictate a coherent and well-worded letter, let alone dictating 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,”<sup>3</sup> as much so as to any one else.

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

A. 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<sup>4</sup> here suggested: Did Mr. Smith forbid your examining the plates?

<sup>1</sup> Emma was Joseph's first scribe, and even though her handwriting is not found in the extant 28 percent of the original manuscript, she may have written a majority of the lost 116 pages. <sup>2</sup>This bracketed note was in the original.

<sup>3</sup> See Isa 29.4

<sup>4</sup> Emma married Lewis C. Bidamon after the martyrdom of her first husband, Joseph Smith.

- A. 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.
- Q. Mother, what is your belief about the authenticity, or origin of the Book of Mormon?
- A. 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 would 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.