
O MY CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN
An account of the sealing of Amanda Barnes to Joseph Smith
Hulda Cordelia Thurston Smith

There is one incident or chapter in the life of mother Amanda Barnes Smith which she related many times to her children and they all understood it, of which she left no record in the Little Book of her history, which appears rather strange and conflicting with our religious views and makes the appearance of our family on the temple record rather irregular and complex. Her grandchildren do not understand it. They wish to know how and why it is that their grandfather and grandmother are not sealed to each other and stand at the head of their family according to the order of the Church. At the request of my children I am writing the narrative of this portion of her life as related to me by herself and verified by Aunt Telitha C. Free Smith, widow of Uncle Alma who said, "It is just as she has related it to me many times."

Mother Smith said she was quite young when she met her husband, Warren Smith, and after a short courtship they were married. He was about fifteen years her senior. She was in her eighteenth year. She had never before placed her affections on anyone and said she loved him and they got along well together. He was kind, a good provider, a good man. He was a good Latter-day Saint and died a martyr for his religion at Haun's Mill. However, he, being so much older, had a serious love affair before and had been engaged to marry a young lady, but they had a disagreement which caused a temporary estrangement between them; and he, although married, had not forgotten nor overcome the love he had for her and said to his wife one day, "Amanda, I love you, but I love her little finger more than I love your whole body." This young lady never married and years after, Grandmother Smith was baptized for her and had this young woman sealed to her own husband, Warren Smith, and her name is on the temple records as the wife of Warren Smith.

After the death of her husband, and as soon as her little son, Alma, was sufficiently recovered to travel, Grandmother prepared for the long journey to Quincy, Illinois. She started in the inclement month of February, making the long journey alone with her children, often sleeping out-of-doors and as she says, they were "mobbed all the way."

There at Quincy she met a widower with five children, whose name was also Warren Smith. He, like her first husband, was by trade a blacksmith. He needed a mother for his children and she a provider for her four children, and a mutual attachment sprang up between them and shortly they were married, thus bringing together a family of nine children. She said there was unity and peace amongst the children and in the family, and between herself and her husband there was perfect love and harmony. She said "We were one, united in all things," and "It was wonderful how our children got along."

They had three children born to them, a son and two daughters. After they moved to Nauvoo the principle of the eternity of the marriage covenant was given by the Prophet. Her husband proposed that she go with him to the temple and be sealed to him for eternity. To this she could not conscientiously consent, for her first husband and father of most of her children had died a martyr for the gospel and to him she owed first allegiance.

Warren reasoned like this, "You have said that you have taken more comfort and have been happier with me than you were with your first husband, and now you have two husbands and children by both, and you certainly have the right to choose between them for eternity." Yet she hesitated and could not decide what to do, and he became very insistent that it be done and without delay.

Still she was undecided, but finally said, "I cannot make up my mind what to do about it, but I am willing to state the circumstances to the Prophet Joseph and abide by his counsel." To this he agreed, and the next Sunday after meeting they both went to the Prophet's house and took supper. There they related their troubles to him as told above, and asked for his advice.

After a few moments consideration he said, "Sister Amanda, I can't tell you tonight what to do, but come to me in two weeks, and I will give you the word of the Lord on it." They went home very satisfied. Before the two weeks had elapsed, however, the Prophet was killed. Her husband now said, "The Prophet is gone and you cannot now get the word of the Lord," and he was sure she had a perfect right to make her choice of husbands and urged her again to go to the temple and be sealed to him.

The situation perplexed her and on Sunday evening, just two weeks from the time they had talked with the Prophet, she was not feeling very well and did not go to meeting, but went into her bedroom and laid down on the bed, and thinking of her problem, she was surprised by her room brilliantly illuminated by a most beautiful light. She saw no one, but a voice perfectly audible said, "Choose Brigham proxy and be sealed to Joseph." She was astounded and thought the communication was surely from an evil source. While thus thinking, the same voice said to her again, "Choose Brigham proxy and be sealed to Joseph." If my memory is right, she said this scene was repeated for the third time. She was completely mystified and thought that this must be from an evil source. "Here I have two husbands, one dead and one alive, and I am told to be sealed to the Prophet Joseph. It surely cannot be done--it must be wrong--it is impossible." She banished the thought and never repeated this thing, not even to her husband.

Finally, she yielded to his persuasions and went to the temple and was sealed to her husband, and she said to me, "As sure as you live, Cordelia, we quarreled for the first time in our lives over some foolish little thing before we got home." She very soon learned why he had been so anxious to have their sealing done so quickly. He had gotten into trouble with their hired girl and it was impossible to keep it a secret much longer, and he knew if the true condition came out she would never be sealed to him. He married this girl and lived with her until she had two sons, when she became tired or disgusted or something, and told him if he would outfit her with a team and wagon

and teamster and a good outfit, she would go East to her people, which he did.

But there was never any more happiness in the Smith family. Quite the contrary. Mother Smith said, "It was a perfect hell." He became extremely abusive and cruel to her and the children. She continued living with him until they came to Salt Lake City in 1850 or 1851. Soon after their arrival, she called on President Young and told him of her troubles and that she felt that she could stand no more and wanted a divorce. He requested her to come to his office on the next day and bring Brother Warren. So the next day they both went to the President's office. He talked with them, and asked some questions and heard grievances of both and then said, "Yes, Sister Amanda, it is right that you should have a divorce. You and Brother Warren stand up." They did and by the virtue of the authority he held, he unsealed them and that was the only divorce she ever had. Warren was soon married to another woman and went to California.

She was now content and quite happy and thinking when her sons were old enough to get their endowments she would have one of them stand proxy and she would be sealed to their father. But one Sunday President Heber C. Kimball preached a direct sermon on "Robbing the Dead." He said it had been and was being done and must be stopped, and said it would bring a curse on those who did it, etc. This she took to mean herself and said, "That is just what I have done and the trouble I have had is in consequence of it. It is just punishment." She resolved, however, to set herself right if possible, so quite early Monday morning, she went down to Aunt Mary Ann Young's (they were old Kirtland friends) hoping to see President Young. He soon came in.

After greetings were over, she said to him, "I am glad to see you, Brother Brigham. I came almost purposely to see you today." "Well," said he, "What can I do for you Sister Amanda?" She said, "I don't know, but Brother Kimball preached a sermon yesterday that went right to my heart." "Oh," he said, "What about?" She told him, and then said, "I feel that this has been the cause of all my troubles and I now wish to set myself right and do my first work over again. Alma is quite young, but he is a good, steady boy and if you think he is old enough to stand for his father, I want him to do it and be sealed to my first husband."

President Young arose to depart and only said, "No, Sister Amanda, you can't do it." And he left without

further ceremony and without explanation. "At this, my heart sank within me. I felt that I was perfectly free from my second Warren, but wondered what I should do now. I felt like a lost soul and that the curse Brother Kimball mentioned was being measured out to me and that I truly merited the punishment I had received. I wandered about like a lost soul; I could not content myself at home and ate and slept but little. I called on all my neighbors and friends, but could find no peace of mind anywhere. Oh, Cordelia, I know what hell is, I have been there."

"After a few weeks spent thus, I thought I would go again and see Aunt Mary Ann Young, this time hoping that I wouldn't see the President. However, I had not been there long when President Young came in." He remembered the way he had left her before and the first thing he said was, "Well, Sister Amanda, what are you going to do with yourself?" She replied, "I don't know, Brother Brigham, what can I do? You tell me that I cannot be sealed to my first husband and you know that you unsealed me from my second Warren, and since then I have felt as far from him as if I had never met him, so what can I do?" He replied, "If I tell you what to do, will you do it?" She said, "Yes." He then said to her, "Choose a proxy and be sealed to Joseph." When he said that I nearly fainted because that which I had seen and heard in Nauvoo came upon me with such force. I said, "All right, Brother Brigham, will you stand proxy?" He replied that he would.

She then, for the first time, related the circumstances of the vision as related above, not even having told her husband, but had tried to banish it from her mind and for years had not thought of it. He then remarked, "When you are told to do a thing after this you will do it, won't you?" She replied, "I will try to." He said, "If you had done that in Nauvoo, I would have taken you into my family as I did others of the Prophet's wives. As I now have all that I can do for and cannot take other responsibilities, you must depend on your children for assistance, but I will stand proxy for the Prophet." This he did and they were sealed for eternity. However, she never used any influence with her children about what they were to do. She left it entirely up to them to make their own choice of parents for the hereafter. When I mentioned it to her once she said, "I have done what I consider right and my children must do as they wish best. I can do no more."

This constituted a great trial for the children who loved and revered their father's memory (though too young

when he was killed for them to remember much about him) for he was a good man, a kind father and died a martyr for his religion. My husband being the oldest in Amanda's family, felt greatly the importance of interviewing the family and finding out what they wanted to do or what they could decide. They felt as though they could not decide, and so they wished to present the matter to The First Presidency of the Church. My husband requested me to go to Salt Lake City and see President Joseph F. Smith and tell him all the circumstances and ask him for advice in this matter, which I did. I met President Joseph F. Smith and his two counselors in his office, and I was accompanied by Telitha C. Free Smith, wife of Uncle Alma Smith.

They listened with interest to the narration and asked some questions, one of which was, "How do the children feel about the matter?" I told him I had heard nearly all of them say they would not desert their own father, yet not one of them questioned the propriety of their mother's action under the circumstances. Yet I believed they would take his advice in this matter and that was what I was there for. After consideration, President Joseph F. Smith said, "Well, if it were I, it wouldn't take me long to decide whether to be sealed to my mother and the Prophet, or to my father and a woman I had never seen." Then I said, "That is your advice?" He said, "Yes, and more." Then he said that if there should be a mistake made, there is not a man on earth who would be more ready and anxious to make it right than the Prophet Joseph.

This counsel was acceptable to all, and President Joseph F. Smith acted as proxy for the Prophet and got Sister Lucy W. Smith Kimball, the only surviving wife of the Prophet Joseph to stand for Amanda Barnes Smith, and the children were sealed to their parents, Joseph, the Prophet, and Amanda B. Smith on 22 May 1902.

After I had narrated this story as above written, I asked Aunt Telitha if she had anything to say. "Do you understand it as I do, or have I in any way overdrawn this narrative?" She said, "You have told the story better than I could and just as I heard Mother Smith tell it many times."

The following statement was made by Joseph F. Smith, then a counselor and later President of the Church. It can be found in the Journal History of the Church, under date of 17 February 1882, as well as in the Deseret News for that date; also, it was reprinted in John A. Widtsoe's

book *Joseph Smith, Seeker after Truth, Prophet of God*, Chapter 38, published by the Deseret New Press in 1951.

“The speaker said, perhaps for the first time in public, that the women who entered into plural marriage with the Prophet Joseph Smith were shown to him and named to him as early as 1831, and some of them were given in marriage to him as early as that date, although it was not then prudent, under the circumstances, to make these facts public. And when the Lord showed those women to Joseph some of them were not even acquainted with the Church, much less him. God knew their hearts, as is proved by the back that they have been true and faithful through all the trying vicissitudes through which they have passed, and that too in the face of a frowning world; they have endured it all, and are today examples of womanhood and purity.”

This information is a bit astonishing to us, the early date of 1831, but does shed light on the subject and helps us clarify reasons why our grandmother Amanda was sealed to the Prophet under her particular circumstances. . .the matter of Amanda’s sealing to the Prophet had been questioned by some member of the family, and that the papers were then up before the Adjustment Committee for final decision. When he returned several weeks later, he learned that the higher authorities have now given this problem their thought and prayers, and it was decided once and for all that Amanda’s sealing to the Prophet will stand as is, since it was done in her lifetime. This decision is gratifying to us, as we know it will be to you, since we had never thought of having the matter placed before the Committee.