

Adam-ondi-Ahman: A Brief Historical Survey

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The recent renewal of interest in Adam-ondi-Ahman as a place of historical importance for Latter-day Saints suggests the need for a new look at the site. Indeed, at least one writer has called for an "archaeological reconnaissance of the area before it becomes too accessible to tourists and souvenir-seekers."¹ It is not the purpose of this paper to defend the pros and cons of such a plea. Rather, this work is written to help identify facts in relation to several important questions: (1) How, when, and by whom was the area of Adam-ondi-Ahman laid out? (2) How large was the town plat, and what purposes did the city serve by its settlement? (3) What do we know about there being a tower and one altar or two in the area?

EXPLORATION AND SURVEY ATTEMPTS

As early as September 1837, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were requested by a conference of the Church at Kirtland to "appoint other stakes or places of gathering" for the Saints, and this was one of the principal purposes behind their visit

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¹See John H. Wittorf, "An Historical Investigation of the Ruined 'Altars' at Adam-ondi-Ahman, Missouri," *Newsletter and Proceedings of the S. E. H. A.*, M. Wells Jakeman, ed., No. 113 (15 April 1969), pp. 1-8. The foregoing newsletter is published at Brigham Young University several times yearly by the Society for Early Historic Archaeology. Wittorf presents an impressive array of evidence gleaned from the journals and writings of early members of the Church and concludes that "the necessity for postulating two 'Adamic altars,' separated by a distance of about a mile," is likely non-essential. In this matter he differs from the conclusions reached by Elder Alvin R. Dyer, *The Refiner's Fire* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1968), pp. 171-175.

to Far West, Missouri, in November of 1837.² Subsequent to their arrival, the Church in Missouri had appointed David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, John Corrill, Lyman Wight, and David W. Patten to explore possible sites for future settlement in northern Missouri.³ The ideal place to begin was in Daviess County,⁴ a sparsely settled area in which some few Latter-day Saints had already located.⁵

An official report of the exploring committee's efforts was made to the Saints in Far West by Oliver Cowdery and David W. Patten on 7 December 1837. They declared the area ideal for settlement and suggested a more thorough reconnaissance in the near future. In a personal letter to Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery reported that he, in company with others, had spent twenty days exploring Daviess County. "I found a great many of the finest mill sites in the western country," he reported, "and made between forty and fifty locations."⁶ The Church in Missouri accepted the committee's labors with gratitude, and the subject was laid over until such time as a more complete survey could be made.⁷ In the meantime, however, at

²Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1957) 2:514 (commonly referred to as the *Documentary History of the Church*, and hereinafter cited as *HC*.)

³*Elders' Journal*, 1:27 (November 1837).

⁴Daviess County was formed in December of 1836 at the same time that Caldwell County came into existence. Shortly after the settlement of the Saints in both counties, Far West became the chief city of Caldwell and Adam-ondi-Ahman the same in Daviess. See Leland H. Gentry, "A History of the Latter-day Saints in Northern Missouri from 1836 to 1839," Ph.D. dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1965, pp. 60-65.

⁵Lyman Wight and a few other members of the Church moved into the Grand River area in the spring of 1837. Shortly thereafter, they were given "public notice" by the non-Mormon residents to leave the county or face the consequences. These and similar threats were ignored, but there can be no doubt that the tendency of the Saints to "fan out" into ever-expanding circles of country was a source of great vexation to their Gentile neighbors. See *HC*, 2:496; *Times and Seasons*, 1:65 (March 1840); and Gentry, "A History of the Latter-day Saints," pp. 224-225.

⁶This quotation is found in a letter which Oliver wrote from Far West to his brother, Warren, a resident of Kirtland, Ohio, on 21 January 1838. Part of the letter was intended for Joseph Smith. Oliver, who at this time was temporarily disaffected from the Church, wrote several letters between late December 1837, and April 1838. At least four of these are preserved in a special collection in the Huntington Library, San Marino, California. The Special Collections section of the Brigham Young University Library has microfilm copies of all the letters, and they make most interesting reading since they help to show the feelings of Oliver during the period just preceding his excommunication from the Church.

⁷*The Conference Minutes and Record Book of Christ's Church of Latter-day Saints, belonging to the High Council of Said Church of their Successors in Office, Caldwell County, Missouri, Far West: April 6, 1838*, pp. 87-88. (Sometimes known as the *Far West Record*, this source will hereinafter be cited as *FWR*.)

least two members of the committee, Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer, had a "falling out" with their Missouri brethren, which eventually led to their excommunication from the Church. Further exploration attempts waited the arrival of the Prophet Joseph Smith in March of 1838.⁸

About a month following the Prophet's arrival, the matter received renewed attention. On 26 April 1838, a revelation was received stating "that other places should be appointed for stakes in the regions round about" Caldwell County.⁹ Less than a month later, an exploratory committee, Joseph Smith at its head, journeyed to Daviess County to lay out a new stake of Zion. The Prophet gives the following description of this effort:

Friday, May 18.—I left Far West in company with Sidney Rigdon, Thomas B. Marsh, David W. Patten, Bishop Partridge, Elias Higbee, Simeon Carter, Alanson Ripley, and many others, for the purpose of laying off a stake of Zion, making locations, and laying claim to lands to facilitate the gathering of the Saints, for the benefit of the poor, in upholding the Church of God. We traveled to the mouth of Honey Creek, which is a tributary of Grand River, where we camped for the night. . . .

Saturday, 19.—This morning we struck our tents and formed a line of march, crossing Grand River at the mouth of Honey Creek and Nelson's Ferry. . . . We pursued our course up the river, mostly through timber, for about eighteen miles, when we arrived at Colonel Lyman Wight's home. . . .¹⁰

The actual work of exploration and survey appears to have occupied some time. Joseph Smith reports that he was personally involved in the same between 18 and 24 of May, while others of the party were active until 28 May. Under date of 4 June, however, he reports: "I left Far West with President Rigdon, my brother Hyrum and others for Adam-ondi-Ahman, and stayed at Brother Moses Dailey's over night; and on the morning of the 5th, went to Colonel Lyman Wight's in the rain. We continued surveying, building houses, day after day, for many days, until the surveyor had completed the city plat."¹¹ The next journal entry is 11 June, and we

⁸HC, 3:8.

⁹Millennial Star, 16:147-148.

¹⁰HC, 3:34-35.

¹¹Ibid., p. 38. The company's chief surveyor was Alanson Ripley, a faithful member of the Church. Abraham O. Smoot was flagman when Ripley

are left to conclude that the Prophet and his party were also busy at the same work during the week of June 4 to 11. Lyman Wight gives us the following report:

About June, Joseph Smith, together with many others of the principal men of the Church, came to my house, and taking a view of the large bottom in the bend of the river and the beautiful prairies on the bluffs, came to the conclusion that it would be a handsome situation for a town. We, therefore, commenced surveying and laying off town lots, and locating government lands for many miles north of this place.¹²

Wight's reference to "locating government lands for many miles north of this place" deserves more than passing notice. It appears to have been the intent of the Saints to spread both north and south of the Grand River and thus occupy large segments of northern Missouri. On the afternoon of 19 May 1838, for example, the Prophet, accompanied by Sidney Rigdon and George W. Robinson, went a half-mile up the Grand River from Wight's home "for the purpose of selecting and laying claim to a city plat near said ferry in Daviess County, township 60, ranges 27 and 28, sections 25, 36, 31, and 30. . . ."¹³ The next day, however, the Prophet's company "traveled about six miles north." The following morning, 21 May, work was begun making locations for settlement in township 61, ranges 27 and 28, following which the company returned to "Robison's Grove," some two miles to the south, and set up camp.¹⁴ That evening the Prophet called a council of the brethren for the purpose of deciding "whether it was wisdom to go immediately into the north country, or tarry here and hereabouts, to secure land on Grand River, etc." Each one present was permitted to express his feelings, after which the Prophet said he "felt impressed to tarry and secure all the land nearby that is not secured between this and Far West, especially on Grand River." The Council voted unanimously

surveyed the town plat—Oliver B. Huntington when the farming area around the settlement was surveyed. Oliver B. Huntington, "Adam's Altar and Tower," *Juvenile Instructor*, 30:701.

¹²The foregoing is taken from Lyman Wight's Journal and is quoted in Rollin J. Britton, *Early Days on the Grand River* (Columbia: Missouri State Historical Society, 1920), pp. 6-7.

¹³HC, 3:35.

¹⁴This would still be some four miles to the north, and if the party followed the course of the river, to the west of Adam-ondi-Ahman.

in favor of the Prophet's proposal.¹⁵ The next day, Sidney Rigdon went east with a company of men to reconnoiter another area of the country for possible settlement. They, too, returned "with a good report of that vicinity, and with information of valuable locations which might be secured." Of the next day's activities, the Prophet Joseph records: "Wednesday, 23.—We all traveled east, locating lands, to secure a claim on Grove Creek, and near the city of Adam-ondi-Ahman."¹⁶ Three days later, following the Prophet's return to Far West, "the company surveyed land on the other side of the river opposite Adam-ondi-Ahman."¹⁷

SETTLEMENT ATTEMPTS

The foregoing information is important for at least two reasons: (1) It demonstrates that the explorations undertaken by the Saints in northern Missouri far exceeded the areas known today as "Tower Hill" and "Spring Hill" or Adam-ondi-Ahman. As a matter of fact the exploring parties appear to have gone in all directions from Adam-ondi-Ahman, perhaps using the latter as a hub from which to radiate throughout the countryside. (2) Further, the evidence suggests that Adam-ondi-Ahman was not intended to be the narrow, restricted town which some may have supposed, but rather a true City of Zion as comprehended by the revelations of God.¹⁸ Additional information clearly indicates that at least some members of the exploration team had land allocated to them as far away from Adam-ondi-Ahman as township 61, some miles to the north.¹⁹ The entire matter takes on new per-

¹⁵HC, 3:36.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 37.

¹⁷Ibid. The evidence, sparse though it is, clearly indicates that Joseph Smith and many others were active in seeking settlement locations for a few days in late May also. Had the Saints been permitted to locate in the Grand River area for any length of time, they would have undoubtedly settled on both sides of the river. As it was, they settled only north and east of the same.

¹⁸See pp. 559-563 below.

¹⁹See "A Record Kept for the Use of the Church: of Lands Surveyed, Locations Made, and Names to Whom Located, Giving the Range, Township, Section, and Quarter; Also of the City Platts, their Surveyer [sic] etc, Far West Missouri and Adam Ondi Ammen, Geo. W. Robinson, Gen. Clerk & Recorder." The foregoing record is housed in the LDS Historian's Office in Salt Lake City, No. 71648 R. It gives the names of several persons to whom lands were allocated in Township 61 as well as of those in Township 60 where Adam-ondi-Ahman was located. At some time subsequent to 1838, the record fell into the hands of Henry G. Sherwood, resident of the city of Nauvoo, who preserved it for the Church.

spective when one considers the following statement from James H. Hunt, a local resident of Daviess County during the time of its Mormon occupation:

Early in 1837, Daviess county began to have an influx of Mormon immigrants. Their settlements were mainly south of Grand River. They had one settlement on Lick Fork, near the Weldon settlement. Here a Mormon by the name of Bosley and a widow by the name of Ives, besides others whose names are not remembered, settled. . . . Further up the river and in what is now Monroe Township, the Mormons formed another settlement—this was on Narrowbone and Honey Creeks. . . . Here Perry Durfey, Roswell Stevens, Henry Belt, the Daleys, and John D. Lee settled, and others also came, whose names are not remembered.

It would be well to state here that at this time all the lands in Daviess County, excepting Colfax Township, were subject to preemption, not having as yet been brought into market. Colfax Township had been surveyed at the same time Ray and Caldwell Counties were, and was therefore in market. Here another settlement of Mormons was made, composed principally of a better class, who were able to purchase their lands and improve them.²⁰

Thus while most of the lands in Daviess County were unimproved pre-emption lands, available from the federal government at \$1.25 per acre, at least some locations were obtained from private owners.²¹

²⁰James H. Hunt, *History of Daviess County and the Mormon War* (St. Louis: Ostick and Davies, 1844, p. 162).

²¹This is the identical procedure used to procure lands for the Saints in Caldwell County. See Gentry, "A History of the Latter-day Saints," pp. 57-58, 75. Far and away the greater portion of the land obtained was by pre-emption purchase, presumably at the United States Land Office in Lexington, Missouri. *Ibid.*, p. 48. In the two years that the Saints occupied northern Missouri, they "opened two thousand farms and . . . paid to the United States government, for land alone, three hundred and eighteen thousand dollars." At a minimum price mentioned above, this gave them "over two hundred and fifty thousand acres." Lucien Carr, *Missouri, Bone of Contention* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1888), p. 181. Still another source says: "All the Mormon settlements outside of this county [i.e., Caldwell] were made with the prior consent of the inhabitants then living where the settlements were made; the consent was obtained in nearly every instance by the payment of money, either for the lands of the pioneer gentiles or for some articles of personal property they owned. Money was scarce at that day, and although the pioneers did not approve Mormon doctrines, they did approve Mormon gold and silver, and they were willing to tolerate the one if they could obtain the other. But afterwards, certain of the gentiles claimed that the Mormon occupation had been by stealth and fraud, and perhaps in some instances this was true." *History of Caldwell and Livingston Counties, Missouri* (St. Louis: National Historical Co., 1886), p. 118. B. H. Roberts says of the last comment: "It is not true, and there is no evidence that warrants the 'perhaps' of the quotation." *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930), 1:420.

Not all the Saints who eventually settled in Daviess County located at Adam-ondi-Ahman, but most certainly did so. In June 1838, when large companies of migrating Saints began to arrive in Far West, they were counseled to move on to Adam-ondi-Ahman. One such group was led by John Smith, the Prophet's uncle.²² The following information is gleaned from John Smith's private journal:

June 16, 1838—Arrived at the city so long sought for, even Farr West [sic].

June 18, 1838—We think of going to Grand River, Davies [sic] county. Spent our time preparing to go. . . .

June 25, 1838—Got help, moved all our goods to Grand River. . . . Camped on the prairie with Br. Hillman and Thayer.

June 26, 1838—Crossed the river, got on the land of Adamondiahman [sic] about ten o'clock; pitched our tent on the bank of the river in the woodland; here we are, thank the Lord; but we have no money, neither house, nor but little provisions; but the Lord will provide.²³

The city continued to grow at a steady rate. One month after the arrival of John Smith, the Prophet recorded in his journal that he [Joseph Smith] "left Far West for Adam-ondi-Ahman in company with President Rigdon . . . to settle some Canadian brethren in that place, as they are emigrating rapidly to this land from all parts of the county."²⁴ On 4 October 1838, more than five hundred Saints arrived in Far West at once. This company, known as the "Kirtland Camp No. 1," came from Ohio, having completed a journey of more than nine hundred miles. They soon learned, however, that their tedious journey was not yet at an end, for they were counseled to settle at Adam-ondi-Ahman.²⁵

As with Far West, so with Adam-ondi-Ahman—attempts were made to set up a City of Zion.²⁶ As set forth by revelation, the chief city of Zion comprehended an area extensive enough to hold fifteen to twenty-thousand people. The city

²²HC, 3:38.

²³"Journal of John Smith," Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah, unpaged.

²⁴HC, 3:38.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 147-148. See also Ibid., pp. 87-148, for an account of the organization and journey of this group. Adam-ondi-Ahman is some twenty-five miles north of Far West.

²⁶See Gentry, "A History of the Latter-day Saints," pp. 75-76.

plat itself was to be one mile square with square blocks of forty rods to the square gridded out from a given centerplace. The city's lots ran north and south or east and west in alternating patterns, each lot one-half acre in extent. In the center of the city was the town square where the public buildings, including the temple and the Bishop's storehouse, were to stand. On the outskirts of the city were the agricultural areas, set at equal distances from every man's dwelling place.²⁷ The economic foundation of Zion was the "Law of Consecration of Property and Stewardship," which had for its basic premise the idea that the earth is the Lord's and that man is merely a steward thereon.²⁸ The entire Order of Zion was intended to make God's people free of earthly encumbrances and to unite them in a social compact where each person was bound by "covenants of mutual friendship and mutual love" to seek the welfare of Zion rather than his own personal aggrandizement.²⁹

It appears that Far West and Adam-ondi-Ahman did not in the end follow precisely the plan laid down for the chief City of Zion.³⁰ They were enough alike, however, that it is apparent that they were patterned in many respects after the latter. The following statement by William Swartzell, a member of the survey team at Adam-ondi-Ahman, is significant here:³¹

Brother White [i.e., Lyman Wight] preached to-day, on the *consecration* of property to the Church of the Latter-day-Saints [sic]. He said that after the brethren had bought lots to suit themselves, with their own money, in the city of Adam-on-Diammon [sic], they should *consecrate* all their money and property to the Church, so that the Church can purchase the lands and locations within 12 miles from the centre of the *stake*, in every direction.³²

²⁷For a description of the plat as set forth by the Prophet Joseph Smith as well as an accompanying drawing of the same, see William E. Berrett and Alma P. Burton, *Readings in LDS Church History* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1953), 1:112-113.

²⁸A more detailed analysis will be found in Gentry, "A History of the Latter-day Saints," pp. 25-26.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 23-27.

³⁰The town plats of Far West and Adam-ondi-Ahman were two miles square rather than one. See Ibid., pp. 96-97.

³¹William Swartzell, *Mormonism Exposed, Being a Journal of a Residence in Missouri* (Pekin, Ohio: By the Author, 1840). Swartzell was a chronic complainer. He wrote his exposé following the expulsion of the Saints from Missouri and their subsequent unpopularity throughout the country.

³²Ibid., pp. 23-24.

The foregoing indicates how expansive the plans of the brethren were where the city of Adam-ondi-Ahman was concerned. Moreover, it illustrates the intention of the Church to purchase extensive areas of land, using consecrated monies as payment. Further, the reference to the city as a "stake" is also interesting. Shortly after the first large influx of Saints into the area, the residents of Daviess County were organized into a stake of Zion. John Smith was appointed to serve as president of the newly formed Church unit, while Reynolds Cahoon and Lyman Wight were appointed first and second counselors respectively. Vinson Knight, pending the arrival of Newel K. Whitney from Kirtland, was chosen as "Bishop pro tempore," while the new High Council was composed of John Lemon, Daniel Stanton, Mayhew Hillman, Daniel Carter, Isaac Perry, Harrison Sagers, Alanson Brown, Thomas Gordon, Lorenzo D. Barnes, George A. Smith, and Ezra Thayer.³³

As formerly noted, the layout of Adam-ondi-Ahman was much like that of the chief City of Zion. Swartzell gives us the following picture:

Two miles square, in the center of the twelve mile circle, was laid out in lots of an acre each, in the center of which was the temple lot of four acres. The lots nearest to the temple lot were the property of the High Priests and dignitaries of the Church. These lots, to a certain distance outside of the two mile square, were of different sizes, from five to ten acres each, to be appropriated or disposed of to individuals, with a due regard to the size of the family, the larger families each to have a ten acre lot, and the smaller families to have five acres, as a homestead.³⁴

The city, then, according to this description, was to be the center of the "stake," and in the center of the city, undoubtedly near the town square, the temple of God was to stand. Evidence has been found which tends to support Swartzell's report. A map, apparently based upon the survey of Adam-ondi-Ahman in 1838 by Alanson Ripley, clearly shows the city occupying an area two miles square. Blocks with the city are

³³Details of this conference will be found in the *Elders' Journal*, 1:61 (August 1838). See also *HC*, 3:38, 39; and Swartzell, *Mormonism Exposed*, p. 13.

³⁴Swartzell, *Mormonism Exposed*, p. 24. An interesting dimension is added to the picture when one studies a topographical map of the area. The area laid out for purchase in 1838 and known as Spring Hill is precisely four sections of land, or two miles square. In the exact center of this area is Tower Hill.

marked off at right angles, and each block is 36 rods in its north and south dimensions and 32 rods east and west. The plat is clearly north and east of the Grand River, with the town square better than a mile away from the river.³⁵ Swartzell's reference to the "homesteads" beyond the city's perimeter also finds support in another source. Joseph Smith's land, for example, was located in Range 27, Township 60, Section 30, South West Quarter, and also in Range 28, Township 60, Section 25, South East Quarter. This would place the Prophet's holdings on both sides of the Grand River, and the two pieces, although situated in different ranges, would be adjacent. Sidney Rigdon's land was located on the east in Range 27, Township 60, Section 30, South East Quarter, and joined the Prophet's land.³⁶

The allocation of land was, as always, a ticklish matter, particularly when the leaders of the Church received their allocations first. As formerly noted, Swartzell reports that the "lots nearest to the temple lot were the property of the High Priests and dignitaries of the Church." He also noted (chronic complainer that he was) that "the least among the brethren were the least noticed and got the least land."³⁷ Benjamin F. Johnson, a late arrival in the area, allows that while all were anxious, including himself, to secure choice lots, his unmarried status placed his chance to select "near the last under the rule of 'oldest served first.' "³⁸ Harrison Burgess, who labored nine days as a surveyor's helper, wrote: "As a reward for rendering this assistance at this time, Brother Joseph selected me a very fine city lot."³⁹

In addition to their personal lots in connection with the Law of Consecration, the Church collectively owned—or it was intended that it should own—large quantities of land beyond the 12-mile radius. Quoting Swartzell again:

³⁵See "A Map of Adam-ondi-Ahman, Mo." in the LDS Historian's Office in Salt Lake City in the file folder marked, "Adam-ondi-Ahman." It is credited to "R. Campbell, A. Ripley, Surveyor." It would appear that Adam-ondi-Ahman included not only the ridge commonly known as Spring Hill, but also Tower Hill, and the entire valley running south to the river.

³⁶"A Record Kept for the Use of the Church. . . ."

³⁷Swartzell, *Mormonism Exposed*, pp. 9-10. His land was in Range 27, Township 60, Section 19.

³⁸Benjamin F. Johnson, *My Life's Review* (Independence: Zion's Press, 1947), p. 36. Johnson, however, obtained the very lot on which the altar (which one?) stood.

³⁹Harrison Burgess, *Labors in the Vineyard: Faith Promoting Series, Book 12* (Salt Lake City: *Juvenile Instructor*, 1884), p. 68.

Upon the extremities of the twelve mile square, there were laid off lots of a thousand acres each; one upon the east, west, north, and south. These thousand acre lots were designed as the general farming lands of the whole brotherhood, who were all to be under the direction of the dignitaries or overseers of the congregations; and from the proceeds of these thousand acre lots, the laboring part, or those who tilled them, were to receive their breadstuffs and their seed-grain, while the residue of the crops was to go to support the Church. . . . This *stake* is so laid out, that all in going to and from their dwellings to the center lots to work, have precisely the same distance to travel.⁴⁰

The rapid growth in population made necessary the immediate construction of houses. Joseph McGee recalled in later years that Adam-ondi-Ahman had more than five hundred inhabitants at a time when Gallatin, the near-by county seat, had but a few houses.⁴¹ George A. Smith, son of John, states that he helped his father build "a two-story log house on a lot in Adam-ondi-Ahman" soon after the family's arrival. He also "helped to raise twenty-five log houses in 25 days."⁴² Swartzell is likewise expressive about the rapidity of the new building program. For his journal entry of 19 July he wrote: "All things are going on a [sic] briskly as ever. The brethren are getting lots and raising houses on them—two or three every day."⁴³ In time, however, the rapid influx of settlers exceeded the abilities and energies of the builders. Jonathan H. Hale reports: "On the 4th of October, 1838, the camp [the famous Kirtland Camp] arrived in Davies [sic] County, Missouri, on Grand River, at a place which we called Adam-ondi-Ahman, the territory assigned to us. There we lived in tents until the last of November, when we were driven to Far West, Caldwell County, Missouri."⁴⁴

⁴⁰Swartzell, *Mormonism Exposed*, p. 24.

⁴¹As quoted in Britton, *Early Days on the Grand River*, p. 8. The vastness of the area was impressive to the Saints, and the Lord Himself said of the area: "Is there not room enough on the mountains of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and on the plains of Olaha Shinehah, or the land where Adam dwelt . . .?" Doctrine and Covenants 117:8.

⁴²George A. Smith, "Journal of George A. Smith," LDS Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah, unpaged.

⁴³Swartzell, *Mormonism Exposed*, p. 19.

⁴⁴Heber Q. Hale, *Bishop Jonathan H. Hale of Nauvoo, His Life and Ministry* (Salt Lake City: By the Author, 1938), p. 61. On arrival in Diahman, this group was told: "Brethren, your long and tedious journey is now ended; you are now on the public square of Adam-ondi-Ahman. This is the place where Adam blessed his posterity, when they arose up and called him Michael, the Prince, the Archangel, and he being full of the Holy Ghost, predicted what

THE ALTAR-TOWER QUESTION

In the course of his labors in northern Missouri, the Prophet Joseph made several visits into the Grand River country. As noted, the first such visit was a rather extended trip for the purpose of "laying off a stake" and "making locations and laying claim to lands to facilitate the gathering of the saints" Under date of Saturday, 19 May 1838, the second day of the journey, the Prophet writes:

This morning we struck our tents and formed a line of march, crossing Grand River at the mouth of Honey Creek and Nelson's Ferry. . . . We pursued our course up the river, mostly through timber, for about eighteen miles, when we arrived at Colonel Lyman Wight's home. He lives at the foot of Tower Hill (a name I gave the place in consequence of the remains of an old Nephite altar or tower that stood there), where we camped for the Sabbath.⁴⁵

One could devoutly wish that the Prophet had told us more about this "old Nephite altar or tower" since it has given rise to some controversy left as it is. Was it really of Nephite origin as the *History of the Church* records, or was it an "Adamic Altar" as others have maintained the Prophet told them?⁴⁶ Or, were our sources referring to two altars instead of one? If so, why did the Prophet mention only one while people report his speaking of another? Even if these and like questions cannot be given final answers in this article, the evidence, at least, can be examined.

The easiest and most logical explanation would appear to be that of two altars.⁴⁷ This view has recently been challenged

should befall his posterity to the latest generation." *HC*, 3:148. This was the first of two "Kirtland Camps," the latter arriving in Adam-ondi-Ahman late in the month of October.

⁴⁵*HC*, 3:34-35.

⁴⁶A careful check of the earliest printed account of "The History of Joseph Smith," which carries this incident concerning the identification of an "old Nephite Altar or tower" is identical with that found in *HC*. See *Millennial Star* (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1854), 16:152. As the result of a conversation with Earl Olsen, Church Archivist, it was discovered that there is no original journal of the Prophet Joseph Smith for 1838. The original manuscript "History of the Church" also carries the same terminology, however. The error, if it is one, then, is of long standing. The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints appears to place little credence in Joseph Smith's mention of the altar which they say he "speculatively referred to as an old Nephite altar." Charles A. Davies, *Question Time* (Independence: Herald House, 1967), 2:167-178.

⁴⁷On the basis of a preliminary survey of historical evidence made in the course of writing a doctoral dissertation, this was the view the present writer adopted. See Gentry, "A History of the Latter-day Saints," pp. 237-241.

by at least one LDS scholar,⁴⁸ however, and it is to be expected that others will also wish to take a serious look at the question.

It is important to know that there are two hills or ridges, separated by a small valley, in the area encompassed by Adam-ondi-Ahman.⁴⁹ Tower Hill, where Joseph Smith located the Nephite altar or tower, is one of these. The small valley connects with the larger valley to form an interesting semicircle. In the words of B. H. Roberts:

North of the ridge on which the ruins of the [Nephite] altar were found, and running parallel with it, is another ridge, separated from the first by a depression varying in width from fifty to a hundred yards. This small valley with the larger one through which flows the Grand River, is the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman.⁵⁰

The ridge on the north was first visited by the Prophet Joseph and his company on 19 May 1838, on the afternoon of the same day that Tower Hill was named. Of this visit the Prophet wrote:

In the afternoon I went up the river about half a mile [i.e., from Lyman Wight's house] to Wight's Ferry, accompanied by President Rigdon and my clerk, George W. Robinson, for the purpose of selecting and laying claim to a city plat near said ferry in Daviess County, township 60, ranges 27 and 28, and sections 25, 36, 31, and 30, which the brethren called "Spring Hill," but by the mouth of the Lord it was named Adam-ondi-Ahman, because, said He, it is the place where Adam shall come to visit his people, or the Ancient of Days shall sit, as spoken of by Daniel the Prophet.⁵¹

The account of the discovery of "Adam's Altar" is quite different from that for the "Nephite altar or tower." Abraham O. Smoot, a member of the survey team for Adam-ondi-Ahman, is quoted as having said that Joseph Smith was not present when "Adam's Altar" was discovered:

⁴⁸Wittorf, "An Historical Investigation," p. 6.

⁴⁹As originally laid out by Alanson Ripley, the City Plat of Adam-ondi-Ahman included both ridges, the small valley between them, and the larger valley to the south. In other words, all the land from "Spring Hill" on the north to the Grand River on the south. See "A Map of Adam-ondi-Ahman, Mo."

⁵⁰HC, 3:40.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 35. Much of this is the identical area laid out for Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon as formerly noted. See pp. 555-557 above. Much of this land has been recently acquired by the Church. See Dyer, *The Refiner's Fire*, pp. 176-177. See also note 34 above.

President Smoot said that he and Alanson Ripley, while surveying at the town [i.e., Adam-ondi-Ahman], which was about 22 miles from Jackson County, Missouri, came across a stone wall in the midst of a dense forest of underbrush. The wall was 30 feet long, 3 feet thick, and 4 feet high. It was laid in mortar or cement. When Joseph visited the place and examined the wall he said it was the remains of an altar built by Father Adam and upon which he offered sacrifices after he was driven from the Garden of Eden. He said that the Garden of Eden was located in Jackson County, Missouri. The whole town of Adam-ondi-Ahman was in the midst of a thick and heavy forest of timber and the place was named in honor of Adam's altar. The Prophet explained that it was upon this altar where Adam blessed his sons and his posterity, prior to his death.⁵²

Analysis of the foregoing report leads to the following conclusions: (1) the stone wall (not a tower) was credited by the Prophet to Father Adam, not the Nephites; (2) there was an apparent construction, an actual "stone wall" whose constituent parts were seemingly "laid in mortar or cement"; (3) the wall had measurable dimensions; (4) the "wall" or "altar" was "in the midst of a dense forest of underbrush"; (5) Adam-ondi-Ahman or "Spring Hill" received its name "in honor of Adam's altar."

Still another factor lends credence to the conclusion that there were two altars rather than one. The altar pointed out and named by Joseph Smith as a Nephite altar was apparently discovered on 19 May 1838. Smoot did not arrive at Adam-ondi-Ahman until 20 June 1838; hence, his discovery with Ripley must have been subsequent to that time.⁵³ There is a second report from Smoot, however, which presents some difficulty. It purports to be a question-and-answer conversation between President John Taylor and Abraham O. Smoot at the latter's home in Provo on 4 December 1881:

Question by President Taylor: Brother Smoot, did you see on the top of a hill, in a place called Adam-ondi-Ahman, the remains of what Joseph Smith said had been an altar built by Adam, upon which he offered sacrifice?

Ans. Yes, sir. I first saw it in 1837, and the spring of

⁵²Matthias F. Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff; History of His Life and Labors* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1909), pp. 545-546. The statement about Adam-ondi-Ahman being "22 miles from Jackson County" is an obvious error.

⁵³See C. Elliott Berlin, "Abraham Owen Smoot, Pioneer Mormon Leader," master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1955, p. 23.

1838, when assisting to survey the town called by that name.

Quest. What was the condition of the stones of which the altar had been built?

Ans. I remember well. The stones which lay scattered around looked as though they had been torn from a wall.

Quest. Yes, my remembrance is too that the stones were scattered as you say they were, having no particular form, except in one place. You remarked that you helped to make the survey; and prior to this particular conversation, you told me that you assisted in making an excavation.

Ans. Yes, sir. I helped to excavate around the base of the altar, some 2 to 3 feet, and from 6 to 8 feet in length, which was sufficient to thoroughly satisfy us that the foundation of the wall was still there.

Quest. Did you examine the wall further at any later period?

Ans. No, sir; but we intended to do so after the war, or as some called it, the "Mormon War," was over. The opportunity, however, to do so did not present itself afterwards.

Quest. Do you know the name of the hill where the Altar was?

Ans. I do not recollect that. I will say that I heard Joseph say that it was the remains of an altar built by Adam; and that he offered sacrifice on it, and called his family and blessed them there.

Quest. That was on the point of the hill that formed a curvature?

Ans. Yes, sir. And that point commanded a beautiful view of the country.⁵⁴

In this instance, the "wall" or "altar" is described as "having no particular form, except in one place," and the stones, which looked as if they had been "torn from a wall," also "lay scattered around." In addition, some excavation work was apparently undertaken to determine if the wall had a foundation. Note the distinctions between the two accounts. Helpful information to aid in the solving of the dilemma comes from John Lyman Smith, the son of John Smith, President of the Adam-ondi-Ahman Stake:

In 1838 my father moved to Davis [sic] County, Missouri, where we assisted in building Adam-ondi-Ahman. Our house, built of logs, was located in a point of timber near the edge of the prairie. A few hundred yards from our door, toward Grand River, the ground seems to have

⁵⁴As cited in Dyer, *The Refiner's Fire*, pp. 173-174.

dropped off from twenty to thirty feet, leaving a line of almost perpendicular rocks for two or three miles, running nearly parallel with the river.

. . . About a quarter of a mile down the road, toward the river crossing, three or four rods to the left of the road, was a copse of trees and bushes, in the center of which was a raised stone work, which showed marks of fire, coal, etc. The falling of the leaves and blowing in of sand and dust had rounded this knell until it was some feet above the road. This place was where the Prophet Joseph said Adam offered sacrifices and blessed his children. I looked upon this as a sacred spot, and often used to hide there when strangers passed along the road.⁵⁵

Here we may see the reason for the excavation work, at least in part: the "raised stone work" was covered with "leaves and blowing in of sand and dust. . . ." Once again, since the "lots nearest to the temple lot were the property of the High Priests and dignitaries of the Church," and since John Smith was the stake president, it would seem that his home would be located near the town square. The "altar" was "a quarter of a mile down the road," rather than on top of Tower Hill where the Nephite altar was found.⁵⁶

Evidence from several quarters strengthens the two-altar concept. Heber C. Kimball, in fact, speaks of "three altars of stone" (a three-tiered altar) as having been used by Adam rather than one. He said:

The Prophet Joseph called upon Brother Brigham, myself and others, saying, 'Brethren, come, go long with me, and I will show you something.' He led us a short distance [from the place where the temple plat had been dedicated] to a place where were the ruins of three altars built of stone, one above the other, and one standing a little back of the

⁵⁵John Lyman Smith, Diary, 1839-1888, Special Collections Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, pp. 1, 2.

⁵⁶See page 564 above. It is not known precisely where the temple lot stood, but it is quite likely that it was *not* on Tower Hill since the map or survey by Alanson Ripley puts the town square some mile or more from the Grand River. Heber C. Kimball states: "While there [i.e., at Adam-ondi-Ahman], we laid out a city on a high elevated piece of land, and set stakes for the four corners of a temple block, which was dedicated, Brother Brigham being mouth; there were from three to five hundred men present on the occasion, under arms. This elevated spot was probably from 250-500 feet above the level of the Grand River, so that one could look east, west, north or south, as far as the eye could reach; it was one of the most beautiful places I ever beheld." Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1888), pp. 222-223. The elevation of the northern ridge exceeds that of Tower Hill by some twenty-five feet when their highest points are compared. There is an even higher point than that to the east.

other, *like unto pulpits in the Kirtland Temple*, representing the order of three grades of Priesthood; 'there,' said Joseph, 'is the place where Adam offered up sacrifice after he was cast out of the garden.' The altar stood at the highest point of the bluff I went and examined the place several times while I remained there.⁵⁷

Oliver B. Huntington, just a lad at the time he lived at Adam-ondi-Ahman, recalled the following concerning the "wall" in later years:

That wall of rock that was in sight and rising above the ground about thirteen inches, was laid as accurately as any wall nowadays, and was five or six feet long. One end showed the corner and end wall enough to prove that it ran back into the hill; the other end of the wall was covered with earth, and I do not know that the visible end was the real end. Dirt had naturally washed and worn down so as to cover the body of the altar.

One day while sitting on the wall and devoutly thinking of the use that had been made of that place, I got a naturally sharpened stick and dug into the earth that covered the altar and found charcoal quite plentiful. . . .

Perhaps these coals, I thought, were from wood burned by Father Adam, and perhaps that altar had been used by men of God hundreds and thousands of years after him.

I felt sure, however, that the rocks were the identical rocks that was [sic] placed there, for Joseph said, "That altar was built by our Father Adam and there he offered sacrifice."

The man who showed me the altar was with Joseph when he discovered it. He said that within a rod or two of the place Joseph stepped quickly ahead of the little company of men who were with him, and, standing upon the altar; told them what use had been made of that spot and who built it.

The rocks that were visible showed indisputable signs of having been burned with fire. I have hunted for rocks around there of that kind, but found none. There were plenty of other kinds not far distant. . . .

My father's house stood about two hundred and fifty yards from that altar, on the bottom land of Grand River, in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman.⁵⁸

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 22. Italics added. This then is a three-tiered altar rather than three separate altars. See altar drawings and discussion in Lauritz G. Peterson's, "The Kirtland Temple," *BYU Studies*, vol. 12, no. 4 (Summer 1972), pp. 400-409.

⁵⁸Oliver B. Huntington, "Adam's Altar and Tower," *Juvenile Instructor*, George Q. Cannon, ed., 30:700-701.

The Nephite Altar or Tower, should it have a separate existence from that denominated as Adam's Altar, seems never to have attained the significance that the latter did. It may even be that some of the brethren in time, or perhaps from the first, confused the two, because many of the accounts were written years later from memory. A possibility is that the altar on Tower Hill faded into graceful oblivion with the discovery of Adam's Altar on Spring Hill. In any case, there is a problem of identity precisely because various accounts of eye-witnesses differ so radically from each other. The following from Benjamin F. Johnson, on whose city lot the altar of Adam is said to have reposed, will show what is meant.⁵⁹

The idea is being taken by some . . . that the altar constructed by Adam is still standing in "a fair state of preservation." Such a statement would be very misleading, for there are those still living who, in 1838, were familiar with the city seat of Adam-ondi-Ahman, as surveyed by Bishop Alanson Ripley, who as agent recorded upon the city plat the names of those to whom lots were given and I well know to whom was given the lot at the top of the hill on which was scattered the many different-sized stones, some of which had been burned—all partly buried; and while there appeared a center from which they were scattered, yet no one stone remained laid upon another to show the form and size of the altar. This was before the identical place with the rock of the altar had been pointed out by the Prophet Joseph.⁶⁰

At this point, then, we are confronted with some very interesting discrepancies: (1) the altar spoken of by Johnson was

⁵⁹Says Johnson: "On our arrival at Diahman [late in October, 1838] our camp was pitched upon the town plat which had just been surveyed by direction of the Prophet, and of course each one was anxious to obtain the most eligible, or first choice of lots. As I was young and unmarried my choice would come near the last under the rule of oldest served first. So when it was my choice I found I must take the top lot on the promontory overlooking the Grand River valley, or go farther away and lower down than I wished to. So I chose the upper, which at first appeared rocky, but which made the other lots appear almost enviable. When, after a few days, the Prophet accompanied us to this spot, and pointed out those rocks as the ones of which Adam built an altar and offered sacrifice upon this spot, when they called him Michael, and where he will again sit as the Ancient of Days, then I was not envious of anyone's choice for a city lot in Adam-ondi-Ahman. Johnson, *My Life's Review*, pp. 35-36.

⁶⁰Letter of Benjamin F. Johnson to the *Deseret Evening News*, 5 November 1895 and published 9 November 1895. Johnson speaks approvingly of Elder E. Stevenson's report in the *News* of 24 September 1895. Stevenson writes under date of 16 September from Adam-ondi-Ahman that "the altar is erected on the highest point hereabouts."

on the lot "at the top of the hill"; (2) the "many different-sized stones" were somewhat "burned—all partly buried"; (3) "not one stone remained laid upon another to show the form and size of the altar"; (4) such was the case "before the identical place with the rock of the altar was pointed out by the Prophet Joseph."⁶¹

A somewhat similar report does not help clarify the picture. On the contrary, the following from Chapman Duncan only casts a greater mist over the problem:

I think the next day [sometime near the end of October], he [i.e., Joseph Smith] said to those present, Hyrum Smith, Bishop Vincent [sic] Knight, myself, and two or three others, get me a spade and I will show you the altar that Adam offered sacrifice on. I believe that was the only time Joseph was in Diamon [sic].⁶² Went about forty rods north of my house. He placed the shovel with care, placed his foot on it. When he took out a shovelful of dirt it barred the stone on the upper side nearly a foot deep. The dirt was two inches deep on the stone, I reckon. About four feet or more was disclosed. [He] did not dig to the bottom of the 3-layer of good masonry well put-up wall. The stones looked like dressed stone, nice joints, ten inches thick, 18 inches long or more. Came back down the slope perhaps 15 rods on the level. The Prophet stopped and remarked this place where we stood was the place where Adam gathered his posterity and blessed them, and predicted what should come to pass to the latest generation.⁶³

According to this report, the entire work was underground also, but the masonry was composed of "3-layers of good masonry well put-up." How can either of the foregoing be reconciled with the following from B. H. Roberts without postulating the existence of two distinct altars:

On the brow of the bluff stood the old stone altar which the brethren found there. When it was first discovered, according to those who visited it frequently, it was about sixteen feet long, by nine or ten feet wide, having its greatest

⁶¹Johnson arrived in Diahman after October 20, probably about the 22 or 23, just about a week before the so-called "Mormon War" broke out in Grand River Country. See Johnson, *My Life's Review*, pp. 35-36.

⁶²We know that the Prophet was in Diahman as early as May, probably before Duncan arrived.

⁶³Chapman Duncan, "Autobiography of Chapman Duncan," Special Collections Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, unpaged. Duncan's reference to "dressed stone" is vastly different from Huntington's insistence that there were no "tool marks" on the altar stones he visited. *Juvenile Instructor*, 30:700.

extent north or south. The height of the altar as the brethren found it, was some two and a half feet at each end but gradually rising higher to the center, which was between four and five feet high—the whole surface being crowning.⁶⁴

It must be admitted that the evidence thus far examined suggests two altar sites. Attempts to explain away the "apparent discrepancy among the accounts" as being merely the difference between "a pile of stones" on the one hand and a "wall or stonework" on the other, the former "on top of the hill" and the other further down the hillside, merely obfuscate the question,⁶⁵ for they do not reconcile the many other conflicting differences observed in addition to the location problem. Would not those who were familiar with the pile of stones have also been familiar with the fact that a standing altar in a fair state of preservation, enough to be recognized at least, was located a short distance away? How about the reference to "buried stones" on the one hand, requiring a shovel to uncover, and a rising set or tier of altars on the other? What about the references to a "Nephite Altar or Tower" in one instance, and "Adam's Altar" on the other?

Perhaps the following from Oliver Huntington is the key to the problem. Huntington appears to distinguish between the altar and a "tower." After speaking of the altar at length, he writes:

After Joseph the Seer had stood upon that memorable spot [i.e., where the altar stood] and told his brethren many things that had taken place there and in the valley just below, while Adam dwelt in that locality, they traveled on up into the prairie beyond. About half a mile or between a quarter and a half of a mile, just in the edge of a grove of timber, they came to a little elevated spot of earth, like a knoll or slight hill, the earth of which was thickly dotted with cobble stones.

"Here," the Prophet and Seer said, "Adam built a tower, from the top of which he could see all the surrounding country, and this knoll is formed of its remains."

. . . My father's house stood about two hundred and fifty yards from that *altar*, on the bottom land of Grand River, in the Valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman.

When Alanson Ripley surveyed a part of the farming

⁶⁴B. H. Roberts, *The Missouri Persecutions* (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon and Sons, 1900), p. 189. Roberts visited the area on at least one occasion.

⁶⁵Wittorf, "An Historical Investigation," p. 6.

land around the settlement, I was flagman, and the spot of ground designated as the place of *Adam's Tower* came within that survey.⁶⁶

Thus we have a new dimension added to the puzzle, for the farming land, it will be remembered, was on the outskirts of the city plat of two miles square.⁶⁷ The confusion appears to come from the fact that both an altar and a tower of Adam were found in the vicinity.

Small wonder that Oliver B. Huntington expressed a belief on one occasion that Edward Stevenson, formerly a resident also of Adam-ondi-Ahman and later a visitor to the area,⁶⁸ had not found the "true Adam's altar." Stevenson's description clearly places the altar he visited on Tower Hill. According to an associate of Huntington, the altar with which the latter was familiar was "not on top of the hill but a few yards below, perhaps 50 yards."⁶⁹ In setting forth his belief in his private journal that Stevenson did not find the "true Adam's altar," Huntington wrote:

. . . The night of October 4th, 1899, I stayed with Elder Arnold Reiser in 6th Ward Salt Lake City. He was the missionary in Missouri that I wrote to about the altar of Adam-on-Diahmon [sic], and through my request, while on his mission he visited Diahman again and searched according to my minute directions and found remains of the wall of the Altar, which wall however had been torn down to a level or nearly level with the ground—probably by cattle, as it was in a pasture, so he proved that which I told Elder Ed-

⁶⁶*Juvenile Instructor*, 30:701. Italics added.

⁶⁷See p. 561 above.

⁶⁸Stevenson made a visit to the area in 1895 and wrote a description of the same which was printed in the *Deseret Evening News* on 24 September 1895, under the caption, "Adam-ondi-Ahman." Stevenson also visited the area with Andrew Jenson in 1888. Jenson's report will be found in the *Autobiography of Andrew Jenson* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1938), p. 162. Another account by Stevenson, which, like the above-mentioned altar on Tower Hill, will be found in Joseph Grant Stevenson, *The Stevenson Family History* (Provo: By the Author, 1955), 4:63.

⁶⁹Arnold Auer Reiser, "Missionary Journal," as cited by Wittorf, "An Historical Investigation," p. 6. Roberts, however, speaks of the altar as standing on the "crown of the hill." "Adam-ondi-Ahman," *The Contributor*, 7:314 (1886). Andrew Jenson states that the altar was located "on the top of what is supposed to be the highest point in the neighborhood." *Autobiography*, p. 162. Benjamin F. Johnson states that the altar was located on his personal property on "the lot at the top of the hill. . . ." *Deseret Evening News*, 9 November 1895. Edward Stevenson states that "the altar is erected on the highest point hereabouts." *Deseret Evening News*, 24 September 1895. Heber C. Kimball says that "the altar stood at the highest point on the bluff." Whitney, *Heber C. Kimball*, p. 223.

ward Stevenson, viz., that he did not find the true Adam's Altar, as he had published.⁷⁰

The fact that the Prophet's records make reference only to a "Nephite Altar or Tower" is difficult to explain. If there were but one altar, the Prophet might have meant to teach that although the structure was built by Adam, Nephites at a later time made use of the same for their own purposes.⁷¹ Latter-day Saints have long believed that the ancient Nephites penetrated into the area now embraced by the United States of America,⁷² and Zera Pulsipher, one-time resident of Adam-ondi-Ahman, even held that the Saints "supposed that there had been an ancient city of the Nephites" at Spring Hill-Tower Hill and vicinity.⁷³ The case for the "two-altar theory" at this point at least, appears plausible. Perhaps the second structure was a "tower" as Huntington states.

Residents of Adam-ondi-Ahman have been known to tell an entirely different tale regarding the altar or rather the pile of stones which were said to have formed the same. According to some accounts the site marked the grave of Father Adam. According to another, gold was buried there by the Saints prior to their rapid departure from the State of Missouri.⁷⁴ The fact

⁷⁰"Diary of Oliver Boardman Huntington," Special Collections Library, Brigham Young University, 1:30-32, 35, 439, as cited by Wittorf, "An Historical Investigation," p. 6.

⁷¹We note, for example, Huntington's statement that "perhaps that altar had been used by men of God hundreds and thousands of years after him [i.e., Adam]." *Juvenile Instructor*, 30:700.

⁷²Latter-day Saints have long believed that at least some of the Nephites found their way into North America. In the days of Zion's Camp, the brethren discovered the skeleton of a "White Lamanite," whose name was Zelph, a good man who served under the great chief Omangagus. See the *Historical Record*, 7:581. Orson Pratt was fond of pointing out evidence of Nephite meanderings during the so-called "mound-building period" on this continent. *Journal of Discourses*, 13:131, and 14:296-298. Brigham Young is quoted as having said that Moroni dedicated the site for the Manti Temple. See Whitney, *Heber C. Kimball*, p. 447.

⁷³"History and Life of Zera Pulsipher by Himself," p. 12. Special Collections Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

⁷⁴Among those who held to this view were Hunt, *History of Daviess County*, p. 164, and Joseph McGee, *Missouri Historical Review*, 20:342. See also Heman C. Smith, ed., *History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, 2:111, and the *Gallatin Democrat* 49:1. "The people in and around Diahman have peculiar views regarding the belief of the Latter-day Saints in connection with this ancient altar. It is the prevailing belief, based on untruthful statements in the history of Davies [sic] county, that the Mormons taught that the Altar was Adam's Grave. One country editor near the place, when told of the error and requested to correct the same through his paper, replied: 'What? You will not take our grave from us will you?' The people have been taught it was the grave and fear it would lose its attractiveness if the correction were made." "Some of the Waste Places of Zion

that the Saints did some digging in this area may have lent some credence to these suppositions. At any rate, the non-Mormons, to satisfy their curiosity, also did some digging, which work had the effect of breaking down what remained of the altar. As a result of their visit to Diahman in 1888, Andrew Jenson and party reported:

The mound of ruins of the ancient altar on the top of the Adam-ondi-Ahman hill measures 36 feet in diameter. A large number of rock fragments which no doubt were once part of the altar lie scattered all around.⁷⁵

It would appear, then, that the evidence still suggests the existence of more than one altar, or at least one altar and a tower. Admittedly, the various classifications represent an individual judgment and are certainly open to challenge. The following chart is a summation of the evidence on which this conclusion is based:⁷⁶

Area of Difference	Altar "A"	Altar "B"
1. <i>Origin</i>	1. Nephite or Adamic	1. Adamic
2. <i>Condition</i>	2. "no one stone on another in 1838 to show size or form"	2. Some stones scattered but altar standing in recognizable form when discovered, having measurable dimensions
3. <i>Size</i>	3. Stones scattered to circle of 30 feet in diameter.	3. Five or six feet long; another account says "16 feet long by 9 or 10 feet wide"; $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet at each end but gradually rising in the center.
4. <i>Description</i>	4. Good masonry work; "dressed stone, nice joints, ten inches thick, 18 inches or more long"; "stones of different sizes" and apparently native to the area; some	4. Untooled stones but "laid accurately as any wall nowadays" in actual mortar or cement; no stones like them in the area; stones partly burned and many exposed above ground; 3 altars

as They Appear Today," Special Correspondence from Caldwell County, Mo., 23 August 1904, as printed in the *Deseret Semi-Weekly News*, 6 October 1904, p. 8.

⁷⁵"Report of Andrew Jenson, et al," *Deseret News*, 10 September 1904.

⁷⁶The classifications are artificial since the so-called "Nephite Altar" located on Tower Hill has never been called by that name except by Joseph Smith. Therefore, it has been necessary for the writer to judge from the various descriptions which was Altar "A" and which Altar "B."

		partly burned and most if not all buried; first stone bared by Joseph Smith at nearly a foot deep.	in rising tiers representing 3 orders of the priesthood
5. <i>Location</i>	5.	On top of the hill	5. "On a sidehill"; "about a quarter of a mile down the road" but also on the "highest point of the bluff" "in the midst of dense forest or underbrush"; perhaps a "tower" on the prairie.
6. <i>Excavation</i>	6.	Yes	6. Yes
7. <i>Approximate Date of Discovery</i>	7.	May 18, 1838, with Joseph Smith present	7. After 20 June 1838, with Joseph Smith not present