

## Ancient Writings Support LDS Doctrine And Teachings

By Rodger L. Hardy  
Deseret News

Published: Monday, Apr. 28, 2008

Ancient writings unearthed in the last century and a half, primarily in Egypt, are lending support to doctrines and teachings of Joseph Smith, founder of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a Brigham Young University professor of antiquities said Sunday.

C. Wilford Griggs, who has written extensively on Egypt and is working on excavating Christian burial grounds in Egypt, said scholars are now admitting that "Joseph Smith got into the antiquities" before experts in the field began their discoveries, but they won't accept his explanation.

Smith, an uneducated farm boy, claimed he translated the Book of Mormon from ancient gold plates using instruments given him by an angel, but scholars are refusing to believe that, Griggs said during a fireside, "Joseph Smith and the Egyptian Connection," at the Pleasant Grove Manila Stake Center. Some of the ancient writings have been found in the past few years.

Many scholars are now admitting that the book accepted as scripture by church members is an ancient book, but as one scholar of antiquities told Griggs, he had no problem with the gold plates and Smith's story would be acceptable "if you'd get rid of that angel."

Anciently, the fountain of Christian knowledge was Egypt and the Mediterranean region and for about 1,000 years 90 percent of the people were in the faith "until they were converted to Islam by the sword," he said.

"We are being flooded with (ancient) writings," Griggs said, describing many as coming from the biblical New Testament period. Many of the writings, now totaling about 8,000, are on papyri, but others are on

metal plates. None are exactly alike, which lends historical credence to the finds.

The apostles scattered throughout the known world and established pockets of Christianity after the time of Jesus Christ, including Egypt, he said. Some of the best early Christian records were found in Egypt, where they survived because of the climate.

The traditional concept that the Bible is complete came about 400 A.D., he said. Before then Christians knew that many other writings existed.

Many of the Christian teachings found in Egyptian digs that are shared in common with Smith's teachings have to do with the temple "and how the heavens can be open to us," Griggs said.

Among those findings is the teaching of baptism by proxy for folks who have died without learning of Christ and his gospel, which centers on the resurrection. Anciently, baptism was known as a "sealing" to go to heaven, he said. The word "sealing" is used today in LDS temples in similar fashion.

Most of the writings which have now been found were secret anciently and held back from the people until they proved their worthiness. Some speak of the potential of their divinity, also a common theme Smith taught, which the first LDS prophet said was given to him by revelation.

"Several of the gospels ... show that revelation was alive and well in the ancient world. Revelation was a keystone," Griggs said.

Yet centuries later, revelation and temples were denounced by religious leaders, including Augustine, as unnecessary.

MormonTimes.com is produced by the Deseret News in Salt Lake City, Utah.

It is not an official publication of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Copyright © 2008 Deseret News Publishing Company