

# ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM

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*The History, Scripture, Doctrine, and Procedure  
of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

Macmillan Publishing Company  
New York

Maxwell Macmillan Canada  
Toronto

Maxwell Macmillan International  
New York Oxford Singapore Sydney



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tion is more than a synonym for IMMORTALITY. Church Fathers argued that deification not only restores the image of God that was lost in the Fall, but also enables mankind to transcend human nature so as to possess the attributes of God. "I may become God as far as he became man," declared Gregory of Nazianzus in the late fourth century (*Orations* 29.19). Descriptions of deification included physical incorruptibility, immunity from suffering, perfect virtue, purity, fullness of knowledge and joy, eternal progression, communion with God, inheritance of divine glory, and joint rulership with Christ in the KINGDOM OF GOD in heaven forever.

The roots of the Christian doctrine of deification are primarily biblical. Beginning with the creation of humanity in the image of God (Gen. 1:26–27), the church fathers developed aspects of deification from such concepts as the command to moral perfection and holiness (e.g., Lev. 19:1–2; Matt. 5:48; 1 Jn. 3:2; 1 Cor. 11:1; 2 Pet. 1:3–7), adoption as heirs of God (Rom. 8:15–17; Gal. 4:4–7), unification with God in Christ (John 17:11–23), and partaking in Christ's sufferings in order to be elevated with him in glory (e.g., Rom. 8:16–18; 2 Cor. 3:18; 4:16–18; Philip. 3:20–21; 2 Tim. 2:10–12). They also pointed to examples of humans described as "gods" in scripture (Ex. 4:16; 7:1; Ps. 82:6; John 10:34–36).

Jewish thought, particularly in response to developing CHRISTOLOGY and its perceived threat to monotheism, was more reticent to speak of humans attaining divinity. Nevertheless, Jews shared some of the crucial biblical texts underlying deification. Talmudic Judaism tended to stress humanity's obligation to imitate God's holiness in consequence of being created in the divine image. Moses and other prophets were spoken of as sharing God's glory and becoming "secondary gods" in relation to other mortals (Meeks, pp. 234–35). Philo described Moses' glorification as "a prototype . . . of the ascent to heaven which every disciple hoped to be granted" (Meeks, p. 244).

Due to its incongruity with the doctrine of God in Western Christianity, deification fell out of favor as the preferred way of describing salvation. Catholic theology increasingly stressed the transcendence of God, who alone was self-existent and eternal. All other beings were created ex nihilo, "out of nothing," having only contingent being. This theological development culminated in Augustine. For him, God's absolute oneness and oth-

erness was so different from humanity's created status and dependence on divine grace that salvation could not bridge the gap between the eternal Creator and the creatures contingent upon him. Ever since, talk of deification has been suspect or heretical in Western Christianity and has formed a major point of objection among traditional Christians to the teachings of Latter-day Saints on the subject.

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KEITH E. NORMAN

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## DEMOGRAPHICS



See: Vital Statistics


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



## DESERET

The word deseret is found in the most ancient book in the Book of Mormon, "And they did also carry with them deseret, which, by interpretation, is a honey bee" (Ether 2:3).

Because the Book of Mormon was written in "reformed Egyptian" (Mormon 9:32), Hugh Nibley has suggested that the etymology of the word deseret is related to the ancient Egyptian

word   *dšrt*, read by Egyptologists as desheret. In Egyptian, *dšrt* means the red crown (of the king of Lower Egypt). The Egyptian

word for bee is  *bt*. In the discussion of the

sign  *dšrt*, Alan Gardiner, in *Egyptian Grammar*, states that  was used to replace  in two Egyptian titles where  was used to mean the *bty* King of Lower Egypt. Thus, the title   *n-sw-bt* was sometimes written as   *n-sw-bt*, which literally means “He who belongs to the sedge plant (of Upper Egypt) and to the bee (of Lower Egypt),” normally translated “The King of Upper and Lower Egypt.” This substitution of  for  has led Nibley to associate the Egyptian word *dšrt* and the Book of Mormon word *deseret*.

The beehive and the word *deseret* have been used variously throughout the history of the Church. The territory settled by the Mormon PIONEERS was called the State of Deseret. The emblem of the beehive is used in the seal of the State of Utah and is a common decoration in Utah architecture, symbolizing industriousness. Brigham YOUNG’s house in Salt Lake City is called the Beehive House. Early Sunday schools were part of the Deseret Sunday School Union. A vital part of the Church Welfare Program carries the name Deseret Industries.

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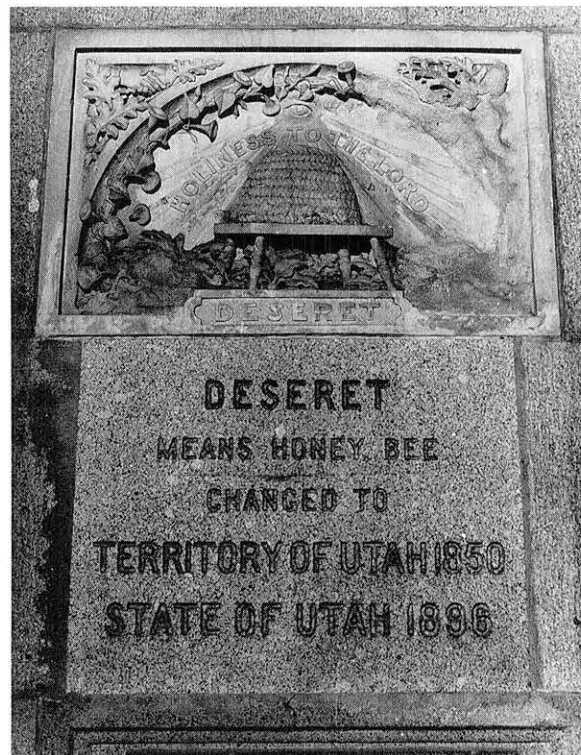
STEPHEN PARKER

## DESERET, STATE OF

On February 2, 1848, by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexico ceded to the United States an extensive area that included the Great Basin, where Mormon PIONEERS had begun settlement six months earlier. Even before the treaty was signed, Church leaders began discussing petitioning the U.S. government for recognition as a state or asking for territorial privileges. In July 1849 a committee wrote a constitution. It used as models the U.S. Constitution and the Iowa Constitution of

1846, from which the committee took fifty-seven of the sixty-seven sections of the new constitution. The committee requested that the state be named DESERET and that the boundaries be Oregon on the north, the Green River on the east, Mexico on the south, and the Sierra Nevada on the west, including a portion of the Southern California seacoast. “Deseret,” a word from the Book of Mormon, means “honeybee” (Ether 2:3) and is symbolic of work and industry. A slate of officers was approved, with Brigham YOUNG as governor. Almon W. Babbitt, appointed representative to Congress, was instructed to carry the plea for statehood to Washington, D.C.

This effort by Latter-day Saint settlers to organize themselves into a provisional government was much like the attempt made in the 1780s by settlers in Tennessee, who organized the state of Franklin when they felt neglected by North Carolina, and the settlers of Oregon, who established a



The word “Deseret” appears twice on the Utah stone at the Washington Monument (1978; replica of the cornerstone of the Salt Lake Temple, 1853). The interior of the monument contains 190 stones representing individuals, cities, states, and nations. “Deseret” was a name often used in the territory colonized by the Mormon pioneers. Photographer: Robert L. Palmer.