

1 **Mosiah 29:13***Which Government?*

- Monarchy (government ruled by a king or queen).
- Anarchy (no government or law and order).
- Theocracy (government ruled by officials regarded as divinely inspired).
- Democracy (a government in which the supreme power is held by the people).
- Republic (a government in which elected officials represent the will of the people).
- Dictatorship (a government or country in which absolute power is held by a dictator).

2 **Mosiah 29:25-27***Four Governmental Principles*

- The concept that law, not force, authority, or personality, rules in society. (Verse 25.)
- The procedure that law will be determined by the voice of the people, supporting and preserving their freedom. (Verse 25.)
- The recognition that correct principles of law are given to man by God through the prophets. (Verse 25.)
- A commitment to the necessity for a spiritual foundation of that law in society. (Verse 27.)

See James R. Moss, "Six Nephite Judges: A study in Integrity," *Ensign*, September 1977, pp. 61-62.

3 The history of the people of ancient America, recorded in the Book of Mormon, teaches that civilizations are built on moral foundations; that when people are morally strong, they do well; that when they are morally weak, they suffer. It teaches us that freedom cannot outlive morality and that freedom is not free—it must be earned.

Elder Royden G. Derrick, "Moral Values and Rewards," *Ensign*, May 1981, p. 66

4 From a modern perspective we might think this verse tells of the establishment of a democratic or representative government very much like the one we now have in the United States. But on reflection we observe that Nephite politics were different from ours in many significant ways: the Nephites had no constitution, no bill of rights, no separate branches of government, and no parliamentary system of government. Their elected officers served for life, and apparently political parties and campaigning for election were discouraged.

Seen without modern influences, then, Nephite democracy assumes an ancient character all its own. On the one hand, the use of popular consent among the Nephites resembles very closely the rite of royal anointing such as David experienced in ancient Israel (2 Samuel 5:1-3). This popular allegiance supplied a special bond of legitimacy between the ruler and his people. In Zarahemla, moreover, the popular voice of allegiance also included a covenant that placed a primary moral responsibility of sustaining the law upon the people themselves.

John W. Welch, *The Book of Mormon: It Begins with a Family* [Salt Lake City:Deseret Book, 1983], 16.

5 **Mosiah 29:26-27***Majority Righteous?*

I have a complete confidence in the aggregate wisdom of the...people, *if they are given and made to understand the facts*. The wisdom of the mass is always greater than the wisdom of the individual or of the group. The few may be more subtle, more agile-minded, more resourceful; they may for a time push to the front and scamper ahead in the march; they may on occasion and for a time entice us down the wrong highway at the crossroads. But the great slow-moving, deliberate-thinking mass plods along over the years down the Divinely appointed way. Led astray, they slowly, cumberously swing back to the right road no matter what the toil or the sacrifice may be, and when they start the return, they crush whatever lies in their path. So has humanity come up through the ages.

J. Reuben Clark, Jr., cited in Jerreld L. Newquist, comp., *Prophets, Principles, and National Survival*, p.110.

6 This scripture should make all Americans pause in this day of wickedness to ask themselves whether the “voice of the people”—that is, the majority—now seeks evil rather than light....The scripture is explicit in saying that if “the voice of the people doth choose iniquity, then is the time that the judgments of God will come.”...But it is a majority which is being reduced each day, as is shown in the rapid increase in crime, immorality, venereal disease, pornography and the other vile blotches upon our land. In a moral way, America is drifting....If we remain adrift, we shall perish, and we shall bring destruction upon our own heads. How safe is America? No safer than its morals and its faith in God! Morals are slipping fast, faith is ebbing. Doesn't it frighten us? It should, especially when we realize what the consequences may be. One might say that other nations are worse than ours. This may be so, but that is no comfort. Let us remember that those other nations are not the “Promised Land,” which America is. We are in a status far different from all other lands. There is a limit to which the Almighty will allow the inhabitants of this particular continent to submit to pollution. Will we take the necessary steps to save ourselves?

Church News, Editorial Page, July 4, 1970.

7 Mr. Frank Staton, CBS president emeritus, told a Brigham Young University audience that network television standards will continue to decline because they are based on society's standards. He said, “Standards come from the audience...; the audience determines the programming and program content.” Further, he said, “I believe there will be more infractions with respect to immorality and violence and it will get a lot worse before it gets better because of the changing standards of our society.” (*The Daily Universe*, Feb 2, 1989, p. 1). What a sad commentary on our society! Again we can learn a great principle from the Book of Mormon. When King Mosiah proposed that judges should rule instead of kings, he said: “...if the time comes that the voice of the people doth choose iniquity, then is the time that the judgments of God will come upon you (Mosiah 29:26-27).” That time of iniquity came about sixty years later and at several other times. In the book of Helaman we read that “they who chose evil were more numerous than they who chose good. (Hel. 5:2).” If television viewing choices serve as a valid measure of our society, they who choose evil surely are more numerous than they who choose good.

Joseph P. Wirthlin, *Ensign*, May, 1989, p.9.

8 That which is right does not become wrong merely because it may be deserted by the majority, neither does that which is wrong today become right tomorrow by the chance circumstance that it has won the approval or been adopted by overwhelmingly predominant numbers. Principles cannot be changed by, nor accommodate themselves to, the vagaries of popular sentiment.

Spencer W. Kimball, *Teaching of Spencer W. Kimball*, p.405.

9 I'll tell you how to vote. You read 134th section of the Doctrine and Covenants and the 29th chapter of Mosiah, and then pray about it and you'll know exactly whom you should vote for at the election. That's how to vote.

Harold B. Lee (address to Seminary & Institute Personnel, BYU, July 8, 1966)

10 This land, to God our Father, is a chosen land, dedicated as I have said to the principles of liberty and freedom, not license. Our fathers, under His inspiration, gave us the constitution of our country, the bill of rights which defines our privileges and places limitations beyond which we may not go.... There is no power that can wreck the government that God has established in this country unless it be the people themselves, and that I do not expect nor believe can occur.

Anthony W. Ivins (*Conference Report*, Oct. 1932, pp. 107-108)

- 11 Voting was referred to...from the book of Mosiah.... I think that is the first record in sacred history of voting, and it occurred on this continent. We are facing an election this year. We learn from this book that man is endowed with certain rights, just as the Declaration of Independence states. We have the right to liberty, to freedom, to the pursuit of happiness. We have the right of the franchise....
 You know, the slaves never had the franchise. Before the Civil War they were not allowed to vote. We have voluntary slavery in this country because we have millions who will not go out to vote who have the right to do so. They are slaves of their own choosing, because if we do not participate in preserving this land choice above all other lands, then to that degree we are bringing back to this land, slavery.
Matthew Cowley Speaks [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954], 111-113.
- 12 During recent years, polls and circumstances have suggested that an unprecedented majority of Americans believe that the private lives of public officials need not be considered as a factor in their eligibility for public office, and that private morality has no connection with public behavior and credibility. I am more deeply concerned about the growing moral deficit than I am about the monetary deficit.
 Gordon B. Hinckley, *Standing for Something*, [New York: Times Books, 2000], xviii
- 13 Speaking behaviorally, when what was once the lesser voice of the people becomes more dominant, then the judgments of God and the consequences of foolish selfishness follow (see Mosiah 29:26-27).
 Cultural decline is accelerated when single-interest segments of society become indifferent to general values once widely shared. This drift is facilitated by the indifferent or the indulgent as society is led carefully down to hell (see 2 Nephi 28:21). Some may not join in this drift, but instead they step aside, whereas once they might have constrained, as is their representative right....
 We actually have an obligation to notice genuine, telltale societal signs....
 For what happens in cultural decline both leaders and followers are really accountable. Historically, of course, it is easy to criticize bad leaders, but we should not give followers a free pass. Otherwise, in their rationalization of their degeneration they may say they were just following orders, while the leader was just ordering followers! However, much more is required of followers in a democratic society, wherein individual character matters so much in both leaders and followers.
 Neal A. Maxwell, (in Conference Report, Apr. 1999, 28-30; or *Ensign*, May 1999, 23-24).
- 14 The virtue of tolerance has been distorted and elevated to a position of such prominence as to be thought equal to and even valued more than morality. It is one thing to be tolerant, even forgiving of individual conduct. It is quite another to collectively legislate and legalize to protect immoral conduct that can weaken, even destroy the family.
 There is a dangerous trap when tolerance is exaggerated to protect the right of those whose conduct endangers the family and injures the rights of the more part of the people. We are getting dangerously close to the condition described by the prophet Mosiah [in Mosiah 29:26-27].
 Boyd K. Packer, "Children of God," *BYU Women's Conference*, May 5, 2006, 6.
- 15 **Mosiah 29:27-31**
Under what Conditions Would a System of Judges Be a Bad System?
 While the people are pure, while they are upright, while they are willing to observe law, the best results must follow the establishment and maintenance of a government like this; but, on the other hand, if the people become corrupt, if they give way to passion, if they disregard law, if they trample upon constitutional obligations, then a republican form of government like ours becomes the worst tyranny upon the face of the earth. An autocracy is a government of one man, and if he be a tyrant, it is the tyranny of one man; but *the tyranny and irresponsibility of a mob is one of the most grievous despotisms which can exist upon the face of the earth.*
 George Q. Cannon in *JD*, 22:136. Italics added.

16 Mosiah 29:32

A lot of us take our civil right for granted. We were born in a free country. We think freedom could never end. But it could....

The only way we can keep our freedom is to work at it. Not some of us. All of us. Not some of the time, but all of the time....

Give it your faith, your belief, and give it your active support in civic affairs,
Spencer W. Kimball, *Teachings*, 405.

17 Mosiah 29:7-36

Advantages of democracy over monarchy

A monarchy is a good system of government if the people can be assured they will always have good and righteous kings. (Mosiah 23:8) However, the weakness of a monarchy is that “ye cannot dethrone an iniquitous king save it be through much contention, and the shedding of much blood.” (Mosiah 29:21.)

...The value of this system of democratic government is that “it is not common that the voice of the people desireth anything contrary to that which is right.” (Mosiah 29:26)

Daniel H. Ludlow, *Companion*, 193.

18 Disadvantages of an
Unrighteous Monarchy

Contention, anger, wars, shedding much blood,
perverting the ways of the Lord (v.7)

Much sin (v.9)

Iniquity and great destruction (v.17)

Bondage (v.18)

Can't dethrone wicked king without bloodshed (v.21)

Destruction of righteous laws (v.22)

Wickedness becomes the law (v.23)

Wicked kings will answer for the wickedness
of their people (v.31)

Inequality is the rule (v.32)

Stealing, plundering and whoredoms (v.36)
Brian D. Garner, Search These Things Diligently, p.166

Advantages of a Democracy

Peace (v.10)

Seek for wise leaders (v.11)

Choose leaders by the desires of the
majority of the people (v.25)

The majority usually choose the right
(v. 26)

If leaders are wicked they can be removed
without bloodshed (vv, 28-29)

The people have liberties, rights, and
privileges of equality. (v.32)

The people carry some responsibilities
for the government (v. 34)

19 **Mosiah 29:32-39**

Freedom in Government promotes Responsibility and Growth in People

With free agency there comes responsibility. If man is to be rewarded for righteousness and punished for evil, then common justice demands action. A knowledge of good and evil is essential to man's progress on earth. *If he were coerced to do right at all times, or were helplessly enticed to commit sin, he would merit neither a blessing for the first nor a punishment for the second.* Man's responsibility is correspondingly operative with his free agency. Actions in harmony with divine law and the laws of nature will bring happiness, and those in opposition to divine truth, misery. Man is responsible not only for every deed, but also for every idle word and thought.

David O. McKay, "Free Agency...the Gift Divine", *Improvement Era*, Feb. 1962, p.86. Italic added.

20 **Mosiah 29:40-41**

As a law maker, Mosiah may be regarded among the most eminent this world has produced. We regard him in some respects as the Moses, in others the Alfred the Great, of his age and his nation. But besides him being king, he was also a seer. The gift of interpreting strange tongues and languages was his. By this gift he translated from the twenty-four plates of gold, found by the people of King Limhi, the records of the Jaradites.

No wonder that a man possessed of such gifts, so just and merciful in the administration of the law, so perfect in his private life, should be esteemed more than any man by his subjects, and that they waxed strong in their love towards him. As a king, he was a father to them, but as a prophet, seer, and revelator, he was the source from whence divine wisdom flowed unto them. We must go back to the days of the antediluvian patriarchs to find the peers of these three kings (the two Mosiahs and Benjamin).

George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, edited and arranged by Philip C Reynolds, 7 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1955-1961], 2:290.

21 *Subjection to secular power does not constitute a divine approval of the system of government involved...* Subjection to government is not an endorsement and approval of the governmental system involved..The Lord's counsel...is obedience and subjection...Rebellion would bring civil penalties that well might preclude true worship itself...

Paul is of one mind with his fellow apostle in counseling the saints "to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men" (Titus 3:1-2)...He exhorts that "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority." Why? "That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." *That is, so that we may be free to live our religion and work out our salvation.* "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour" (1 Timothy 2:1-3).

Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1985], 687.

22 It is the duty of the saints to submit themselves to the laws of their country. Nevertheless, they should use every proper method, as citizens or subjects of their several governments, to secure for themselves and for all men the boon of freedom in religious service. It is not required of them to suffer without protest imposition by lawless persecutors, or through the operation of unjust laws; but their protests should be offered in legal and proper order. The saints have practically demonstrated their acceptance of the doctrine that it is better to suffer evil than to do wrong by purely human opposition to unjust authority. And if by thus submitting themselves to the laws of the land, in the event of such laws being unjust and subversive of human freedom, the people be prevented from doing the work appointed them of God, they are not to be held accountable for the failure to act under the higher law.

James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, p.422-23.

23 I like a good government, and then I like to have it wisely and justly administered. The government of heaven, if wickedly administered, would become one of the worst governments upon the face of the earth. No matter how good a government is, unless it is administered by righteous men, an evil government will be made of it.

John A. Widtsoe, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1925], 147

24 From Karl Marx has come the communistic form of government that menaces our present-day world with the doctrines of force and elimination of the gospel of Jesus Christ with faith in a personal God, instilling a hatred for all men that do not subscribe to the doctrines of Marxism. It is a question as to how long it will be until mankind will feel the full impact of this evil-inspired ideology, which opposes all that is righteous and good. The kingdom of evil continues its efforts in this manner to frustrate the plan of God through governments which deal with principles of force to achieve its ends.

Alvin Dyer, *The Meaning of Truth*, rev.ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1961], 102-103.

25 **Mosiah 29:42**
Chief Judge and High Priest

This theocratic system, patterned after the order and system that prevailed in heaven, was the government of God....He gave direction in all things, both civil and ecclesiastical; there was no separation of church and state.

Bruce R. McConkie, *New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, 35

26 **Mosiah 29:44**

Thus commenced the reign of the judges. After Lehi left Jerusalem, time was reckoned according to the date of his departure—e.g., “fifty years after Lehi left Jerusalem” or “four hundred years had passed away from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem” and so forth. With the establishment of the system of the judges we encounter a new reckoning of time among the Nephites—the “first year of the reign of the judges,” the “fifteenth year of the reign of the judges,” and so on. This system would be in effect until the sign of the birth of Christ would be given, when they would begin reckoning their time from that point (see 3 nephi 2:8).

Millett & McConkie, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol 2, p. 320.