# Editors' Introduction

*Sharlee Mullins Glenn, Kristine Haglund, Linda Hoffman Kimball, and Susan Elizabeth Howe*

> *"For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (Isa. 2:3)*
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> *"And Enoch continued his preaching in righteousness unto the people of God. And it came to pass in his days, that he built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even Zion." (Moses 7:19)*

It would be nice if Isaiah had enumerated the law into a statutory code, or if Enoch had left some city council minutes behind. While Restoration scriptures give tantalizing hints of societies that have achieved the kind of harmony God intends, the descriptions are thin and short on practical details. Even the Doctrine and Covenants, which mentions Zion even more often than the Old Testament and has precise directions about many aspects of organizing the Saints in the earliest days of the Church, doesn't easily translate into a roadmap for governance or citizenship in the many countries where Latter-day Saints—in much larger numbers and more diverse circumstances—find themselves in the twenty-first century.

We can, however, be quite sure that the meetings of the city council in the city of Enoch were nothing like the partisan, rancorous, even violent municipal government meetings happening throughout the United States right now. Our congregations, even sometimes our families, are frayed and torn by seemingly intractable disagreements. And though the scriptures do not offer us precise directions for forming governments, they do make clear that the forms of government people choose and the ways they uphold those governments have great import for the religious and spiritual health of God's covenant peoples. The Book of Mormon warns that corrupt governments are both symptom and cause of spiritual destruction: "For as their laws and their governments were established by the voice of the people, and they who chose evil were more numerous than they who chose good, therefore they were ripening for destruction, for the laws had become corrupted" (Hel. 5:2).

On the other hand, as Rob Schwartz shows in examining the effect of King Benjamin's address to the Nephites, righteous government can—through education and commitment to a strong social contract—realign culture, adjust habits of thought, and change attitudes toward wealth and inequality. The Book of Mormon peoples who applied King Benjamin's teachings were able to create just institutions and islands of peace and relative equality, despite the chaos of their circumstances. The doctrine that enlivens this history insists that good and bad government are not fated or externally imposed; human beings build governments and societies by their choices. "The Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself" (2 Ne. 2:16).

How then shall Latter-day Saints act in a moment of governmental crisis? What resources does our faith offer us? What responsibilities do our covenants impose? What wisdom can the Latter-day Saint tradition offer a fractured world? The essays that follow present a variety of responses to these questions and to the context—our fractious planet—in which they are asked. The deep scholarship, ardent scripture study, hands-on experience, creative energies, and personal examples of the contributors to this volume are attempts at the hard work of distilling scriptural truth into actionable civic principles. If we cannot yet effect a global Zion where all people are unified and "pure in heart" (D&C 97:21), the challenge to work from where we are toward that goal remains before us.

We begin with the artist's statement about the quilt and quilt scraps that enliven the covers of our issue. Artist and author Linda Hoffman Kimball's textile artwork is a nonverbal exploration of the question "What makes for a good government?" Her short description of the process—and mishap—that came with the work's creation provides a glimpse into the work in progress we aspire to: Zion.

The first few articles in the issue all address in one way or another the underlying principles that members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints must look to as we consider the question of what good government is and how we can best achieve and maintain it. The central thesis of Melissa Wei-Tsing Inouye's excellent lead essay is that good government requires individual goodness. Citizens must first look inward and govern themselves and then look outward and honor the fundamental truth that we are all children of God.

In "Fellow Travelers, Brothers and Sisters, Children of God," Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf recounts the soul-wrenching experience he and his

wife Harriett had as they visited Auschwitz a number of years ago and identifies three basic principles that we must honor if we hope to prevent anything akin to the horrors of the Holocaust from ever happening again.

With impressive thoroughness, Robert F. Schwartz examines patterns of inequality in the Book of Mormon and argues that in the history it recounts, privilege and disadvantage become "defining lenses" through which various individuals and groups view each other and construct their narratives. One of the great lessons of the Book of Mormon is that societies are able to prosper only as they prioritize equality.

Melissa Dalton-Bradford details the complex, protracted, but largely successful process Germany has undertaken toward reconciliation for its crimes related to the Holocaust and asserts that if the United States hopes to heal as a nation, we must follow Germany's lead by openly acknowledging, confronting, and repenting of the racism that blights not only our own history but also our present.

Susan R. Madsen begins her piece by clearly establishing the quantifiable benefits that come when women are involved in government and politics. She then examines scriptural injunctions and other Church teachings that speak to the need for members to be engaged participants in civic life and concludes by asserting that as women in the Church take an active role in politics, they can "work hand in hand with the Lord to further his work in ways that this world has never seen before."

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The articles in the next section offer models explaining how Latter-day Saint groups and individuals are making a difference in the practice of government, as well as identifying the principles from which their actions are derived. President Dallin H. Oaks's November 2021 Joseph Smith Lecture at the University of Virginia, "Going Forward with Religious Freedom and Nondiscrimination," demonstrates how finding common ground in the midst of fundamental disagreements has sparked creative solutions and sturdy legal frameworks that bypass opposing ideologies. His experience shows that "the goals of both sides are best served by resolving differences through mutual respect, shared understanding, and good faith negotiations."

Keith Allred, executive director of the National Institute for Civil Discourse, shares his insights into a core principle identified by Mosiah and James Madison: initiatives that achieve broad support across many constituent divisions are likely to produce good policy. Promoting such initiatives, as Keith does through his organization CommonSense American, is a way of leading political parties, which are too often opposed to good policy merely because it was suggested by the other party, to make more effective laws.

Sharlee Mullins Glenn describes how Mormon Women for Ethical Government (MWEG) came to be and outlines the core principles upon which the organization was founded. She also addresses some of the challenges the group has faced in its quest to enliven political engagement, quell rancor and political divisions, and teach a nonpartisan, nonviolent, faith-fueled better way to live up to the responsibilities of citizenship.

The article that follows is by the current executive directors of MWEG, Jennifer Walker Thomas and Emma Petty Addams, who share how this organization is "providing the scaffolding to help women build a new identity as peaceful, competent, and principled citizens who have the ability to change the political landscape in lasting and ethical ways."

The next two articles show the many ways the use of truthful, appropriate language affects the conduct of good government. Grounding her arguments in President Oaks's call for Latter-day Saints "to moderate and to unify" as they participate in political discourse and activity around contested issues, Kristine Hansen describes how we can become faithful "citizen rhetors" who persuade others by developing an ethos of warmth, civility, and gratitude, by welcoming diversity, and by being truthful.

Ed Carter's contribution is catalyzed by Elder D. Todd Christofferson's address to executives of the Inter-American Press Association in 2017. Christofferson reminded these journalists that their "privilege and calling as Journalist[s] is to facilitate discussion and debate between people who have different beliefs, races, nationalities, and political opinions. An informed citizenry, it is often said, is the bulwark of democracy." In extending and amplifying that charge, Carter reminds us that by seeking out and supporting good journalism, we will help the press perform its proper functions of being a check on government, giving voice to the voiceless, building communities that "build trust and support civic participation," and affirming the human dignity that requires freedom of expression as the foundation for all other human rights.

The next set of articles offers examples of Church members serving in various branches of government. Thomas B. Griffith, retired judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, discusses the role of federal judges in good government, arguing that this role is important but limited. A judge's loyalty must be to the Constitution and to the law, not to the president who appointed him or her or to his or her own faith, family, personal beliefs, or political party.

Patrick Moran provides us with an overview of the involvement of Latter-day Saints in foreign policy and foreign service, beginning in the

nineteenth century and continuing to today, when considerable numbers of Church members are making careers in foreign service. He explains both the challenges Church members face and especially the opportunities their beliefs create for them in postings throughout the world.

And Tinesha Zandamela, whose work has been at the local and state level, describes her own experiences volunteering, running for office, and initiating programs to serve those who are often overlooked. It is worth noting that Tinesha has done all this in her teens and twenties; at twenty-eight, she is a first-year law student.

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We have made Jessica Preece's piece the final essay of this collection because we hope that what it teaches will be the final principle readers take away from this study of what leads to good government. Despite the extreme partisanship, incivility, and dishonesty that have taken root in our political system, Preece encourages us not to become cynical but to choose hope, which activist and writer Mariame Kaba calls "a discipline,"[1] that will lead us to act "in the direction of the good things we hope for."

We encourage you to sit with the analysis and criticism offered by these writers. Historian and cultural critic Jacques Barzun wrote that "criticism . . . aims at action. True, not all objects can be acted on at once, . . . but thought is plastic and within our control, and thought is a form of action. To come to see, in the light of criticism, a situation as different from what it seemed to be, is to have accomplished an important act."[2] We hope that you will come to see some things differently through reading this issue of *BYU Studies Quarterly.* We hope that new visions will invigorate you with God's grace to stand up and get engaged in the arduous, practical, imperative quest for "good government."

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*BYU Studies would like to thank Mormon Women for Ethical Government for their support of this special issue. We especially thank Sharlee Mullins Glenn and Linda Hoffman Kimball (founding members) and Kristine Haglund (a current senior director) for serving as guest editors of this issue. Their networks of colleagues, voluminous knowledge, and endless hours of work have led to the breadth and depth of the content you are about to read.*

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1. Mariame Kaba, *We Do This 'til We Free Us: Abolitionist Organizing and Transforming Justice,* ed. Naomi Murakawa (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2021), 26–27.

2. Jacques Barzun, *Science: The Glorious Entertainment* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 6.