



Captain Moroni and the Title of Liberty, Arnold Friberg, © IRI

In creating the title of liberty, Moroni codified the Nephite desires related to faith, freedom, and family on the fragment of his coat and turned it into a powerful emblem.

# *Contrasting the Leadership Styles of Captain Moroni and Amalickiah*

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**T**he Book of Mormon was written as another testament of Jesus Christ. It was also written by leaders and about leaders. One of the most well-known leaders and charismatic figures in the Book of Mormon is Captain Moroni (hereafter referred to simply as Moroni). His capable leadership enabled the Nephites to survive civil insurrection and invasion by the Lamanites. Mormon, the compiler of the Book of Mormon, holds up Moroni as one of the text's exemplary leaders. He points to Moroni's leadership and righteousness as the reason for Nephite success during this trying era.

Mormon contrasts the successful leadership of Moroni with that of Amalickiah. Modern leadership theory helps us understand not just that Moroni *was* a successful leader but *why* he was. Reading the narrative through this lens also shows, somewhat surprisingly given how much Mormon admires Moroni, that Moroni was not a perfect leader. Similarly surprising, considering Mormon's framing of Amalickiah as a villain, is the revelation that Amalickiah also displayed effective leadership skills, though he used his influence for unethical purposes. Examining the contrasting leadership styles of these two individuals through the models of transformational and

pseudo-transformational leadership helps us understand how the Book of Mormon can be taken as a leadership text and provides readers with interesting insights into the strengths and weaknesses of both Amalickiah and Moroni.

In this article, we briefly examine the literature on leadership as well as the much smaller subset of leadership studies that draw examples from Christian scriptures. We then examine Moroni and Amalickiah through the lens of leadership theory. When we view these two figures through this lens, an interesting picture emerges in which Moroni and Amalickiah display the mirrored leadership styles of transformational leadership and pseudo-transformational leadership—reflective of each other, but opposite. The juxtaposition of these two figures and of their leadership styles in the Book of Mormon text provides a rich case study of transformational leadership and pseudo-transformational leadership in action. We conclude by discussing the leadership lessons drawn from the Moroni-Amalickiah duo, as well as possible future directions for applying scholarly leadership studies to the Book of Mormon text.

## Literature Review

The literature on leadership is rich. Decades of work have produced thousands of publications and hundreds of definitions.<sup>1</sup> Early work on leadership focused mainly on elements of centralized power and control.<sup>2</sup> Leadership was viewed as an act of dominating the subordinates' wills. Many leadership theories followed from these early approaches and are often referred to as *classical leadership theories*. They include the trait approach,<sup>3</sup> the behavioral approach,<sup>4</sup> the situational approach,<sup>5</sup> and the path-goal theory.<sup>6</sup> In these classical theories of leadership, subordinates were viewed as "persons to be influenced or directed to accomplish the leader's aims . . . people to be 'led' by someone who has 'superior' qualities."<sup>7</sup> The late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries saw a shift away from these *classical leadership theories* and their emphasis on subordinates as "persons to be . . . directed" to a new generation of leadership approaches that emphasize relationships, morality, integrity, and inspiration. Collectively, this cluster is sometimes broadly called *positive leadership theories*.<sup>8</sup> They take a more holistic view of both leader and follower. There are many theories that fit under the umbrella of positive leadership such as servant leadership<sup>9</sup> and authentic leadership.<sup>10</sup> This paper focuses on transformational leadership, described below.

While leadership has been extensively studied elsewhere, there has been relatively little work done on leadership in the scriptures. Of the little that exists, one example is from Hazony, who uses Jacob's sons as representative examples of leadership prototypes.<sup>11</sup> Additional work has been done in the *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership*, founded in 2006. It features studies that explore biblical figures such as Esther, Abraham, and Jesus as leaders.<sup>12</sup> Most of this work focuses on the theory of servant leadership.<sup>13</sup> The editor of the aforementioned journal believes that biblical leadership studies have barely scratched the surface and that they merit deeper engagement.<sup>14</sup>

The lack of leadership studies in scriptures is even more evident when it comes to the Book of Mormon. Hugh Nibley's "Leaders to Managers: The Fatal Shift" is a notable exception.<sup>15</sup> Nibley uses the Moroni-versus-Amalickiah dichotomy as an entry point to discuss his views on the decline of organizations from true leadership (Moroni) into mere management (Amalickiah). Nibley's attempt to engage with leadership in the Book of Mormon was not informed by the vast literature on leadership then in existence. Nibley is a specialist in his own field of expertise, but when it comes to leadership studies, he seems unaware of (or at least uninformed by) the vast work on leadership available when he wrote his article.<sup>16</sup> Despite its lack of rigor from the perspective of leadership studies, Nibley's article has real value. By appealing to the Book of Mormon text as a source of valuable information about leadership, he endorses the premise that the book does indeed provide worthwhile lessons on the subject. And by initiating a discussion of the leadership principles found in Book of Mormon figures, he opened the door for further contributions.

The previous year has shown a growing interest in what the Book of Mormon teaches us about leadership, as evidenced by two recent pieces. Elder Khumbulani D. Mdletshe explores leadership lessons gleaned from Nephi. While his work is intended for devotional and training purposes, it does claim that "anyone desiring to learn about leadership might profit by a study of the leaders found in [the Book of Mormon's] pages."<sup>17</sup> Following Elder Mdletshe, Christopher Peterson's recent master's thesis<sup>18</sup> attempts to engage with the Book of Mormon through the lenses of several leadership theories including transformational leadership, servant leadership, and followership. This article builds on and deepens Peterson's efforts to understand Moroni as a transformational leader and Amalickiah as a pseudo-transformational leader. Because

we apply these theories to the Book of Mormon in this article, it is useful to understand what they mean.

### Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership views leaders in terms of their ability to inspire and motivate their followers. Bruce Avolio describes the transformational leader as being “charismatic, inspiring, morally uplifting, and focused on developing followers into leaders.”<sup>19</sup> Megan Tschannen-Moran neatly summarizes transformational leaders as leaders who “provide meaning and challenge to followers so as to promote enthusiasm, optimism, a shared vision, goal commitment, and team spirit.”<sup>20</sup>

The most popular model of transformational leadership was developed by Bernard Bass, who divided transformational leadership into four components, the combination of which characterizes this kind of leader. These four elements are often described as “the four I’s.” They are *idealized influence*, *inspirational motivation*, *intellectual stimulation*, and *individual consideration*.<sup>21</sup> The first component, *idealized influence*, encompasses the leader’s role as an exemplar and moral guide for their followers. The second component, *inspirational motivation*, describes a leader’s ability to communicate a strong sense of vision and mission to their followers in an appealing and motivating way. The third component, *intellectual stimulation*, refers to the leader’s ability to find novel solutions to problems and encourage followers to do the same. The final component, *individual consideration*, highlights a leader’s concern for the well-being of individual followers. Figure 1 summarizes the four components of transformational leadership.

Idealized influence	Inspirational motivation	Intellectual stimulation	Individual consideration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· suppresses self-interest within himself or herself</li> <li>· maintains high standards of moral conduct</li> <li>· is an exemplar of courage, self-sacrifice, and dedication to the cause</li> <li>· provides a strong role model</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· inspires commitment and motivation in followers</li> <li>· focuses group onto collective action</li> <li>· communicates an appealing vision</li> <li>· uses symbols and emotional appeals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· seeks innovative solutions to problems</li> <li>· encourages out-of-the-box thinking</li> <li>· encourages input from others</li> <li>· stimulates followers' creativity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· demonstrates concern for the welfare of followers</li> <li>· provides support, encouragement, coaching, and mentorship</li> <li>· creates a supportive climate</li> <li>· listens to followers' concerns</li> </ul>
<b>Followers</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· attribute charisma to leader</li> <li>· feel a high degree of identification with leader</li> <li>· often seek to emulate leader</li> </ul>			

**Figure 1:** The four I's, or four components, of transformational leadership

Max Weber argued that charismatic leaders—a precursor to the transformational leadership model—emerge in times of crisis.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Bass argued that transformational leadership is most effective during crises.<sup>23</sup> Many research studies have examined leadership in the crisis-driven context of the military. And a few of these studies looked specifically at the high-stress and extreme context of combat.<sup>24</sup> Taken collectively, they indicate that, at least in the context of military combat, transformational leadership is highly effective. In fact, it “appears to be more critical for team performance under a maximum performance context than a typical performance context.”<sup>25</sup> This article analyzes the leadership of Moroni, a top-level military commander, during a time of war. The research cited here suggests that, given the extreme context of combat, transformational leadership would have been an effective style for him to employ, with a significant and positive impact on his soldiers’ performance.

## Pseudo-transformational Leadership

Charisma and motivation can be used to move groups to achieve amoral or immoral ends just as much as moral ones. Transformational leadership does not hold a monopoly on it. To account for this fact, Bass developed the idea of *pseudo-transformational leadership*, creating two similar, but opposing leadership models. While authentic transformational leaders inspire and empower others from a place of morality, pseudo-transformational leaders use their charismatic influence for selfish reasons and self-gain.<sup>26</sup> As Chiou-Shiu Lin et al. explain, “Pseudo-transformational leadership refers to leaders who violate the basic ethical requirement for transformational leadership.”<sup>27</sup>

Christie, Barling, and Turner created a model of pseudo-transformational leadership that exactly mirrors authentic transformational leadership using the same four components of transformational leadership. In a way, pseudo-transformational leadership can be imagined as the evil twin of transformational leadership in which each component has a twisted counterpart. As such, Christie et al. describe pseudo-transformational leadership using the same four components, the four I’s, from transformational leadership.<sup>28</sup>

The component of *idealized influence* in pseudo-transformational leadership refers to leaders’ efforts to use their power and influence to enrich or glorify themselves. The second element, *inspirational motivation*, is unique in the dichotomy of transformational versus pseudo-transformational leadership in that it is identical in both models. In the component of *intellectual stimulation*, rather than encouraging initiative and innovation, pseudo-transformational leaders seek to suppress them. The final component is *individual consideration*. Where true transformational leaders give followers consideration and concern, pseudo-transformational leaders do not. Figure 2 provides a summary of the four components of pseudo-transformational leadership.

<b>Pseudo-idealized influence</b>	<b>(Pseudo-) inspirational motivation (same as in transformational leadership)</b>	<b>Pseudo-intellectual stimulation</b>	<b>Pseudo-individual consideration</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· is motivated by self-interest</li> <li>· seeks power for his or her own purposes</li> <li>· is attributed charisma by followers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· communicates an appealing vision</li> <li>· inspires commitment and motivation in followers</li> <li>· focuses group onto collective action</li> <li>· uses symbols and emotional appeals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· suppresses followers' original ideas and thoughts</li> <li>· discourages individual initiative and creative problem-solving</li> <li>· suppresses opposition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· demonstrates disregard for followers' well-being</li> <li>· views people as tools to be used to achieve his or her own end</li> </ul>

**Figure 2:** The four components of pseudo-transformational leadership

Pseudo-transformational leaders have the capacity to wreak great havoc—they ruin lives, businesses, and communities as they pursue their own self-interested goals. Their influence is always negative. Perhaps the most well-known pseudo-transformational leader in world history is Adolf Hitler. He used each of the four I’s of pseudo-transformational leadership to convince the people of Germany to follow him and then plunged the world into a devastating war from which it is still recovering. Hitler’s focus was on achieving his personal goals at all costs. Moroni’s nemesis in the Book of Mormon, Amalickiah, displayed many of the traits of a pseudo-transformational leader. His leadership style is a useful counterpoint to that of Moroni.

**Considerations**

In conducting this analysis, we are cognizant of the fact that it was Mormon—the editor and narrator of this section of the Book of Mormon—who had access to the primary source documents. We as modern readers do not. All that we know about the events described come to us already filtered through Mormon and his concerns, worldview, and biases. Grant Hardy notes that Mormon attempted to balance three competing demands to create the Book of Mormon’s narrative. Hardy writes that “Mormon’s character is most clearly



revealed as he tries to negotiate the divergent demands of being an accurate record keeper, a literary artist, and a moral guide.”<sup>29</sup>

In navigating these three roles, Mormon had to make editorial decisions about what to include and exclude, wanting his compilation to be accurate but also to transmit moral lessons. One repeated theme that emerges from Mormon’s inclusions is what Hardy calls “charismatic leaders.”<sup>30</sup> The result is that we have a lot of information included about Moroni, and by extension his nemesis Amalickiah, but also that the information we have is likely colored with Mormon’s personal biases, despite his concern for historical accuracy. Because we do not have access to the original primary sources, we made the decision to treat the Book of Mormon text as is and conduct our analysis of these two leaders as presented in Mormon’s narrative.

The context in which Moroni and Amalickiah acted informs our ability to make sense of the historical record and to more accurately analyze their actions. Recent scholarship has deepened our understanding of the socio-political factors that impact warfare in the Book of Mormon. Both Nephite and Lamanite societies were kin based<sup>31</sup> and organized into tribes based on lineage.<sup>32</sup> This had a direct impact on who could take leadership roles—both civilly and militarily. War was common in Book of Mormon history and, as Nibley argued, is described in terms that align realistically with our modern understanding of the waging of war.<sup>33</sup> Welch categorized the different wars described in the Book of Mormon according to their primary motivations. Seven were economically motivated, four were religiously motivated, and six were politically motivated, including the wars involving Moroni and Amalickiah.<sup>34</sup>

Merrill notes that Nephite society seemed to rely on lay armies or militias drawn from local populations, especially the lower classes, during times of military need, rather than standing or professional armies.<sup>35</sup> Early in Nephite history, combat was directly led by the king, but when Mosiah restructured their governance to a system of judges, eliminating the kingship, a change in military command structure was also required. Merrill argues that the “initial solution to this problem was to have the chief judge lead the armies.”<sup>36</sup> Soon afterward, however, in Alma 16:5, Zoram was appointed as chief captain over all the Nephite armies. Merrill points out that a “need to relieve [the chief judge] Alma the Younger of this responsibility may have prompted Zoram’s appointment, and thenceforth, a chief captain rather than the chief-of-state commanded Nephite armies.”<sup>37</sup> After this shift away from chief-of-state

command, Nephite military command positions continued to be hereditary, drawing from a military caste within the Nephite aristocracy. John Tvedtnes even argues that Moroni “may have been one of Mormon’s paternal ancestors.”<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, knowing that Moroni would have been part of this military caste, we can deduce that he would have received military training and preparation above and beyond that of a typical Nephite of the day. In short, he was taught how to fight and how to lead. Not being from the same lineage, as near as we can tell, Amalickiah may not have had access to similar training,<sup>39</sup> though he likely came from a lineage with a defensible claim to rulership.<sup>40</sup> This makes the pairing of Moroni and Amalickiah as leaders all the more informative.

Our decision to do a side-by-side comparison of two parallel figures follows the lead of Mark Thomas and Grant Hardy.<sup>41</sup> Both make the case that Mormon intentionally paired stories in juxtaposition for rhetorical benefit.<sup>42</sup> As our analysis of Moroni and Amalickiah unfolded, it became more and more apparent that they were mirror images of each other.

### **Analysis: Moroni versus Amalickiah**

In Alma 48:7, partway through the Moroni-Amalickiah narrative, Mormon summarizes the events by saying that “while Amalickiah had thus been obtaining power by fraud and deceit, Moroni, on the other hand, had been preparing the minds of the people to be faithful unto the Lord their God.” Here, Mormon focuses our attention on the juxtaposition of these two figures, including their motives and actions.

Moroni first enters the narrative in Alma chapter 43, in which the text identifies him as the “chief captain” who had “all the command, and the government of their wars” (Alma 43:16–17). Over the course of twenty chapters, we see Moroni commanding the Nephite armies through two wars against three enemy leaders (Zerahemnah, Amalickiah, and Ammoron). We look at Moroni’s leadership through the lens of the four components of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. Figure 3 contains a summary of key Book of Mormon passages that provide evidence that Moroni displayed the components of transformational leadership.

Idealized influence	Inspirational motivation	Intellectual stimulation	Individual consideration
Suppresses self-interest 52:33–35 60:36 62:43	Inspires commitment and motivation in followers 43:48–50 48:7 62:5–6	Seeks innovative solutions to problems 43:19–21 48:8–9 49:2–9 50:1–6 55:4–24	Demonstrates concern for the welfare of followers 53:2 53:7 59:1–2
Is an exemplar and role model of high moral conduct 43:23 43:53–54 48:11–17 52:33–35 62:25–29	Focuses group onto collective action 43:26 46:28 46:36 62:5–6	Encourages input from others 43:23  <b>Pseudo-intellectual stimulation</b> 51:20	Creates supportive climate 44:12–15  Listens to followers' concerns 50:26–28 50:29–31
Followers attribute charisma to leader 50:13 53:2	Communicates appealing vision with symbols and emotional appeals 43:9 43:26 43:30 43:45–47 43:48–50 44:5 46:11–24 46:36 60:25–27 62:3–4		
Followers identify with and seek to emulate leader 46:19–21 48:21–25 48:11–17; 50:23 Mormon 2:23–24			

**Figure 3:** Passages aligning Moroni with the four I's of transformational leadership (all citations are in Alma unless otherwise specified)

Amalickiah's leadership style provides a compelling counterpoint to Moroni's. As we show, Moroni clearly engaged in many of the markers of transformational leadership. Amalickiah, on the other hand, demonstrated many of the markers of pseudo-transformational leadership. Figure 4 summarizes the textual passages that provide evidence that Amalickiah displayed the components of pseudo-transformational leadership.

Given that the one-to-one pairing of the markers of transformational and pseudo-transformational leadership are opposites, we present the two men together, trait by trait—first discussing a marker of transformational

leadership as exemplified by Moroni and then discussing its opposite as exemplified by Amalickiah.

Pseudo-idealized influence	Pseudo-inspirational motivation	Pseudo-intellectual stimulation	Pseudo-individual consideration
Seeks power for his own purposes 46:3-4 47:3-4 47:15-16 47:21-24 47:32-35 48:2 48:7	Communicates an appealing vision 46:4-5 46:7 46:10  Inspires commitment and motivation 46:4-5 47:1 47:30 48:1-2  Uses symbols and emotional appeals 47:1 47:27-28 48:3 51:9	Suppresses followers' original ideas and thoughts <i>No relevant passages</i>  Discourages individual initiative and creative problem solving <i>No relevant passages</i>  Suppresses opposition 47:18-19 47:23-28	Demonstrates disregard for welfare of followers 46:33 47:13 47:21-24 49:10  Uses people as tools 46:4-6 47:15-16 47:32-35

**Figure 4:** Passages aligning Amalickiah with the four components of pseudo-transformational leadership (all citations are in Alma)

### Idealized Influence

The first component of transformational leadership is idealized influence. Idealized influence can be divided into four markers: (1) the leader suppresses self-interest, (2) the leader is an exemplar or role model for high moral conduct, (3) the followers attribute charisma to the leader, and (4) the followers identify with and seek to emulate the leader.

Mormon provides little description of the in-battle behavior of specific figures in favor of a more large-scale chronicling of events (for example, troop movements, winning strategies and tactics and epistolary correspondence between key people). However, there is evidence that several commanders, including kings, were active participants in combat, leading from the front—though guarded by elite soldiers—rather than only directing their armies

from a position of more relative safety.<sup>43</sup> As seen in Alma 52:33–35, Moroni was directly involved in combat. The fighting in this battle was particularly fierce, and Moroni was injured while his opponent Jacob was killed. Moroni's willingness to personally fight—exposing himself to the risk of injury and death—demonstrated, to a degree, a willingness to suppress self-interest in favor of a greater good.

A second passage also implies that Moroni was not motivated by a personal lust for power. Alma 62:43 reports that after the war was won, Moroni voluntarily resigned as chief captain, giving up the great power he possessed. According to the internal chronology of the Book of Mormon, Moroni would have been about thirty-nine years old at the time of his resignation and subsequent retirement.<sup>44</sup> This is hardly the action of a self-interested, power-hungry military commander.

Perhaps the clearest textual evidence comes from a letter written by Moroni himself. In this letter to Pahoran, the nation's chief judge, Moroni declared, "I seek not for power, but to pull it down. I seek not for honor of the world, but for the glory of my God, and the freedom and welfare of my country" (Alma 60:36). In this verse, Moroni explicitly stated his personal motivations. Such self-declarations are not necessarily trustworthy. In this case, however, considering the lack of other evidence of Moroni acting self-interestedly, and in combination with the other passages above, we are confident in saying that Moroni sufficiently demonstrated a suppression of self-interest—the first of our markers for idealized influence.

The second marker of idealized influence is that the leader is an exemplar and role model of high moral conduct including courage, dedication to the cause, and other virtues relevant to the group mission and identity. Alma 52:35, in which Moroni was injured in battle defeating Jacob, cited above, is also evidence of Moroni's willingness to lead from the front, an exemplar of courage and commitment. In addition, he was a role model to his followers of having faith in God and heeding God's servants. Alma 43:23 describes Moroni's willingness to seek advice and guidance from Alma, the sitting high priest of the church. Moroni sought guidance directly from God as well. Moroni prayed multiple times "that the cause of the Christians, and the freedom of the land might be favored." Moroni was also a role model of other Christian virtues, specifically mercy and compassion. Moroni consistently showed restraint and mercy rather than bloodlust and ruthlessness (see Alma 43:54; 48:14–16).

Closely related to the leader's display of role-model behavior is the followers' internalization of that example, characterized by their identifying with the leader and seeking to emulate him or her. There are many clear examples in the text of this marker. In perhaps the most famous event of his career, Moroni, frustrated at the apparent apathy of his countrymen and government, made a banner out of his torn coat. He wrote an inspiring, unifying message on the cloth and "went forth among the people, waving the rent part of his garment in the air that all might see the writing" (Alma 46:19), shouting a rallying cry. The people who heard and saw his message "came running together with their armor girded about their loins, rending their own garments in token" (Alma 46:21), in a clear moment of emulating or mirroring Moroni.

It was not just Moroni's contemporaries who identified with and sought to emulate Moroni. Mormon, chief captain of the Nephite armies approximately four hundred years after Moroni, modeled his own military command after Moroni (Mormon 2:23–24). Mormon also explicitly states that Moroni "was a man who was firm in the faith of Christ, and he had sworn with an oath to defend his people, his rights, and his country, and his religion, even to the loss of his blood. . . . Yea, verily, verily I say unto you, if all men had been, and were, and ever would be, like unto Moroni, behold, the very powers of hell would have been shaken forever; yea, the devil would never have power over the hearts of the children of men" (Alma 48:13–17). As Hardy explains, "This is as strong a statement as Mormon can possibly make; the only other instances of 'verily, verily I say unto you' in the Book of Mormon are spoken by the resurrected Christ himself."<sup>45</sup> Mormon clearly identified with Moroni and tried to emulate his example.

It is evident that Moroni demonstrated the requirement of idealized influence. He suppressed his self-interest on behalf of the Nephites. He provided a strong example for his followers. And his followers attempted to emulate his actions.

### **Pseudo-idealized Influence**

The mirror opposite of idealized influence is pseudo-idealized influence. Two markers show pseudo-idealized influence: (1) the leader seeks power for his or her own self-interested purposes, and (2) followers attribute charisma to the leader.

The text provides a string of passages that identify Amalickiah's motives—he wanted to be king (see Alma 46:4, Alma 47:4, and Alma 48:2). He was willing to use fraud and deceit to achieve his aims (Alma 48:7). The text also describes Amalickiah in charismatic terms. He used flattery to get people to follow him and persuade them to comply with his wishes (see Alma 46:10). Troy Smith argues that “Amalickiah was an opportunist. His entire purpose in life was the pursuit of political power. He was a master of deception, and he manipulated the emotions of the people to achieve his sinister goals.”<sup>46</sup> Amalickiah's actions fit the criteria for exercising pseudo-idealized influence.

### Inspirational Motivation

The second component of transformational leadership is inspirational motivation. The following markers are indicative of inspirational motivation: (1) the leader inspires commitment and motivation from followers, (2) the leader focuses the people into a cohesive group and onto collective action, and (3) the leader communicates an appealing vision, using symbols and emotional appeals.

Several incidents in the narrative indicate Moroni's ability to inspire and motivate his followers. A particularly strong example is found in Alma 43. During the battle against Zerahemnah, the Lamanites fought so fiercely that there came a moment when Moroni's men “were about to shrink and flee from them.” Reading their intentions, Moroni “inspired their hearts with these thoughts—yea, the thoughts of their lands, their liberty, yea, their freedom from bondage” (Alma 43:48). Because of his words, his soldiers “turned upon the Lamanites, and they cried with one voice unto the Lord their God, for their liberty and their freedom from bondage. And they began to stand against the Lamanites with power” (Alma 43:49–50).

The second marker of inspirational motivation is that the leader is able to focus individuals' behavior into collective action. Early on in Moroni's story, the narrative showcases his uniting capability. In Alma 43, we read that “he caused that all the people in that quarter of the land should *gather themselves together* to battle against the Lamanites” (Alma 43:26; emphasis added). Similarly in Alma 46, “Moroni . . . went forth . . . and *gathered together* all the people who were desirous to maintain their liberty, to stand against Amalickiah” (Alma 46:28; emphasis added). These two verses emphasize Moroni's ability to unite the Nephites. Nephite armies were militia-based and drawn from local populations and separate kin groups. This meant that

their leaders were required to unify them behind a single cause.<sup>47</sup> Moroni excelled at this task.

The final marker of inspirational motivation is *how* the leader communicates to inspire commitment and unify his or her people. Often the leader accomplishes this by using symbols and emotional appeals that inspire the people. In creating the title of liberty, Moroni codified the Nephite desires related to faith, freedom, and family on the fragment of his coat and turned it into a powerful emblem (see Alma 46:12). The image of the ripped coat with the inspiring words written upon it clearly had a powerful effect on the minds of the people. Thousands of people were inspired and came running to join the cause. Even those who could not read the words would have been able to draw inspiration from the power of the symbol.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to finding a powerful symbol to communicate his message, Moroni was also skilled at delivering his message with emotional weight. Mormon includes an epistle—apparently verbatim—written by Moroni to Pahoran, the country’s chief judge or governor, whom Moroni suspected of betrayal of the cause of freedom. In it, we get a sense of Moroni’s passionate and emotional way with words. He spoke of wanting to see the “true spirit of freedom” (Alma 60:25). And in one particularly fiery verse, Moroni promised, “I will come unto you, and if there be any among you that has a desire for freedom, yea, if there be even a spark of freedom remaining, behold I will stir up insurrections among you, even until those who have desires to usurp power and authority shall become extinct” (Alma 60:27). Throughout his career, Moroni successfully leveraged emotional appeals, focused his followers’ efforts into collective action, and inspired them to greater levels of commitment and motivation. His powerful use of symbols enabled him to motivate his followers to accomplish their goals.

### Inspirational or Pseudo-inspirational Motivation

Inspirational motivation is the same in both transformational and pseudo-transformational leadership. Amalickiah used the same three markers in his pursuit of power: (1) an appealing vision, (2) an inspiring commitment and motivation, and (3) the use of symbols and emotional appeals. We don’t know the nuances of the vision he communicated to his followers, but we are told multiple times that it was full of “flatteries” (see Alma 46:4, 7, 10). Whatever the content of the flatteries, they seemed to have appealed to many people, as evidenced by the line that he “gained the hearts of the people” (Alma 47:30).



His messaging was also able to inspire commitment and motivation. He inspired a group of Nephites to risk death in a rebellion against their own government (Alma 46). And then, among the Lamanites, he “did stir up the Lamanites to anger against the people of Nephi” (Alma 47:1) as a tool to advance his own agenda of becoming king (see also Alma 48:1–2). Once he had obtained the throne of the Lamanites, he continued to “inspire their hearts against” the Nephites (Alma 48:2). He employed an interesting technique of mass media propaganda to accomplish this, appointing “men to speak unto the Lamanites from their towers” (Alma 48:1). Amalickiah’s strategy of mass marketing his message from towers runs parallel to Moroni’s system of raising the title of liberty in every city and giving speeches to inspire the hearts of Moroni’s countrymen.

Finally, like Moroni, Amalickiah infused his message with strong emotional appeals. A clear example of this occurs after Amalickiah orchestrated the murder of the Lamanite king. He framed the king’s servants and “pretended to be wroth, and said: Whosoever loved the king, let him go forth, and pursue his servants that they may be slain” (Alma 47:27). As a result, “all they who loved the king” obeyed Amalickiah (Alma 47:28). Taken as a whole, Amalickiah’s actions meet the criteria of pseudo-inspirational motivation.

### Intellectual Stimulation

The third component of transformational leadership is intellectual stimulation. The markers of intellectual stimulation are (1) the leader seeks innovative solutions to problems, and (2) the leader seeks input from others. We found textual support for both these markers.

Gardner notes that Moroni “is presented as a military innovator who invented defensive armaments and tactics that later became standard.”<sup>49</sup> He was already innovating during the war with Zerahemnah. Mormon explains that Moroni “had prepared his people with breastplates and with arm-shields . . . and also shields to defend their heads, and they were also dressed with thick clothing” (Alma 43:19). On the other hand, the Lamanites were mostly naked and “not prepared with any such thing” (Alma 43:20). The Lamanites’ surprise at seeing the Nephite soldiers’ armor leads the reader to believe that it was a new, creative solution to the problem of battle.<sup>50</sup>

When Moroni next faced the Lamanites, in the Amalickiahite war, he found that they had adopted the Nephite armor technology (see Alma 49:6). In this new reality, Moroni had to innovate again. In this campaign,

Moroni developed several techniques for fortifying his armies' encampments and the Nephite cities. These techniques included building walls and small forts around his armies and building stone walls around some cities (see Alma 43:8–9). He also fortified other cities with banks of earth topped with wooden structures, pickets, and towers (see Alma 50:1–6).<sup>51</sup> These measures surprised the Lamanite armies, who were confident in their impending victory because of their greater numbers and their newly adopted armor (see Alma 49:8). Mormon highlights that these city fortifications had never been seen before by either side and credits Moroni as the source of the innovation (see Alma 49:8).

Moroni also innovated in terms of military strategy. A strong example is found in Alma 55 when Moroni used a Lamanite defector to infiltrate a city where the Lamanites were holding Nephite prisoners. The Lamanite defector tricked the Lamanite guards and incapacitated them using strong wine. Moroni then provided weapons for the Nephite prisoners. When the Lamanites realized that their prisoners were armed, they quickly surrendered.

An additional marker for intellectual stimulation is the leader's encouraging of and seeking input from others. The text contains only one example of Moroni seeking input from others. Alma 43:23 records Moroni's efforts to seek input from Alma, the high priest of the Church.

### **Pseudo-intellectual Stimulation**

The mirror of intellectual stimulation is pseudo-intellectual stimulation. Three markers of this component are (1) the leader suppresses innovative problem-solving, (2) the leader discourages individual initiative, and (3) the leader suppresses opposition.

We did not find any evidence of Amalickiah engaging in the first two markers of pseudo-intellectual stimulation. However, Amalickiah did brutally suppress potential opposition in at least two instances. The first occasion was when he had the rival Lamanite general Lehonti murdered (see Alma 47:18–19), and the second occasion was when he had the Lamanite king murdered and then blamed the king's servants for the murder. Amalickiah cowed any potential opposition by sending his army to capture and kill the king's servants if possible (see Alma 47:23–28).

Surprisingly, we found that Moroni also engaged in pseudo-intellectual stimulation. When Moroni learned that there were dissenters in the heart of the country seeking to overthrow the government, "he was exceedingly

wroth” (Alma 51:14). After obtaining the authority from the government, he marched his army to quell the internal rebellion. His army defeated the dissenters and threw many of them into prison without trial (see Alma 51:19). The dissenters who were not killed or imprisoned without trial were “compelled to hoist the title of liberty upon their towers, and in their cities, and to take up arms in defence of their country” (Alma 51:20). This was not the only time that Moroni engaged in this type of behavior. After coming to Pahoran’s aid, he also had many dissenters executed (see Alma 62:7–10).<sup>52</sup> Considering Moroni’s otherwise passionate messaging for freedom and liberty, this violently oppressive behavior comes across as out of character for him.

### Individual Consideration

The fourth and final component of transformational leadership is individual consideration. Three markers help identify individual consideration: (1) the leader demonstrates concern for the well-being of his or her followers, (2) he or she creates a climate that feels supportive and safe, and (3) he or she listens to the concerns of others. There are several passages of text that support these three markers of individual consideration in Moroni’s behavior.

Moroni was concerned about the welfare of others. As previously mentioned, he opposed wanton bloodshed. He also went out of his way to care for the civilians impacted by the war by having his soldiers work to deliver “women and . . . children from famine and affliction” (Alma 53:7). In addition, Moroni demonstrated genuine concern for others through his emotional reactions to learning about the successes and safety of his followers in battle. He rejoiced in the safety of Lehi (see Alma 53:2) and of Helaman and his command of young soldiers (see Alma 59:1). These examples indicate Moroni’s genuine concern for others.

Only one passage provides support for the second marker of individual consideration. During a pause in the battle with Zerahemnah, Moroni offered his enemy a chance to surrender. Instead, Zerahemnah rushed toward Moroni to attack him directly. One of Moroni’s soldiers jumped in to defend the captain, scalping Zerahemnah in the process and then delivering a rousing, impromptu speech. This event is evidence that Moroni created a safe and supportive climate within his army. David Spencer convincingly argues that Moroni was “a soldier’s soldier, meaning a man who leads from the front, shares the deprivations of his men, puts his mission and men above himself.”<sup>53</sup> He engendered great camaraderie among his troops and empowered them to

take initiative. This is clearly seen in the behavior of this soldier, who felt able to speak on behalf of the army.

The final marker for individual consideration is a leader's willingness to listen to others. Alma 50 describes a contentious situation between two Nephite cities that led to hostilities. The people from the victimized city "fled to the camp of Moroni, and appealed unto him for assistance" (Alma 50:27). Similarly, a few verses later, we read how Morianton, the leader of the aggressive group, was angry at his maid servant and "beat her much" (Alma 50:30). The beaten woman ran away and "came over to the camp of Moroni, and told Moroni all things concerning the matter, and also concerning" Morianton's plans (Alma 50:31). These two incidents—of people running away from aggressors and running *to* Moroni for aid—indicate that he had a reputation both for listening to people's needs and for using his resources to aid them.

### **Pseudo-individual Consideration**

The mirror of individual consideration is pseudo-individual consideration. Two markers of pseudo-individual consideration are (1) the leader demonstrating a disregard for the welfare of his or her followers, and (2) the leader using people as tools to accomplish his or her own ends. Ryan Davis points out that the leaders of the dissenters and the Lamanites consistently followed this pattern.<sup>54</sup> There are several episodes that demonstrate Amalickiah's disregard for the welfare of others. Chapter 47 records how Amalickiah sold out his men to an enemy force. This was typical behavior for Amalickiah.<sup>55</sup> Later he successfully conspired to murder the Lamanite king. In perhaps the most explicit verse highlighting this trait in Amalickiah, the narrator explains that if Amalickiah had been personally leading the army, he would have ordered them to attack a well-defended city because "he did not care for the blood of his people" (Alma 49:10).

Amalickiah also showed a habit of using people as tools toward achieving his own ends. A clear example of this is when he "delivered his men, contrary to the commands of the king . . . that he might accomplish his designs in dethroning the king" (Alma 47:16). Similarly, Amalickiah used the widow of the Lamanite king to consolidate his own power (see Alma 47:32–35).

### **Discussion**

As shown herein, examining the Book of Mormon from the perspective of modern leadership theory is a productive exercise. Textual evidence strongly

suggests that Moroni was a transformational leader, displaying all four of its associated behavioral components. Similarly, Amalickiah was not simply a villain with poor leadership skills; rather, he was a surprisingly effective leader, displaying the four elements of pseudo-transformational leadership. In these two men, we see reflections of the other. This clearly falls in line with Mormon's goal in pairing Moroni and Amalickiah and highlighting their differences.

A surprising result arose from the juxtaposition of Moroni and Amalickiah. We found that both men engaged in pseudo-transformational leadership. It was unanticipated to find any elements of this immoral leadership style in Moroni, the otherwise transformational leader, who is held up as an exemplar of moral leadership. This discovery highlights the fact that leaders are human and that they are constantly fighting against the natural man (see Mosiah 3:19). The leadership literature tends to describe leadership models in the monolithic terms of ideals.<sup>56</sup> What is often lacking in the literature is the messy, human reality of enacting the ideals in real life. Leaders have good days and bad days, just like the people they lead. Moreover, they are always somewhere along a leadership learning curve, either progressing and growing into better leaders or sliding backwards into worse leaders. No leader can be described as having arrived at leadership perfection, thus requiring no more growth or learning. Perhaps a more nuanced view of leaders as learners, full of potential growth, might provide a more beneficial framing for preparing the leaders of tomorrow.

Moroni was not a perfect leader, but he was successful. His leadership behavior achieved Peter Northouse's definition of effective leadership: "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal."<sup>57</sup> He was also successful in that he won the war. Significantly, Moroni consistently worked to care for those under his charge and was willing to take feedback and rebuke as demonstrated in his interactions with Pahoran. It was his willingness to acknowledge error and to attempt to be better that enabled the true power of his use of transformational leadership.

Regarding Amalickiah, it would be incorrect to say that he was not an effective leader. On the contrary, he demonstrated all the components of pseudo-transformational leadership, an accepted academic model of leadership. He "pulled off a nearly bloodless coup, acquiring control of the city of Nephi and the land of the Lamanites, popular support, and the army's support."<sup>58</sup> He was successful at gaining the people's hearts and motivating

them to group action. Amalickiah's leadership, just as Moroni's, matched Northouse's definition of effective leadership.<sup>59</sup> However, Amalickiah was not a moral leader, and he ultimately lost his bid for power over both peoples, the war, and his life. Amalickiah presents a clear example of the dangers posed by pseudo-transformational leadership both to the leader and the followers.

The leadership styles displayed by these two leaders are tied together. Likewise, in each of these two mirrored men, we see the potential of the other. In a time of frustration and anger, Moroni took a step down the pseudo-transformational path used by his nemesis. If he had continued down that path, becoming more like Amalickiah, the outcome of the narrative may have been very different. In Amalickiah, we see the tyrant that Moroni could have become had he further given in to his moments of anger and weakness and turned his talents toward self-interested ends. Yet Amalickiah was also a talented and skilled leader, despite his wasting of his skill on selfish desires. What good could he have accomplished if he had applied himself to the good of others? In Moroni, we see the leader—the force for good—that Amalickiah could have been, had he been motivated by altruism and righteous, moral principles.

## Conclusion

This article demonstrates the value of studying the Book of Mormon as a leadership text. It examines the leadership styles of Moroni and Amalickiah and shows how they demonstrated characteristics of transformational and pseudo-transformational leadership. Elder Mdlletshe was correct to assert of the Book of Mormon that “anyone desiring to learn about leadership might profit by a study of the leaders found in its pages.”<sup>60</sup> It is, after all, a book written by leaders and about leaders. We invite other scholars in leadership fields to add their perspectives and expertise on what the Book of Mormon teaches us about leadership. Examples of future work might include looking at King Benjamin through the lens of servant leadership, at King Noah through the lens of laissez-faire leadership or transactional leadership, or at Alma the Younger through the lens of path-goal theory. If we compare the Book of Mormon text to a field of potential analyses of leadership figures, we submit that “the field is white already to harvest” (Doctrine and Covenants 4:4). Let us grab our sickles and get to work.

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## Notes

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36. Merrill, "Nephite Captains and Armies," 278.
37. Merrill, "Nephite Captains and Armies," 279.
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45. Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 109–10.
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49. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 565.
50. For a detailed analysis of the armor described in the Book of Mormon and the comparisons with historical armor from ancient Mesoamerica and the Near East, see William J. Hamblin, "Armor in the Book of Mormon," in Ricks and Hamblin, *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, 400–425; and Spencer, *Captain Moroni's Command*, 54.
51. For an examination of fortifications in the Book of Mormon, see Spencer, *Captain Moroni's Command*, 70.
52. For more discussion of Moroni's violent responses to internal dissent, see Spencer, *Captain Moroni's Command*, 126–31.
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