



BOOK REVIEWS

Review of Palma, P. J., & Gomez, D. (2026). *Bridge-Building Leadership: A Biblical Approach to Human Flourishing Across Ethnoracial, Socioeconomic, and Gender Divides*. Palgrave Macmillan. (ISBN 978-3-032-09310-3), xxiv + 177 pp., USD 169.99.

Palma and Gomez (2026) pose an intriguingly simple question: What kind of leadership adheres to the Gospel truth that, in Christ, God has acted to reconcile people to Himself and, by extension, to one another (2 Cor. 5:18-20)? Their answer challenges the modern tendency to treat leadership merely as instrumental, as though it exists chiefly to produce outcomes. Instead, they frame leadership as bridge-building that aims at human flourishing, and they insist that the church (or any organization) cannot outsource this vocation to slogans or programs, because Scripture treats reconciliation as a central expression of the reality of new creation (Eph. 2:14-16; 2 Cor. 5:17-20). The argument moves with Pauline logic from the Gospel's reconciling act to the church's reconciling vocation, then presses that vocation into the fault lines where leaders too often retreat into rhetoric rather than obedience.

The book's theological center emerges from its biblical foundations, where bridge-building leadership rests on the reconciling love of *agapē*. John's Gospel clarifies the author's move, as Jesus defines the credibility of discipleship through enacted love rather than spiritual behavior (John 13:34-35). Paul likewise frames love as cruciform imitation rather than a matter of personality preference (Eph. 5:1-2). Palma and Gomez (2026) press leaders toward truth-telling, endurance, and formation as prerequisites for reconciliation, and that emphasis aligns with the New Testament's refusal to sentimentalize love. In Scripture, love does not float above conflict; it walks into it and bears the cost of peace. This framing also guards the concept of flourishing from drifting into a vague therapeutic ideal. The authors locate flourishing within a reconciled life that receives God's gift and then practices God's mission.

Palma and Gomez (2026) develop their bridge-building claims across three domains, illuminated by the canonical witness. The ethnoracial argument holds that Gospel-faithful leadership must pursue reconciliation as part of becoming one multinational people of God. Pentecost sanctifies cultural witness rather than erasing

cultures (Acts 2:5-11). Revelation ends with worshiping diversity around the Lamb (Rev. 7:9–10). In Paul’s letter to the church at Ephesus, unity is Christ’s demolition of hostility and the creation of a new humanity (Eph. 2:14-16). The authors urge leaders to steward the unity already achieved, shifting away from image management to faithful witness.

The socioeconomic argument centers on *koinōnia* as stewardship through fellowship, reshaping community life and responsibility. Acts describes *koinōnia* as shared devotion (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35). James emphasizes that partiality is a theological contradiction, not just a social mistake (James 2:1-9). Leaders steward God’s reconciling mission by fostering communities that resist exclusion and promote tangible solidarity. The biblical pattern moves from episodic charity to a sustained reordering of communal habits. Palma and Gomez (2026) highlight long-term commitment and legacy thinking, aligning with Scripture’s rhythm of forming a people through repeated practices that embody the kingdom, not quick fixes.

The gender argument is based on the *imago Dei*, urging leaders to recover humanity’s shared image-bearing identity. Genesis states God created humanity in His image (Gen. 1:27), and Paul shows that redeemed community life reflects a new-creation identity that reorders how believers honor one another (Rom. 12:10-13; 2 Cor. 5:17). Palma and Gomez (2026) see reconciliation as a theological commitment, not abstract anthropology or policy debate. It should visibly guide leaders in recognizing dignity, fostering participation, and practicing mutual honor in God’s community. Their focus on formation serves as a guardrail, preventing leaders from promoting honor without practicing the disciplines that build it, thereby creating the very fractures they oppose.

The concluding synthesis presses the model toward leadership studies and practice, but its most provocative theological move remains this: bridge-building does not begin with technique; it begins with leaders who submit to formation so they can embody reconciliation rather than merely advocate it. Paul’s revelation in Corinthians supports this ordering because reconciliation is first a gift received and only then a ministry entrusted (2 Cor. 5:18-20). Leaders who ignore that sequence tend to build bridges as performance. Leaders who honor that sequence build bridges as witness.

Palma and Gomez (2026) provide a biblically grounded framework interpreting leadership through the church’s reconciling mission, questioning what flourishing looks like when Christ has made peace. Its strength lies in emphasizing that Scripture does not see division as normal or flourishing as optional. Pastors, leaders, and students seeking a biblically rooted framework beyond technique for formation will find a clear theological grammar for reconciliation-as-witness.

Matthew Hattabaugh
GoChurch Beirut / RHEMA Bible Training Center Lebano

Review of Markow, F. A. (2024). *Organization Behavior in Christian Perspective: Theory and Practice for Church and Ministry Leaders*. Baker. (ISBN 9781540968029), 243 pp., pb \$27.99.

Markow maintains that organizations struggle with leadership issues simply because they do not understand where the study originated, the answer is organizational behavior. The author explores the dynamics of organizational behavior from a Christian perspective, identifying theories and practices for ministry and its leaders. Markow argues that the church is not a business in the traditional sense, an entity created by a human founder who sells products and services for profit. The scripture declares, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" Hebrews 11:3. The church's founder and maker is God, who is not materialistic as human beings define it. Jesus asked Peter, "For what is man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matthew 16:26. Profit in the natural typically involves financial gain; however, in the spiritual context, God seeks the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance) to be displayed in the lives of believers. Organizational behavior in the church should foster spiritual development rather than profit from obtaining a leadership position. The most valuable asset for a Christian leader is spiritual development, not a desire for an earthly position or title. However, in Christ, believers can have them both, an earthly position and spiritual development, the best of both worlds. Organizational behavior in ministry must bridge biblical principles and practices with leadership theories and their practices. A critical example of spiritual profitability includes being open to biblical teaching, counseling, and guidance.

Markow's book defines organizational behavior as "The study of people in organizations, how they relate to one another in an organizational context, how they relate to the organization itself, and how the organization relates to its people" (pp.14-16). The book is a particularly good read with biblical applications and managerial principles. This book would be a valuable tool in the library of any faith-based leader because it offers a clear understanding of its subject matter through the lens of ministry leaders. Markow offers sound biblical analysis and very useful applications, which are strengths. Although the book is about viewing the material from a Christian Perspective, it would have been useful to compare and contrast the research from a secular perspective. The final chapter speaks to organizational culture, which could have been an optimal space to make the distinction but lacked practical application. This lack of comparison has resulted in a weakness.

The target audiences for Markow's book, identified in this book review, should be pastors at every level, secular and biblical organizational leaders, college students, particularly Christian students, from universities or seminaries. The author provides a great platform for addressing leadership in the Christian community. The book is well structured and offers a biblical approach for ministry leadership. The author offers insights for ministry leaders navigating complex challenges. For example, he says in a

ministry context, “Becoming aware of others’ perspectives can help leaders reduce miscommunication, enhance decision quality and develop more creative ideas and solutions” (pp.29-30). Markow concludes that, just as people should fit properly in their clothes, they should fit properly within their organization at every level for the organization to be healthy and operate at an optimal level. Just as an outfit should not be too loose or too tight, people in an organization should not be too rigid or too detached.

Valencia Mitchell
Liberty University