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and deep river; eventually it penetrates even into the barren world around the church. On the banks of the river of God's renewing grace there grow all kinds of trees, which produce fresh fruit, giving food and healing to all who come to this river. The renewal of the church is a blessing not only for the church itself, but also for the world around it.

Dr. Klaas Runia is the President of the Fellowship of European Evangelical Theologians (FEET) and is ministering in Holland. p. 87

The Servant Church

David S. Lim

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The following article by David Lim is based on his doctoral dissertation, The Servant Nature of the Church in the Pauline Corpus (1987). The research shows that servanthood not only provided the theoretical framework of Paul's doctrine of the Church, but also served as an important basis for the interpersonal relationships and communal structures in his churches. Servant-ecclesiology is revealed theologically in the use of the terms ekklesia, soma christou and diakonia in the Pauline corpus, demonstrated historically in the official ministry of the church leaders, the simple meetings of the house-churches and the egalitarian ideas of social relationships in the Pauline communities. The author demonstrates that for Paul, the church (1) exists by its very nature as the servant of the Triune God, (2) manifests itself in history primarily in the form of assemblies where its members serve one another in love, (3) develops functional offices and flexible structures through the free-yet-orderly exercise of Spirit-endowed gifts, (4) serves in non-authoritarian ways, just as its leaders follow the model of Christ's voluntary self-sacrificial service, (5) aims at egalitarian relationships, which ensue in non-clerical and decentralized forms of congregational life, (6) identifies with those of low status, and thereby also is characterized by simplicity and smallness, (7) exhibits the holism of God's eschatological plan which extends to all areas (not just the religious sphere) of life, (8) demonstrates the inclusiveness of divine redemption through its service of all humanity, and (9) flourishes in the flexible pluriformity and contextuality of its structures.

Editor

We are living in exciting days. God is moving his Church towards another reformation, to complete the incompleteness of the 16th. century Reformation. The first Reformation focused on our *doctrine of salvation* (sola gratia, sola scriptura, sola fide), but failed to proceed to apply the implications of this biblical truth in our *doctrine of the Church* (especially 'the priesthood of all believers'). Protestants are not Protestant enough. We still maintain the vestiges of the hierarchical, paternalistic, clergy-centred 'heresy' of the medieval Church (with its post-Constantinian Christendom model of superchurch, cathedral, p. 88 basilica structures). What will happen in our churches if we become more faithful to the teachings of the Scriptures? I envision at least three important features:

(1) *Church Structures*. We will develop into the 'servant church' model. We will become a loose network of small communities/ churches organized as simple Christ-worshipping Bible study groups which live out the radical demands of the Gospel in non-hierarchical, non-paternalistic and non-clerical ways in our worship, fellowship and community service (*leitourgeia*, *koinonia* and *diakonia*). Each 'local church' (or 'house church' or 'Christ group') will be any believing community which claims a clear Christian identity (in the essential doctrines) built upon a base-community (such as neighbourhoods, schools, factories, or government offices). Each will live out, confess, theologize, communicate and celebrate their faith together with some regularity (and some may specialize in one or two of the churches' functions). Present church structures will be transformed into decentralized networks of house-churches or cell-groups which serve as dynamic centres for evangelism and community involvement (rather than just for lip-service love of God, self-congratulation and parochialism); each small group will have a local locus (working for contextualized witness) and a global vision (working for social transformation).

(2) *Church Growth*. The spontaneous expansion of the Church will then be viewed in terms of 'quantity *through* quality', statistics based on radical discipleship and suffering servanthood. We will be concerned not just for short-term goals of winning a few converts one by one, but especially for the long-term reputation of Christ's Body in the locality, nation and world. (It is very possible 'to win a few battles, yet lose the war'.)

Our messages and lifestyles must never be compromised. Our churches clearly stand for what our Lord Jesus called for: 'radical disciples' and 'suffering servants' who repent from selfishness, pride, materialism (which means greed and covetousness), and self-righteousness, and obey him in love, truth, justice and equality, peace and freedom. Hence smaller committed Christian communities are necessary visible expressions of these commitments.

Thus rather than aiming to make small churches bigger (by addition) we must seek to increase the number of small churches (by multiplication). We should work for an ever-growing number of small churches instead of a smaller number of ever-growing churches. Is there any better way to mobilize the totality of the membership in Christ's Body? [p. 89](#)

(3) *Church Leadership*. Our church leaders will be models of 'radical discipleship' and 'suffering servanthood'. Though they may come from different backgrounds (some coming from the upper class like Paul and Barnabas), they will heed Christ's call to 'renounce all' in order to prioritize the work of spreading the good news of the Kingdom of God, especially among the poor in the rural areas and urban slums.

Our main leaders will be itinerant (and hopefully theologically-trained!) 'servants of the churches', who live simply and serve sacrificially, since they see their nation and the world (not just their own churches) as their parish. They will have developed their spiritual gifts in the context of a committed community, and will be sent forth by their respective 'home base' to be transient short-term 'pastor-helpers' or 'church-planters' (with full financial support) or incarnated long-term missionaries (with gradually decreasing support) serving in other areas. This is 'incarnational mission' in contrast to modern 'mission by affluence'.

The overall framework of this vision is the biblical teaching that the church is the 'firstfruits' or vanguard of God's kingdom (his new creation and new humanity), where love and righteousness (justice, equality) prevail, where every person treats other persons as equals (as friends, as co-servants) created in the image of God. As long as the Church actively pursues the priority of following her Lord on the way of the cross, the forces of evil will not be able to overcome her assaults in the 'spiritual battle [between good and evil]' that is going on in heaven and on earth.

‘For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God ...’ ([1 Pet. 4:17](#)). ‘Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our Lord and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death’ ([Rev. 12:10, 11](#)).

ADVANCING THE SERVANT-CHURCH MODEL

One of the major causes of stagnation in most of modern Christianity is the dilution of the new wine (i.e. propagating the ‘gospel’ of cheap grace), and the confinement of it in old wineskins (in the Christendom model). Throughout church history revivals have occurred only when the gospel is proclaimed in its radical transforming freshness, and when Christians have allowed it to break old wineskins. **P. 90**

Comparison between Christendom and Servant-church Models

<i>Categories</i>	<i>Christendom</i>	<i>Servant-church</i>
Key theological theme	special clerical ministry	priesthood of all
Key concepts	institutional church	community/organism
Main services	pastoral, spiritual care	total-person care
Emphases	quantity, magnificence	quality/simplicity
Stewardship priorities	institutional assets	sharing in need
Leadership style	centralization	decentralization
Decision making	top-down hierarchy	democratic
Primary structure	super church	house-churches
Leadership	hierarchical pyramid	inverse pyramid
Leadership roles	administration, sermonizing	modelling, enabling
Church Growth	planned for bigger church	spontaneous multiplication
Main strategies	mass evangelism	personal evangelism
Buildings	cathedrals	community centres

Missions	sending by donations	by personal support
Ordination	makes one 'holier'	discovering gifts

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

Those who are committed to the servant-church model will try to the following:

- (1) If put in leadership roles, they will serve as models of facilitating, discipling, and training 'faithful people who will be able to teach others also' (cf. [2 Tim. 2:2](#); [Eph. 4:11-13](#)), while serving as *one among equals*, or even as *first among equals* (corporate leadership team with rotating 'chairmanship').
- (2) They will work for the decentralization of churches and Christian organizations into smaller independent units which are *each* self-governing, self-supporting (with their own budgets) and self-propagating.
- (3) They will start house-groups, Bible study groups and fellowships (viewing each as a church), while discipling two or three leaders in each group.
- (4) They will teach (without imposing) how these groups should spend their resources, on *people* (rather than on buildings), especially the needy, and on community serving projects. Every ten adults should be able to support one adult to serve 'full-time' as coordinator of the community or as church-planter in these communities.
- (5) They will encourage these groups to 'network' with other Christian groups, through co-sponsorship of *ad hoc* meetings and projects, and the formation of more permanent, loose associations or alliances (e.g., monthly prayer meetings for leaders).

Dr. David S. Lim is teaching at the Alliance Bible Seminary, Manila, Philippines. p. 91

Book Reviews

THE DREAM THAT WOULD NOT DIE: THE BIRTH AND GROWTH OF THE WORLD EVANGELICAL FELLOWSHIP 1846-1986

by David M. Howard
(Paternoster, Exeter, 1986)
Pp. 239, £6. 95

Abstracts of reviews by David P. Whitelaw, in *Missionalia*, Vol. 15 No. 1 April 1987 and Dr. Fritz Laubach

The attractive paperback tells the story of world-wide co-operation among evangelical Christians from 1846-1986 focusing primarily on the formation of the World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF) in 1951 and its subsequent development. The writer is David Howard,