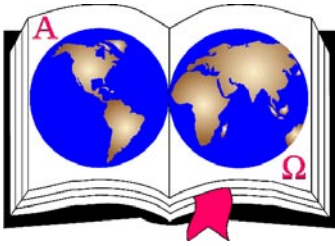




Some Encouraging News from China

January-February 2008

News and Prayer Letter



Reformation Christian Ministries

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Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow [think] not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do. [Luke 17:9-10]

DUTY VS. SUPEREROGATION

The Roman Catholic Church doctrine of the *works of supererogation* refers to actions believed to form a fund of merit that can be drawn on by prayer in favor of sinners. Put more simply, when you do more than what duty requires, you get special "points" that you can redeem in various ways. In secular parlance, it refers to a *class of actions that go beyond the call of duty*.

When it comes to thinking about missions, I fear that a vast majority of people view the subject as one somewhat of *supererogation*: something above and beyond the call of duty, **rather than mere duty**. In the illustration used by our Lord to His apostles in Luke 17, He makes the point that nothing within the commandments of God can possibly fall into the category of works above and beyond the call of duty, for all God's commands **are our duty**, including the command to *make disciples from all the nations*. And it is here very important to take note that these are ALL the nations, not just some of the nations, especially those centered in North America or countries in close proximity.

I wonder if serious mission work, and even the support of serious mission work, has been regarded with such a sentimental admiration, that it does not end up being inadvertently categorized mentally by many as **a work of supererogation rather than of duty**, and thus more easily dismissed. In the eyes of the Lord, it is however considered nothing more than duty, and not just for some, **but for all**.

The the average Christian, missions and missionary life has long been consigned to an undertaking of the most extraordinary magnitude, to such daring and devoted Christians of near apostolic capacities. And for some, the mystique and romance of missions is so great that the mere willingness to consider it elicits a heightened level of admiration, which, for some becomes their motive of attaining. But as young John Urquhart (1808-1827) once said, *...we should do well to view the matter apart from this borrowed splendour, which, by its glare obscures rather than brightens the object of our contemplation*.

Missions is for the church, thus for ordinary people. How much more ordinary can one be than those apostles called of the Lord—among whom we find fishermen, bureaucrats and carpenters. Plied by the Spirit of God, they became missionaries. As this matter of missions is considered by every Christian saved by the quintessential Missionary, the Lord Jesus Christ, it seems that it comes home in the form of duty—a duty which every Christian is, in some way, responsible. The application of the duty may vary, but the duty obliges

all. The duty of missions and the support of missions are not the fruit of some extraordinary faith that falls upon the lot of the extraordinary few of apostolic endowment, but is rather a test of simple discipleship itself.

We are told in Luke 14:26: ***If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple***. What qualifications do we find in this statement of the Lord which leaves one single Christian exempt? Do we rather not see this as a matter of our duty to the Lord who gave His all that we might have life eternal in service to Him? Has He not left us upon this earth to fulfill this duty, among others?

Each of us are responsible before the Lord for a part in the fulfilling of the church's great commission to make disciples from all the nations. We are not speaking here of sharing your faith with friends and neighbors, but having a vital part in missions to all nations. This means more than just putting a few dollars in the plate and believing you have now fulfilled your duty.

This young eighteen-year-old Urquhart went on to say to the St. Andrews Missionary Society in 1826 "If by these, and the remarks that follow, I can impress the mind of any one of you with the duty of engaging in this great undertaking, let me warn such an individual of the delusion of putting such convictions away from him on the ground that this is a work far too high for him to engage in; or under the deceitful impression that his shrinking from such an enterprise is a sign merely that his faith is weak, and has not yet acquired sufficient strength to warrant his engaging in a work of such difficulty and self-denial. If the words of Christ be true [quoted above Luke 12:46], *to shrink from duty, even in the face of all the trials that present themselves in the contemplation of the missionary life, does not argue a weakness of faith merely, but a want of faith. The man who is not ready to part with country and even life itself, at the bidding of his Saviour, is not worthy of the name of a disciple.*"

As this is true of those God calls to consider missions as a career in one form or another, so also this must necessarily be true of those who remain at home. For those who go cannot do so but by the support of those who remain. How often is it the case that believers spend such an inordinate amount of their treasure on things totally unrelated to the things of Christ, and particularly missions? While we have earthly responsibilities to our families, and even local churches (which mere selfishness could encourage us to fulfill) we must also keep them in the context of the Lord's statement: ***If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.***

Not everyone is up to works of supererogation, but every Christian is required to do his duty. And having done all our duty which we are commanded to the utmost, we remain but *unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do*. ***For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation is committed unto me*** (a duty). [1 Corinthians 9:16] Our willingness in doing our duty is then the basis of hearing from the Lord: *Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities*. [Luke 19:17]

In contrast to what Christ's mission did for His people, our duty in missions is being faithful in but *very little*. However, that very little we must do to our utmost in reliance upon His Spirit for its fruit. Let us not think of missions as some work of supererogation, but rather as our commanded duty. Missions is not a work anymore than anything else Christ has commanded us to do. It is a duty. Let us be about our duty out of love for the One who loved us first.

Geoffrey Donnan

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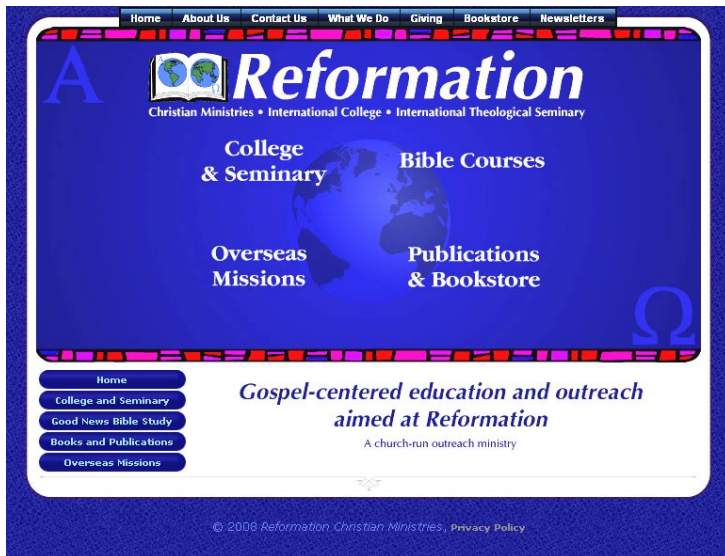
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Director of Missions: G. W. Donnan, Minister

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WEBSITE NEWS:

We have been a little brief on news lately mainly because we have not taken any dramatic trips with a lot of pictures. Some months back, we mentioned that the first part of this year would be spent on working on much of our infrastructure and websites. Part of that involved many major decisions as to what software we will be migrating to with respect to our future development. So much of our work is increasingly conducted via the internet, even overseas, we have been taking the time to make the right decisions on software knowing that once made, there is a huge, expensive and time-consuming task of customizing that software to suit our purposes. This is what we have been doing through most of November through January. Except for a few short trips, we are limiting our travel until this vital part of our education and outreach efforts are completed.



We have finally settled on the highly integrated software that we will be using for our Good News Bible Study, college and seminary courses and all related administration. It is used by many universities around the United States and is "open source" which means it is both free and we can get to the code behind it and make changes as needed. This is not something that can be done with most proprietary software. The program name is *Moodle*. We also will need to program its integration to our Joomla website content management software.

Revs. Poettcker and Donnan attended the annual Council of Private Colleges of America meeting in Orlando, Florida on January 29, where we were able to see Moodle operating in several applications and were most impressed. The Lord has also provided us with a software engineer from our church who

himself is involved in starting a pre-school and primary Christian school who plans on using Moodle himself. He is helping us to integrate this software with our new website software and is beginning the familiarization process so that the Bible courses can be placed there. Once this is done, we will then be able to utilize both of these programs for our Italian, Albanian, Russian and Chinese websites. Pray with us for people who would be willing to volunteer to help in these massive projects.

At this same conference, we met with the chief people of a new "consortium" through which we are engaged in offering our Bachelor of Education program. We find some very interesting possibilities for course offerings through this consortium that will enable us to even offer certified nurses and other technical training (though not the practical portions) through our college program. This will be a tremendous advantage for our students overseas, especially in Suriname. So, we see some very exciting possibilities coming down the pike. Pray with us as we carefully wade through all the details of organizing these educational opportunities which we trust will further prepare Christians to whom we minister for service within their respective lands. This will be a tremendous advantage for our students overseas, especially in Suriname. So, we see some very exciting possibilities coming down the pike. Pray with us as we carefully wade through all the details of organizing these educational opportunities which we trust will further prepare Christians to whom we minister, for service within their respective lands.



Poettcker's Prayer Partners



We greet you in the name of our heavenly King!

Please remember that if you would like our brief regular prayer emails, to let me know by emailing me at rep@reformation.edu.

In addition to working on the B.Ed. program and with the students who are studying in that program in Suriname, I have been working at preparing and streamlining courses for the M.Div. program. Our deep delight and joy is that Andrea Modolo (Italy) is entering into this program and will be working to prepare for the ministry.

He has been trained as a lawyer in Italy and is presently helping out in the church formerly pastored by Dr. Franco Maggiotto. We have been close friends with him and his parents for many years now; I consider it an honor that he calls me "uncle". It is an unspeakable joy to see the Lord at work in his life. I consider it an incredible privilege to mentor him in these studies. Please pray for Andrea as he proceeds, and pray for me as I work on these courses with him.

Lord willing, on February 15 I will make another trip to Suriname, to work in both church and school there. I normally preach two Sundays when I am there and serve on Session there (Eldership) with Pastor Asgar Hamid. We have two discipline cases and some other matters and concerns in the church there. The school is going well; I will be helping with Third Quarter Tests and continue to make further exams for several courses. Please pray for God to bless my trip and the work I do in Suriname.

We also ask your sincere prayer in regards to Sharilyn's knees. Most recently they have been doing much better but she does have recurring pain and is booked for knee replacement surgery for March 13. We are praying for God's direction and wisdom concerning this surgery, and also that she will be able to work until that time.

We continue to be thankful to the Lord for your faithful partnership with us, *Rudy & Sharilyn Poettcker*

RCM UPDATE: SOME CHANGE IS IN THE WIND



At the time of this newsletter, David Card has received word that he has passed his test to be considered as a trainee at the nuclear power plant of Florida Power and Light in Ft. Pierce utilizing his U.S. Navy nuclear submarine experience. This will enable him to be paid much better than RCM could ever hope to

pay him for the work he was doing, invaluable as it was. Furthermore, he will be given benefits there that he has not had since the Navy and for his whole family of eleven. Passing this test means he will probably be asked to join them.

We are certainly happy for David as this is something his family has much needed, but sad because it will be giving RCM a real challenge to seek one or two people to replace him. We are in the process of preparing a job description for his replacement(s). Please let us know if you know of anyone who might be interested. We are especially interested in perhaps a young single man or woman who is really computer savvy who we could train that would be interested in being involved in missions in this way. But would also consider more experienced persons. We also can consider a student who might wish to study at one of our schools and work for their fees through this program.

In the meantime, we are making the necessary adjustments for this transition so that the rest of us can cover many areas, and David has agreed to work after hours to do the mission critical things until we find a replacement. We have no doubt that God, in His good Providence knows exactly what He has in mind for us. Your prayers would be appreciated during this transition.

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Contact me about working on the RCM Advisory Board I would like to teach at C.L.A. in Suriname.

I would like to assist with the college and/or seminary program. I am sending a resume.

Please add this/these person(s) on your newsletter/e-mail list:

An Encouraging Word from China

(The following is a story from a secular school in China administered by some Christians whom, over the years, we have sought to assist through prayer, training and books. We received permission to share this information, though we are deliberately vague as to location and identity just in case this might be used in some way against them. Such a demonstration of God's love will certainly be used to draw many to the Lord.)



Happy Christmas to you and you family. Here is a good story about one of our students, I think it is one of the best presents for you.

This boy's name is _____. He had a crippling disability from a child. He can't walk himself without his mother's help. His father and mother can't teach him themselves. They asked all the schools to take their son in their school in our town. But the public school and the other private schools refuse him. When our student's parents talked about our school with them, they came immediately. We admit this boy. And we teach our students to admit this boy as an ordinary child and help him. As our teachers often teach our students the important things in our lives is love (to love _____ and to love our neighbor). All his classmates would like to help him. Now he is very happy in our school. Because he feels our teachers and his classmates love him. Because he can't go use the bath room himself so he doesn't drink water in the morning at first. Our teachers told him don't need fear. If he is thirsty, drink water is good for his body. When the class is over, all the girls go out. He can "pee" in a bottle in classroom and his boy classmates help him to pour it in the bathroom. We also encourage him to practice to walk and now he can walk himself and play with his classmates in his classroom. This is our school with love and admit and helping. I think it is one of our good presents for you and all those who pray for us...

Yours _____

Pray with RCM as we seek those who can help us launch an outreach website in Chinese. Millions of Chinese have computers. Computers are part of the training of this school from seven years and up. While China has an Internet police force of some 30,000 officers and some internet access is restricted, it primarily involves political sites. Christian content is rarely blocked. Pray with us for committed Chinese individuals can work together with us in developing this site over the next year.

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