Some Encouraging News from China
January-February 2008
News and Prayer Letter
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 above 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 the Lord—among whom we find fishermen, bureaucrats and carpenters. Plied by the Spirit of God, they became missionaries. As this matter of the Lord among whom we find fishermen, bureaucrats and carpenters. Plied by the Spirit of God, they became missionaries.

Urquhart (1808-1827) once said, “we have done that which was our duty to do.” While we have earthly mistakes, and even local churches (which mere selfishness could encourage us to fulfill) we must also keep in mind 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.”

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 mistakes, and even local churches (which mere selfishness could encourage us to fulfill) we must also keep in mind 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
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

To: Reformation Christian Ministries

U.S.A.: 13950 - 122nd Street • Fellsmere, FL 32948-6411 • Phone (772) 571-8833 • Fax (772) 571-8010
CANADA: RR#1, 5060 Oliver Road • Murillo, ON P0T 2G0 • Phone (807) 473-9344 • canada@reformation.edu

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January-February 2008

E-MAIL: gwd@reformation.edu
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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 pubic 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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Reformation Christian Ministries
UNITED STATES REGIONAL OFFICE
13950 - 122ND STREET
FELLSMERE FL 32948-6411

Reformation Christian Ministries
CANADIAN OFFICE
RR#1      5060 OLIVER ROAD
MURILLO ON P0T 2G0
CANADA