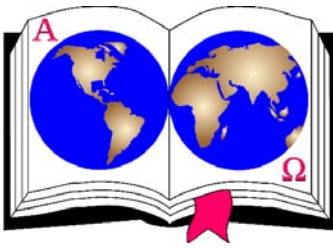


Scratch Beneath the Surface

story page 3



June 2007
News and Prayer Letter



Reformation Christian Ministries

News & Prayer Letter

June 2007

Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum (Albania), I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. (Romans 15:19) Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you. (Hebrews 13:24)

From the earliest church times the Adriatic has been a hotbed of Christianity, the Apostle Paul himself having preached both in Albania and Italy. Prior to the advent of Islam, Christianity pervaded the area capturing the hearts even of those who conquered Rome. However, over time, the same thing happened to Christendom that happened to Israel—religion became a matter of formality and tradition rather than in spirit and truth. Unlike northern European countries, the Reformation never brought the needed changes to these areas. So, while northern Europe today is suffering from a post-Reformation problem; southern Europe (with a few brief exceptions) and especially the Adriatic region has not even had the benefit of a serious Gospel Reformation since early church times. This needs to change and God is continuing to give hints that some seeds have been planted that are showing signs of life. It is with that in mind that RCM continues its calling by the Lord to continue to aid in the nurture and development of these embryonic developments.



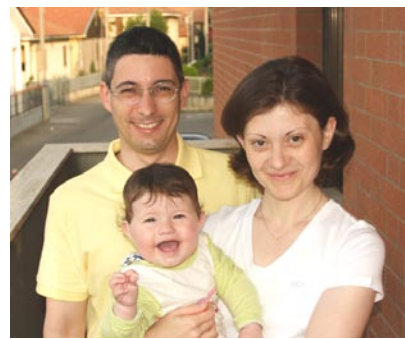
Rev. Geoff Donnan leaving Alpignano, Italy by train.

Consequently, five weeks after heart surgery with the consent of my cardiologist, the Lord enabled me to travel by planes, trains, busses and automobiles to Italy, Switzerland, and Albania for planning meetings aimed at finalizing the approach to continuing the Lord's work of Reformation in Italy and Albania. The trip was exhausting, but all went quite well by God's grace with my heart holding up under the various strains and stresses. Below is a report from the trip that God enabled me to complete by His grace with your prayers and support.

The trip schedule began by flying from Orlando to Amsterdam, and to Milan after two cancelled flights due to an Italian airline strike. The first stop on the itinerary was Alpignano, near Turin, Italy.

Report from Alpignano:

Alpignano is the town where Dr. Franco Maggiotto lived and ministered. There were three churches connected with Franco in Finale Ligure, Turin and Alpignano. During the time of



Andrea, Piera, and Anna Modolo

Franco's illness, the facilities that were being used for the Turin church were no longer available, so it was decided that those in Turin would join in worship with those in Alpignano. At the death of Franco, the Alpignano/Turin church community was most affected for it had long relied primarily upon Franco as their pastor and preacher. The church in Finale Ligure, down on the Gulf of Genoa, has long been working on its

own, so apart from the grief at the passing of their founding pastor, they were far more self-reliant as a congregation.

I was hosted in Alpignano by Andrea and Piera Modolo, the "Love Story" couple (see Dec. 2004 newsletter). They now have a new baby, Anna. Andrea is hoping to pass both his written and oral Italy bar exams and officially become a lawyer. As soon as that is done, he announced his intention of enrolling in RITS, our distance learning seminary program. We are already gearing up for him and some other prospective students who will be able to take English language courses and then output their work in the form of an Italian language course comparable to what they have taken.



Waldensian cemetery, Angrogna, Italy



First on the agenda was a visit to the small Waldensian town of Angrogna, an hour East of Turin in the French Alps, to visit the gravesite of our

good friend and colleague, Dr. Franco Maggiotto. The small graveyard sits nestled in this Waldensian valley and surely represents the peaceful

repose after the battle of life for the Lord that characterized Franco since his conversion in the 1970s. By the time you receive this newsletter, we will have a few pages of pictures available by clicking on the "In Memory of Franco Maggiotto" section of our website.



Turin fellowship. p. 2 first ¶

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Fields: Albania, Italy, Russia, U.K., Congo, Zambia, and Suriname.
Director of Missions: G. W. Donnan, Minister

Editor: G. W. Donnan
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On May 23, visits were also paid to some long-time members and friends of the Turin church community to discuss their grief and struggles following the loss of Franco and the hope for the future.

Aurora Maggiotto was also kind enough to grant me a visit the same day and we spoke at length about their state of affairs, her plans, the ideas for the church and such. Her son Alberto is now in his internship as a psychologist in a state hospital for troubled youth and was unable to get free for a visit. She indicated that they were very pleased with the services of Andrea Modolo as a preacher. They have plans to have some of their more experienced Christian men to take some courses of study at the Waldensian university in Rome aimed at providing education for deacons. Andrea was offered this same opportunity, but preferred to enter regular seminary level training and not to study with the Waldensians.



Alpignano Bible study

On Thursday, May 24, I met with a few members of the Alpignano church during the time of their normal

Bible study and was asked to share my relationship with Franco and vision for the future of the Reformation of Italy, something of great concern to them. I was also able to challenge and encourage them briefly from the Scriptures. They look forward to on-going contact with those involved with RCM to reach out to all of Italy. Andrea Modolo, who preaches for their church at least once a month, will serve on the committee overseeing this work in Italy.

On Friday, May 25, I boarded the train in Alpignano for Turin, and from there to Lecco on Lake Como. I was met at Lecco by Rev. Paolo Castellina and his fiancé, Allison Bailey who was visiting from London. We took a somewhat leisurely drive to Borgonovo, Switzerland, where Paolo lives and ministers in the surrounding villages. Meanwhile, Giorgio Modolo drove from the eastern part of Italy (Vitorrio Veneto, north of Treviso) and met us later that evening.



Geoff Donnan, Giorgio Modolo, Paolo Castellina at Vicosoprano Church

Report from Switzerland:



Casacchia church

Our visit to Rev. Castellina was a follow-up to his visit to the U.S. in April at RCM's request. With the presence of Giorgio Modolo, leader of a small gathering of Reformed Christians in his area and Interim Administrator for RCM in Italy, we intended to see first hand the work of Paolo over the last 24 years in one of the valleys to which Italian Reformed

Christians fled to avoid the persecution of the pope in the 1500s. Such names as Pietro Paolo Vergerio and Peter Martyr Vermigli, and later Francois Turretin(i) are some of those who sire from this Italian Reformation, in contrast to the Waldensians who were primarily of French stock which later assimilated into what is now Italy.

Most of our time on Saturday, May 26, was spent indoors discussing the stratagem for on-going reformation within our respective abilities and



Rev. Paolo Castellina holding 1669 Communion cup at Casacchia church

resources and determining our compatibility both in doctrine and methodology. We had the opportunity to see and meet many of the church members in this rural Swiss valley of villages. On Sunday, May 27, Giorgio and I were able to observe Pastor Castellina in two of his churches. The first was in Casacchia. This church was begun in 830 A.D. though the current building was erected in 1745. The communion cup with which we partook of the quarterly Lord's Supper has been in continual use since 1669. The second church service was held in Borgonovo at St. Giorgio's church. Attendance in the Swiss Reformed Church is very nominal. Pastor Castellina is pictured here in his Genevan robe with a good crowd on Pentecost Sunday.

Pastor Castellina's contract with his church expires this year, but he has already been given a reduced workload so he has agreed to begin translation

of needed materials into Italian having completed the Italian translation of our Children's Catechism and should be finished with the Good News Bible Study in the next several months. The Westminster Larger Catechism is currently being completed. We will begin working on the new Italian website in the months to come. Discussions are still taking place as to other responsibilities which will depend upon other opportunities Paolo is considering. Please pray with us as deliberations continue.



St. Giorgio's church, Borgonovo

On Monday, May 28, I was driven by automobile from Switzerland to Colico, Italy where I took the train first to Lecco, then to Milan Central and from there by bus to Milan's Malpensa airport. From there, I flew late in the evening to Tiranë, Albania and upon arrival by auto to Durrës.

Report from Albania:



Nardi, Enkeleida, and Sarah Doka Durrës, Albania

The trip to Albania was intended to confirm the relationship we have with Leonard Doka, a man who worked with our missionary Patrick Dickens back in the early 1990s. He is now married and has a little girl, Sarah. Nardi has worked full-time for Child Evangelism Fellowship as a translator, but has concluded his employment with them so that we can now use him full-time to work on

translations and website development in conjunction with that which we shall be doing in Italy. Nardi has just completed the Westminster Larger Catechism and will begin shortly on the Ecclesiastical Catechism and checking over a number of the other translations that we have completed in order to prepare them for our website. He will also be the grading center for the Albanian language version of the Good News Bible Study which will be available on-line by the end of 2007 to anyone in the world who speaks Albanian. There are perhaps 100,000 Albanians presently in Italy, though historically there have been many migrations from the country. As many as 50% of the Albanian people speak/read Italian, so we anticipate a substantial cross-over on our website from Albanian and Italian people. We intend to link the Italian and Albanian websites. There is much more to come, but this is all we have space for at this time.

 Geoffrey Donnan

Scratch Beneath the Surface

Cover picture: Church of St. Martin (Chiesa di San Martino), Bondo, Switzerland.

On our way into Switzerland, we stopped to visit this church which was built in 1250. It became a Reformed Church in 1552. Once it became reformed, the various paintings and murals upon the walls, many of which depicted the Lord and saints, were completely plastered over. The Reformed people took seriously the scriptural injunction about not worshipping any image. While the churches remain "Reformed" in name, they do so on the basis of tradition rather than conviction. Pastor Paolo Castellina, whose contract with the state Swiss Reformed Church ends in December 2007, has already had his replacement selected and put on salary. I do not know the new pastor's name, but she is from the same valley and will fit in much better than Paolo. In recent years, this ancient church has rediscovered the murals beneath the plaster as it began to fall off. Instead of remaining consistent with the principle by which their early reformed forefathers plastered them over, they are systematically restoring the walls back to the original murals. In other words, as they scratch beneath the surface, Roman Catholicism has been rediscovered and embraced in the name of continuing Reformation and under the name of the Reformed Church. North American and northern European Protestantism and evangelicalism are going through a similar process. Instead of sinking their roots within the fertile soil of Scripture and the Reformation, when you scratch beneath the surface, you discover their roots are often heading back to Romanism. How strange the irony that in such a rich heritage, such dangers are rising to become a new surface.

Report from Suriname:

Rev. Rudy Poettcker returned from Suriname and brings the following picture report for CLA's graduation for the 2006-2007 school year at Christian Liberty Academy in Paramaribo, Suriname.



The school valedictorian this year, Sung Min Park, a Korean student, gives his valedictorian address.

The eleven graduates are seen below.

With respect to the need for teachers in Suriname: we have one foreigner from last year who is staying on and two new teachers the Lord has provided. One returning and two new teachers, Tony Jakub is from Glen Burnie, Maryland, and Lance Visser is from Washington State. We thank the Lord for this answer to prayer.



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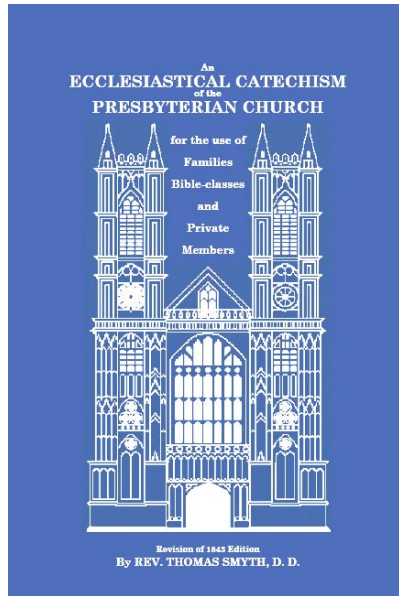
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I would like to assist with the college and/or seminary program. I am sending a resume.

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OCTOBER/NOVEMBER SPEAKER AVAILABLE:



Professor Philip Stott from South Africa will be available in October of this year to provide lectures on various Science and Bible subjects. He will have a limited time so if you or your church have an interest, please let us know. His time table is beginning to fill up.

Russia Trip

In September, 2007, RCM will be participating in a conference in St. Petersburg and Tver, Russia. The conference will be on the subject of the Gospel in milieu that is Russia. We will make some arrangements to visit some of the sites while we are there, but the primary purpose is to minister to the churches there. There is also a chance that we will be able to conduct an additional seminar at a seminary in St. Petersburg, though we will possibly consider doing that after our trip so that those who may wish to continue with their own travels or return home will not be obliged to sit through several days of lectures, in addition to the conferences.

We are offering the opportunity for anyone who would like to "tag-along" on this trip to join us. We won't be able to exactly calculate the costs until we have an idea of how many people might be interested in joining us. Please contact Rev. Geoff Donnan to express your interest or ask questions.

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