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“France and Armenia shared a common Christian heritage for many centuries.”

Interaction between French and Armenian ministries

Dear friends,

Many of you receive the newsletter of the French branch of *Reformed Faith and Life*. Over the years, some of you have been following the developments in both French and Armenian ministries. The two, though distinct in target, budget and tools, share a common vision, established by Rev. Aaron Kayayan who initiated them and labored in both fields. The interaction between the two ministries is currently taking place through the translation, recording and broadcasting of a series of 150 programs for children originally written in French, and aiming at telling them all the narrative parts of the Bible. There is no point in teaching children about the Christian faith if they do not know the mighty acts of God through human history, as recounted and explained in his Revelation, with the authority of the One who governs the course of history by his mighty Providence.

A long history of shared Christian heritage

France and Armenia have been sharing a common Christian heritage for many centuries, even though the tidal wave of secularization undermining France does not leave much space for the kind of faith in God which Armenians still display nowadays. This shared heritage explains why there is generally speaking a very positive attitude from the French towards fellow French citizens from Armenian descent, or even towards recent Armenian immigrants.

The basilica of Vézelay in the beautiful region of Burgundy, illustrates this historical connection: completed by the middle of the 12th century, the basilica's main tympan offers one of the most remarkable ensemble of Romanesque sculptures organized around a figure of a Christ seated in glory who sends his disciples to evangelize the nations of the world. At his feet stand the apostles Peter and Paul. Around the figure of Christ extending his arms, a semi-circle arch made of eight recesses contains sculptures of men and women illustrating several nations of the earth. Some are unknown (like the Cynoscephalae supposed to live in India and recognizable with their dog's heads!), other stand among the nations listed in Acts chapter 2: Arabs, Egyptians, Phrygians and... Armenians, in the bottom right recess (recognizable by their characteristic shoes). The presence of Armenians may sound strange if one refers to Acts 2 where there are not specifically mentioned. However, in quoting this Scripture passage, Church fathers such as Tertullian (3d century) and Augustine (5th century) include them in the listing of visitors of Jerusalem at Pentecost. In 1146, only a few years after the basilica of Vézelay was completed, Bernard of Clairvaux preached there the necessity of going to the second Crusade in





order to free Jerusalem from the yoke of the Seljuk Turks who were preventing pilgrims from visiting what Medieval Christianity considered to be holy places (the tomb of Jesus etc.) These Crusades saw a political and military alliance started between Armenian princes and Frankish noblemen that would last about two centuries, with a number of intermarriages, some assassinations, and even a French family (the Lusignan) accessing the throne of the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia despite being Roman Catholic (thus following the Latin rite instead of the Armenian Apostolic one).

“The only crusade we are sent on is the proclamation of the Gospel”

The only crusade worth preaching

Thankfully, we are reminded by God’s Word that the only crusade we are sent on is the proclamation of the Gospel, rather than the sealing of military alliances in order to “free” a few dead stones. We continue planning our program of forthcoming publications. We are currently looking for suitable material on ethical and apologetic issues in a style accessible to the general Armenian public. A letter recently received from one of our reader (a 3d year university student in Gyumri) stresses the need to continue publishing such material. Commenting the book on *Islam and the Gospel* written years ago by Rev A.R. Kayayan (an augmented version of the initial book in French) she writes, *religious issues and crises are more evident in our times, along with various issues in our politics. Rev Kayayan’s work offers a great help for stabilizing our minds and leading us to clear logical decisions in order to smooth out our way. I would like to add that I was most captured by the end of the book in which the idea of religious freedom was clearly emphasized.*

As we prepare to celebrate the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus-Christ, who came to dispel the power of sin, death and darkness, we wish to thank you for your prayers and support. We also trust that you will still see your way open to keep supporting our various projects in the new year, in particular the editing work that still needs to be done on our translation of the New Testament in modern Armenian.

Merry Christmas to all of you!

Rev. Eric Kayayan

On behalf of the committee of Christians for Armenia



The basilica of Vézelay in Burgundy was built during the 12th century



In the series of sculptures of the main tympan, Armenians are recognizable by their typical shoes.

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