

February, 2007

Dear Friends,

VARTANANK, or THE VARTANIANS!

Each February, Armenians all over the world remember and commemorate one of the most glorious epics of our national history, which occurred in the year of the Lord 451.

Some 150 years earlier the Armenian nation had been the first to accept the Christian faith and been converted from paganism to Jesus Christ. This did not happen without cost, bitter struggles and many national sacrifices, for the neighboring Persia —pagan, follower of the Mazean religion— was not only trying to dominate Armenia politically but also to bring it back to its own paganism!

The resistance of the Armenians was glorious yet it also meant martyrdom. In this year 451 the Armenian king, seconded by the Head of the Church and by his most famous general, Vartan Mamigonian, gave to Hazgerd 2, the Persian emperor, a categorical NO to reconverting to paganism. One of the most famous words of Vartan on this occasion was: YOUR SWORD OUR THROATS! We will not give up our faith! This led finally to the battle of Avarair, where the Armenian army of 60,000 faced the triple military force of the Persians. Militarily, the issue was a catastrophe. Vartan and more than 1,066 of his valiant soldiers fell on the ground. However, the moral victory was overwhelmingly total. Hazgerd the Persian was finally almost forced to recognize the moral courage, determination, and spiritual invincibility of the small Armenian nation.

In passing only, let me remind that the year 451 was also one of one of the most important dates in the history of the Christian Church with the paramount importance of the adherence to the orthodox doctrine of the Divinity of Christ, equal to the Father and to the Holy Spirit. Armenians had been hindered from attending the Chalcedon Synod and therefore were not in position to subscribe to this Christological dogma; up to this day, the Armenian Church remained what theologically we call monophysites, which means one nature of Christ.

Naturally, Armenians are proud of this most glorious epic in their national history. What is the present situation of the Armenian Church? Its greatest weakness is not merely its weak and unsatisfactory Christology, but also its rigid and sterile traditionalism, invoking a glorious past, yet lacking any relevant spiritual force.

Our friend Vachagan Frangian, one of our collaborators in Armenia, writes how difficult is to approach members of the Armenian Church to evangelize, as they are under the spiritual and ecclesiastical threat of the Official Church.

We therefore cannot expect many immediate marvelous results from his evangelistic ministry, although we do not give up hope, for the Holy Spirit remains active even in such unfavorable external conditions.

Our broadcast ministry gives to it a most encouraging and hopeful evidence. The letters we receive witness to the effectiveness of the preached Word and the internal and efficient operations of the Holy Spirit. At times the letters expressing their gratitude for what they receive from the messages of *Reformed Faith and Life* are like eloquent pieces of literature; or I may even call them answers to a non-organized Biblical Correspondence course. They witness to the Communion of the Saints, even if the visible Reformed Church has not yet been appearing.

We covet your prayers and support for such a ministry. Our ambition is not, has never been, to assure an easy success. Success is not the criterion of truth. Our ambition is to remain faithful to the Word given once for all. Our listeners, men and women, respond to it enthusiastically.

Allow me to mention a sad matter toward which any reformed believer will not remain indifferent. One is the paramount success of Pentecostals whose superficial spirituality I am afraid at times is a mere caricature of that engendered by the Spirit.

Another distressing fact is the so-called philanthropic activities in Armenia by liberal Protestants. They distribute bread and soup to poor people —an act which must naturally not be neglected — yet seem not to have the slightest idea —or conviction— that man shall not live by bread alone. I read much publicity and self congratulating reports from those liberal organizations. One of them, French-Armenian, does a lot of good works thanks to the generosity of French Armenians and French Protestants and Roman-Catholics. But I wonder if that organization also had to preach the Gospel according to the Gospel — merely according to good works— whether any French Armenian or French friend of Armenia, would consent to give to this organization a single penny! I doubt it.

Here is our plight, and our main purpose: to preach faithfully the Gospel as we have received it from the Bible and the Reformation. We are confident that the sown grain will fructify.

Thank you for your support.

Yours in His fellowship,

A.R.Kayayan

P.S. Please take note of our new postal address:

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**We are updating our website. The address is:
www.christiansforarmenia.org**