

Born with a Purpose

The Rushdoony Family Legacy

By

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Dedicated to my grandfather.

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Chapter One

My seventieth birthday has come and gone as has the second birthday of my great-granddaughter Scarlet. Sitting here with her on my lap the stories my grandfather told me when I sat at his knee have become more and more important. I have come to treasure these stories and want Scarlet to know the importance of her family (those who came before her) and the perilous journey they traveled to come to America.

I come from a family of greatness, of men and women who gave up all they had, even their lives, to protect their freedom to worship our Lord Jesus Christ. They were men descended from kings who worshipped but one King, the Lord God Jehovah. They were men who lived in turbulent and violent times who found their peace in God and His Word. They were men forbidden to carry or own a Bible who memorized God's Word and held it in their hearts. They were men trained by their families to live their lives for God. They were refugees who fled their homeland because life there as Christians was no longer possible. They were much like the Christians now fleeing ISIS and those now being killed in other Muslim countries.

I am the eldest daughter of Rousas John Rushdoony and the granddaughter of Yeghiazar Kachig Rushdoony. These two dedicated men of God and their forbearers are my heritage, my history, and their faith is my hope for the future.

My grandfather Yeghiazar Kachig Rushdoony was one of the greatest men I have ever known. He was a man of peace and of great love for his God, his family, and the two nations that he called home, Armenia and America. As a pastor to hundreds of immigrants in four churches, he was an anchor for many who escaped the Ottoman Empire (modern Turkey) with only their lives and the hope that others too had found refuge in America. My grandfather lost virtually everything when he fled his homeland of Armenia just ahead of the Muslim Turkish army who wished to kill him, along with all Christian Armenians. In fleeing, he protected his unborn child, my father who his wife Vartanoush carried: the life he believed would be greatly used of God. God spared Yeghiazar's life so many times he was convinced it was for an important purpose and committed his unborn child to God and His use.

My grandfather's Armenia was a beautiful country of mountains and valleys, of beautiful lakes, and of vineyards and orchards south of Mount Ararat where, millennia before, the ark Noah built had landed. My grandfather spoke of being taken on a pilgrimage and not only of seeing a piece of the ark in a monastery at the foot of the mountain, but also of climbing the mountain with his father and seeing the ark himself. Armenia has another special designation: it was the first country to declare Christianity as its state religion in about 301 A.D.

My grandfather's name changed with the circumstances of his life. He was born Yeghiazar Kachigian to Kachador (Kachig for short) and Gulaizar (Manougian) on June 13, 1881, in the Rushdoonik (a small province governed by the Rushdoonys) in their ancestral village of Nor Kugh ("Nor Kugh" means "new village," although it was over two thousand years old) in the Kavash district southwest of Lake Van, in the state of Van, in Turkish Armenia (Ottoman Empire). Yeghiazar means "God has helped"; "Kachig" means "cross, or belonging to the cross."

Most of the village was made up of Rushdoonys, Yeghiazar's extended family. To distinguish the families, individuals took their father's first name and added "ian" (which means "son of") to it to form their village surname. Yeghiazar ("Eliezar" in English, though he never went by that), as "the son of Kachig" therefore went by Kachigian. Yeghiazar described his village as a "panorama; the high mountains, valleys, and the azure Lake Van made it one of the most beautiful spots on earth. Our family has been native of the village from immemorial time. All have been farmers. All have been white skinned, not dark, and some blond."¹ This village is mentioned more than once in Armenian history in the period of the Arabian invasion of Armenia in the eighth and ninth centuries A.D.

Yeghiazar grew up in a time of trouble not unlike that of the Middle East of today. Most of the Turkish people who lived around him were Muslim, and often there was violence toward the Christian Armenians. His father, Kachig, was a priest in the Armenian Apostolic church who was blinded with the butt of a gun handle for preaching his Christian faith. Kachig had already memorized the church's liturgy, and with Yeghiazar's help, began memorizing the Bible so that he could continue to preach. Later he was killed for his "infraction" of preaching God's Word. Yeghiazar's family had a Christian history that dated back to the year 320 A.D., over sixteen hundred years. Before that, in the time of Isaiah and the Assyrian Empire, they were the royal dynasty of Urartu. (The kingdom of Ararat is referred to alternatively as Ararat or Armenia in the Old Testament.)

Yeghiazar's mother, Gulaizar Manougian, was from the neighboring village Paklner. She was nicknamed "Bozaghjig," which means "blond girl." Her brothers and mother were also blond. Gulaizar's family was also over two thousand years old, and her brother was their village priest. Yeghiazar was fair like his mother and had blue-green eyes. Gulaizar died soon after her husband was blinded (she died of a broken heart, according to Yeghiazar), and Yeghiazar's sister Hasmig (Jasmine) died soon after that from a lack of milk, although an aunt had tried to feed and care for her. Yeghiazar noted he remembered little of his mother, and all he remembered of his sister was that she was a happy child with blond curls. He was very fond of Hasmig, whom he called "Hudo" which means joy.

Yeghiazar was a very intelligent boy and, like his father and grandfather, had an exceptional memory. When he was five, he was already a shepherd who helped watch the village sheep. He named them all, remembering and calling each by name. He played in the family cemetery where he memorized the names on the tombstones going back hundreds of years. Yeghiazar was not a physically strong boy, but he was very strong in his faith. He helped and guided his blind father to and from church several times a day. Decades later, Yeghiazar could still recite the liturgy by heart. His grandfather Rev. Ghazar Der Gularian was a priest who had served in Constantinople and was a member of the old aristocracy, or old royal family. (Ghazar was by some accounts 7'2" tall and wore a tall priest's hat; he is said to have looked like a giant walking among his much-shorter, fellow Armenians.) Several kings of Armenia were represented in his bloodlines.

Yeghiazar's grandfather taught him until the village opened a school. Yeghiazar was taught from the Bible and other prayer books, but Yeghiazar wanted to learn even more than the village could teach him. He loved learning so that after his mother, father, little sister, and grandfather

all died, his aunt took him to a Christian boys' school in the city of Van, Armenia. He was only at the school a few months when the Turkish Muslims came to his school to kill the Christian boys. They killed Yeghiazar's friend Digin, and Yeghiazar had to run and hide. It took him three days to find Digin's mother and sister, during which time he ate rose petals for food. God and his faith helped him survive.

Yeghiazar was taken to a Protestant mission orphanage where Digin's mother was the cook. The orphanage was started by an American Presbyterian missionary named Dr. George Raynolds. At the orphanage Yeghiazar's name was transliterated into English. He did not want to lose his connection to his Rushdoony heritage, so he took the clan name as his last name and kept his father's name as his middle name. Thus, he became Yeghiazar Kachig (or Kachador) Rushdoony. The spelling of Rushdoony was a transliteration of the Armenian name by American missionaries. The ancestral name is translated in modern history books as "Rustuni," "Rushtooni," or the like. The orphanage had five hundred orphans in it, three hundred boys and two hundred girls, who had also lost their families to the reoccurring violence against Christians. Yeghiazar was put in charge of forty boys, even though he was only eleven or twelve, and they all became as a new family, brothers, to one another.

The orphanage also had a school. Yeghiazar was given a test to see what grade he should be in. The school said he needed seven more years of academics to graduate upper high school, but Yeghiazar worked very hard and finished in two and a half years. Besides his studies, he had to carry water from a well and do chores in the garden. While in school, the students were vaccinated for smallpox. Many of the students became sick; Yeghiazar and another student were the sickest. The other student died, but God again spared Yeghiazar's life.



Yeghiazar Rushdoony is in the second row from the top second from the right.

Mr. & Mrs Raynolds are in the bottom row center

Spridon Zhamgotchian Vartanoush's cousin is just above Dr. Raynalds

After Yeghiazar finished at the orphanage school, he went to a village close to his own to start a new school for the local children. There wasn't much room for the 125 students in the school, and it became overcrowded. Yeghiazar had to use the chicken coop for a classroom. He said the boys would burst out in laughter when, as they were reciting their lessons, they had to compete with the cackling chickens laying their eggs.

Yeghiazar also worked as an itinerant preacher traveling from village to village to preach. One day, Yeghiazar traveled with the sexton of the Nareg village church and came upon an armed Muslim Kurd riding a mule, who forced them to walk ahead of him. They knew he intended to eventually kill them and quickly hatched several plans of escape which failed. Yeghiazar stated in one of his notes, "The Kurd drove his mule and stood over me by cursing made me to hurry. Now it was quite clear, no way to escape, the sun was about to set, we began to go down in the valley of death. With a short prayer I made ready myself for death. The sexton was trembling. While we were descending in the valley, some mounted Kurds with their wives met us. According to the oriental custom, they saluted each other and were engaged in conversation. I told the sexton, 'This Kurd, our enemy, cannot dishonor the others by cutting their conversation. It is time for us by hiding ourselves behind rocks to disappear.'" They snuck away as the Kurds talked, slowly walking away behind the rocks until they were a distance from the Kurds. When the mounted Kurds finally left, "our enemy began in a crazy way to seek us." The Kurd could not find them and decided not to go after them. In this way they were kept safe and returned to their village, exhausted but alive. Yeghiazar's life was, once more, spared.