KEEPING CHURCH OPTIONS OPEN

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Category: Did You Know?

In the mid-13th century the Armenian Church entered into discussions with the Greek Orthodox patriarch in Constantinople in order to build an alliance and gain protection in the event of attack by the Mongols. The Armenians also opened negotiations with the Vatican, signalling their willingness to declare that they were in agreement with the papacy's interpretation of the process of the Holy Spirit—a topic that had caused much friction. Just as a religious agreement seemed a certainty, the sands shifted: the Great Khan Guyug died in 1248. As a result there was a prolonged struggle for the leadership of the Mongols. As the process played out, the rulers of Cilician Armenia and Byzantium received assurances that no Mongol attack was imminent. The Mongol envoy to Constantinople was also bribed to discourage a Mongol attack on Asia Minor. Confident of their safety, the Armenian Church lost interest in signing agreements which would have led the Greek Orthodox or the Roman Catholic Churches to dominate it.

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