

HISTORY IS STILL SPEAKING by Carl McMurray

On January 23, 1899, in Sabon-Lez-Metz (Lorraine) was born to a managing railway clerk, H. Godwin Grimm. Five of his ancestors had given their lives for the gospel and his father had just the year before his birth been appointed an elder of the last small congregation of the Alsace-Lorraine church of Christ. At the age of 58, in January of 1957, brother Grimm penned an article that today covers approximately 19 pages of single spaced type titled, "The Story of the Churches of Christ in Central Europe."

It is a moving history of our brethren in Europe beginning around the date of 1052 up until that present time. He gives the perspective of a New Testament Christian, to historic events and men that are merely European historic figures to most of us. I'm speaking of Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli and of Calvinism, Lutheranism, as well as Catholicism. Even more touching, I believe, is that he gives forth the viewpoint of one whose own fathers bled and burned as they came in contact with the above opposing forces to pure New Testament Christianity.

Two things especially struck me about his history that I wanted to share. One was reading about all those in Poland, Moravia, Bosnia, Lithuania, Prussia, Germany, Russia, Bulgaria, and Switzerland who would accept no name but "Christian" and no description save, churches of Christ. They resisted denominational division and stood four square on the Bible as God's inspired word. They taught baptism as a burial into Christ for the remission of sins and they remembered him in the Lord's Supper every first day. Over 500,000 strong at one point – and today they are gone. Their churches were destroyed by brutal persecution from Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, Russian Czars, Nazi's and Communists. H. Godwin Grimm saw much of this first-hand. Those who think light and darkness can dwell together in peace are deceiving themselves.

Secondly, I had to ask myself ... "How did brother Grimm remain faithfully standing for the truth through those troubled years?" I think perhaps part of the answer is found in the following sad paragraph where he remembers the church of his youth, as he was 15 years old. He writes:

"In 1914 we numbered only one church with twenty-eight baptized numbers of my Alsatian homeland. But these last true faithfuls of the old-time religion continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. Every Lord's day found them in the old mansion of the ancestors in the Valley of St. Gregory, to worship God, by comforting themselves and edifying one another by Bible study, song, and prayer, breaking the bread and taking the cup of the New Covenant in remembrance of the Savior.

It was customary for everybody to sit after the evening service around the fire in our parlor and sing the songs of Zion. We could each choose a hymn or two, and this singing in the twilight held a warm place in my heart for all the years. Such a homely hour after worship may not appeal to folk in these modern days, but I would like them to know that since I have reached manhood, I have thanked God thousands of times for the training I received as a boy among – as I believe with much regret – that last Christians of Central Europe."

When next the feelings of boredom rise up in you at the announcement of a worship service, a singing or an opportunity to fellowship with saints, I hope you will think of H. Godwin Grimm. I will.