

PREFACE

THE ACCOUNTS in this booklet are a collection of true stories relating to earlier days of the Apostolic Christian Church. Some of these accounts have existed for generations and have been handed down since 1840 via word of mouth. Others took place during the twentieth century. Many of these accounts were collected and written for the Heritage of Faith¹ church history course in an attempt to preserve the record of the staunch faith of Apostolic Christian believers. The examples of faith illustrate both courage and devotion, and offer much inspiration for today's believers.

As a matter of clarification, the three groups referred to in these accounts all have roots in the faith which was ignited by Samuel Froehlich in Switzerland in 1832. The Evangelical Baptists of Switzerland and Germany, the Nazareans² of Eastern Europe (including the Ukraine), and the Apostolic Christians of America all originate from the same group of believers who embraced the Froehlich doctrine.

The governments of the countries in Europe have held differing views on religion over the decades. Some governments, such as Switzerland's during Froehlich's time, recognized the Christian religion. But because church and state were one, these governments enforced the state church's doctrine on its citizens, insisting that everyone belong to the state church. Other governments, particularly the Communist regimes, refused to recognize any form of Christianity or God, and would deny our brethren the privilege of worshipping at all. It is interesting to note that both

types of governments persecuted the true believer, and the treatment could be as severe under a state church government as an atheistic one.

Please be aware that although most of the stories are for family reading, the content of a few stories are quite graphic and may not be appropriate for young children, especially the accounts giving details of our brothers' wartime imprisonments. Parents may want to first read through these accounts to determine what ages they are appropriate for.

The material has been researched and checked for authenticity and accuracy, and much care has been taken to find and use the most credible information possible. Please note, however, that many of these accounts have been passed down over the years by word of mouth, which can lead to some variation and potential error. If there are inconsistencies found, please contact the address on the title page, and any feedback will be reviewed.

You may notice a variation in the writing style of the different stories, and may also wonder about some awkwardness in sentence structure. This is due to an attempt to keep the meaning intact while translating accounts from one language to another. This presentation is not intended to be a professional document, but rather a glimpse into the lives of our forefathers to reveal the victories of their staunch faith. The facts speak for themselves.

Contributors and writers of the Stories of Faith and Courage include Mike Bauman of Mansfield OH, Kurt & Jane Ehnle of Edelstein IL, John Hartter of Sabetha KS, Perry Klopfenstein of Gridley IL, David & Eva Rocke of Eureka IL, Endre Toth of Warren OH, several brethren from Eastern Europe, and numerous others. Cover and text were designed by Chad Kellenberger of Elgin IL, and others proofread and formatted the material. May God bless each one who gave of their time and talents to make the first volume of this booklet possible.

The authors would welcome additional accounts to be added to this collection. If anyone has true accounts of examples of faith and courage that could be considered for inclusion in another volume, please contact curricularesources@juno.com or call 309-249-6281. As more accounts are readied, plans are being made for a second volume.

God bless you as you contemplate the faith and courage of the forefathers of the Apostolic Christian faith.

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1 *The Stories of Faith and Courage* booklet is a result of research being done for the *Heritage of Faith* course, which is an overview of Christian history from an Anabaptist perspective, with an emphasis on the history of the Apostolic Christian Church. Its ten units begin at the time of Christ and proceed through the early Apostolic age, the Reformation and Anabaptist eras, through Samuel Froehlich's beginning of the Apostolic Christian Church in Switzerland and its spread into Eastern Europe (*Stories of Faith and Courage* booklet used here as a reference), and into America up to the present. Also included are unit studies of *How the Bible Came to Be* and the *Zion's Harp* hymnal. The *Heritage of Faith* course has been developed by the Education Resources Service and has been reviewed by the Elder Education Committee of the Apostolic Christian Church. The course is a work in progress, and the current version is available by contacting the publisher address on the inside of this booklet.

2 Not to be confused with the Church of the Nazarene, a well known denomination in America today.

A FAITH WORTH LIVING FOR and DYING FOR

Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

MATTHEW 10:22

REQUIRED MILITARY SERVICE in old Austria-Hungary became a very serious matter for our brethren. The emperor, Franz Joseph, refused to recognize their convictions and did not allow the Nazarean believers to serve as noncombatants in the army. It is noteworthy how many young brothers stood firm in their beliefs. Many were imprisoned, tortured, or even put to death. Two such accounts were preserved in an August 1914 entry in the diary of a chaplain. This minister of the Reformed Church, Sándor Csikesz, served as chaplain in the Hungarian army around World War I. Here is the vivid testimony in his own words.

The Strong Faith of Two Nazarean Believers

"I have kept my two most difficult assignments to the very last. No one [should] dare to challenge the members of this sect. My experiences were verified by facts while ministering as chaplain on the battlefields. On two occasions I had such dreadful encounters out there on the warfront, to accompany a man, a sectarian of the Nazarean faith, on his final walk. [Each was] sentenced to death for his faith and religious conviction, for he would not bear arms. There were no such rules in those days that this kind [those who resist bearing arms] should be assigned to dig trenches on the front lines where the danger is the greatest.

"I explained to one that mending barbed wire barriers on the fields served the same means as the use of firearms, for here too, many human lives would be maimed. He admitted this as he wept in great

anguish, and was just about to return to the tribunal to relent on his faith. But he reconsidered, and would not give in.

"As he was about to be shot, he refused to be blindfolded. Calmly and self-assuredly looking into the gun barrels, and with a low voice he began to sing, 'When strikes the hour, oh when will I be there? Home, O' sweet home.' So spellbound and captivated were the soldiers by the calmness of this man facing death, that a second command to fire had to be given.

"The other refused every reasoning and persuasion. He asked that we spend the night in his death cell and just talk about the blessed LORD Jesus Christ. It was my most unforgettable night! The next morning, out there at the edge of a freshly dug grave he knelt. This simple farmhand from the prairies of Csokonicok with touching words prayed for us and for his persecutors. I have never heard a testimony spoken with such deep conviction of faith from such a plain, simple person. I had to believe his words. By giving up his life, he gave evidence of his faith! Let no one dare to face up to or challenge these sectarians, who with their strong faith and firm stand on the truth are ready to defend it by sacrificing their lives, and in their dying moments still pray for their enemies.

"Jesus looks upon you. Be diligent, hold fast to your faith, and He will stand beside you!"