

Simon, Ernst Bruno (1903–1998)

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Ernst Bruno Simon was a pastor, missionary, and Bible translator.

Early Life and Education

Ernst Bruno Simon was born in Chemnitz on July 15, 1903. His parents were Protestant Christians although they did not regularly attend a particular church.¹ Simon found employment as an agricultural student in Lauterbach near Marienberg/Erzgebirge.

It was during this time that he became an Adventist. Simon got baptized in Chemnitz and immediately began working as a colporteur.² Subsequently, from 1922 to 1926, Simon studied at the Mission Seminary in Friedensau.³ In the course of his studies there, he got interested in languages since his linguistic talent was already evident.

Missionary

In 1926, Simon was sent to the Middle East as a missionary to work among Muslims in Palestine.⁴ In 1927, during his language studies in Cairo, Simon was married to Hildegard Schädlich, the daughter of an Evangelical Lutheran pastor. After his language studies in Cairo, the Simons worked, from 1928 onwards, in Palestine in the area of Jerusalem, Taibe, Ramallah and Bethlehem, especially among the Arab, but also the Jewish population.



Simon Ernst

Photo courtesy of the European Adventist Archives in Friedensau.

Baptismal ceremonies at the Jordan River were among the highlights of his work.

Pastor, Soldier and Translator

In 1933, Simon and his family went on furlough to Germany. However, at the end of the furlough, Simon could not return to his mission area due to political circumstances. In the following years, he worked as a pastor in Chemnitz, Berlin, Cottbus and Wittenberg.⁵

In 1939, Simon was conscripted into the military and worked as an interpreter and paramedic. After the war, Simon went back to pastoring a congregation in Wittenberg as well as in Senftenberg. In 1955 he moved to West Germany and settled in Wiesbaden, where he found a job as a language teacher in the U.S. Army European Command in Frankfurt.

Around 1965 to 1970, Simon worked as a pastor in Hanau. He probably retired in 1970 and then began a Bible translation project into German. He completed his translation around 1976 and published an independent translation of the original biblical text under the motto of “keeping the Holy Scriptures pure”, which is similar in word fidelity and syntax to the so-called Elberfelder translation. The goal of his translation was to create a text that comes as close as possible to the original text. Minor notes and explanations were intended as reading aids. The translation of the Simon Bible was only used in Adventist circles,⁶ but it never became an official translation of the Seventh-day Adventists.

Later Life and Contribution

In April 1986, Simon's wife Hildegard died and was buried in Darmstadt-Eberstadt. Simon was remarried to Charlotte Ackermann, and from 1992 onwards, both lived in the retirement home in Friedensau, Germany. Simon spent the rest of his life in Friedensau until he died on October 21, 1998.⁷

Ernst Bruno Simon served the Adventist Church as pastor in Germany and missionary in the Middle East. His work among Arabs contributed to the overall goal of establishing Adventism among Muslims and Jews in the Palestine and Jerusalem areas. Simon's most notable contribution was his attempt to create a Bible translation that both came close to the original text and reflected Adventist doctrinal concerns. The “Simon Bible” became known as a translation that was close to the original Hebrew and Greek text. Moreover, Simon was probably one of the very few Bible translators who created a complete Bible translation in Adventist history.

SOURCES

Heinz, Daniel. “Missionar Ernst Simon.” *Adventecho* March 3, 1999.

Heinz, Daniel. “Simon, Bruno Ernst.” *Magdeburger Biographische Lexikon* [Magdeburg Biographical Lexicon]. Accessed June 1, 2020, <http://www15.ovgu.de/mbl/Biografien/0188.htm>.

NOTES

1. Daniel Heinz, "Missionar Ernst Simon," *Adventecho* March 3, 1999, 3.
2. Ibid.
3. Daniel Heinz, "Simon, Bruno Ernst," *Magdeburger Biographische Lexikon* [Magdeburg Biographical Lexicon], accessed June 1, 2020, <http://www15.ovgu.de/mbl/Biografien/0188.htm>
4. Heinz, "Missionar Ernst Simon," 3.
5. Ibid.
6. Heinz, "Simon, Bruno Ernst," *Magdeburger Biographische Lexikon*.
7. Ibid.; Heinz, "Missionar Ernst Simon," 3.

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