

Erzberger, Heinrich (1884–1953)

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Heinrich Erzberger was a Bible worker, pastor, missionary, and educator in Germany, Switzerland, and the Middle East.

Early Life and Education

Heinrich Erzberger was born on November 3, 1884, to Jakob and Marie Erzberger-Yersin in Basel, Switzerland. Heinrich's father, Jakob, was a pastor and pioneer Adventist worker in Switzerland and Germany, which meant the family was always on the move. As a result, young Heinrich did not stay in one place for long during his childhood. He attended several schools in Zürich, Biel, and Pieterlen (where his mother served as the matron for the primary school).¹ In May 1904, Heinrich enrolled as a student in the Mission Seminary at Friedensau in Germany.

Pastor and Missionary

After studying for about two years, around 1906, Erzberger began working as a Bible worker in East Germany.² In 1910, Erzberger was ordained to the Gospel ministry.³ From 1911 onwards, he proceeded to work in Bavaria.⁴ On August 29, 1912, he was married to Louise Zange in Munich.⁵ The young couple went to serve in Salzburg and later in Hamburg, where they attended the Colonial Institute in preparation for missionary work.⁶

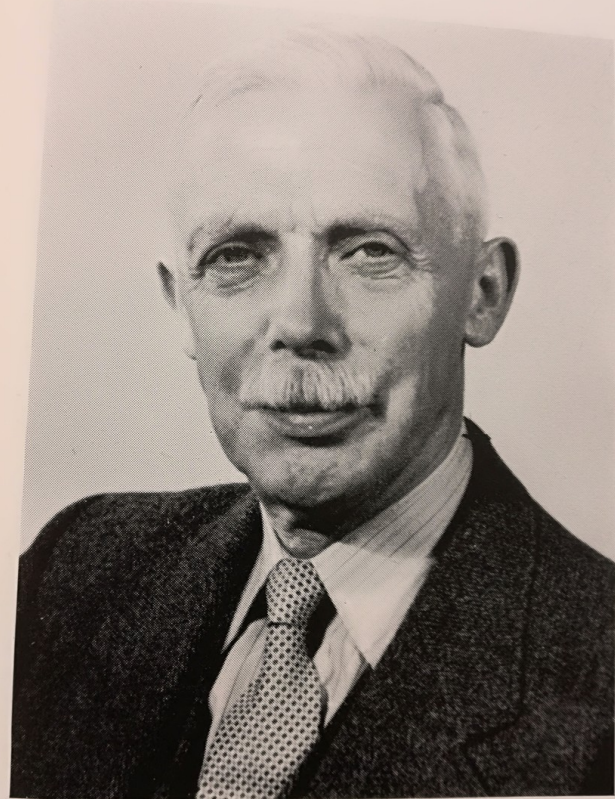
In September 1913, the Erzbergers were sent to Beirut under the Syrian Mission, where they joined another missionary couple, Walter and Frieda Ising.⁷ In 1914, after Ising left to lead the Mission in Lower Egypt, Erzberger became the superintendent of the Syrian Mission, overseeing the territories in Syria, Mesopotamia, and Arabia.⁸ When World War I broke out, the couple stayed in Beirut. They were forced to spend a few months in Egypt, then returned to Lebanon, and later went to Jerusalem, where they worked from 1915 to 1917.⁹

In 1917, Erzberger responded to a call to go to Constantinople to succeed Emil Frauchiger (who had just been transferred to Czecho-Slovakia) as head of the Levant Union Mission, a position which he held until 1923.¹⁰ The mission field of Constantinople was very difficult due to the strong presence of Islam and the political turmoil of that time. There was persecution mainly of Armenians, with massacres and banishment of Christians.¹¹ Still, Erzberger was instrumental in fostering a number of conversions to Christ.¹² Moreover, a school (and orphanage) was built as well as a publishing plant to provide literature for colporteurs to use.¹³

Teacher, Death

In 1924, the Erzbergers returned to Europe. At first, Erzberger worked as a pastor in the German city of Mulhouse (Alsace). Later on, he was called to minister in the Waldensian valleys in Italy, and finally in Basel, Switzerland.¹⁴

From 1926 to 1939, Erzberger trained pastors and missionaries in the classroom. In 1926, he moved to Germany with his family to serve as a Bible teacher at the Marienhöhe Seminary. From 1928 to 1935, he became the director of the Mission Seminary in Neandertal. Then, from 1935 to 1939, he worked as the principal of the Marienhöhe Seminary.¹⁵



Heinrich Erzberger

Photo courtesy of the Historical Archives of Seventh-day Adventists in Europe, Friedensau.

When World War II came, Erzberger served as pastor and district elder (for eight years) in Lindau on Lake Constance, where he, as a Swiss citizen, had the opportunity to represent other pastors in the whole region who had gone to war.

In 1945 and 1946, while still living in Lindau, Erzberger entered into social and humanitarian work, assisting the Adventist Church in offering relief services and distributing food and clothing among refugees.¹⁶

The year 1947 brought Erzberger and Louise back to Switzerland as Erzberger took up ministerial responsibilities in Bern.¹⁷ At the same time, he was in charge of the Religious Liberty and Education departments of the German-Swiss Conference. He apparently held this position until his death on August 31, 1953. He was 69 years old!¹⁸

Contribution

Heinrich Erzberger devoted 47 years of his life to the service of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. As a Bible worker, evangelist, and pastor, he was instrumental in the conversion of souls to Christ in Germany and Switzerland. As a missionary and administrator, he contributed to the growth of Adventism in the Middle East. As a teacher, educator, and principal, Erzberger played a key role in the training of pastors and missionaries. As a relief worker in the wake of World War II, Erzberger assisted the Adventist Church in bringing back lost hope and livelihood to refugees.

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NOTES

1. Robert Gerber, "Heinrich Erzberger," *Adventecho* (November 1953): 14.?
2. His name appears in the *Yearbook* from 1907 onwards: "East German Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington D. C.: Review and Herald, 1907), 80.?
3. Ludwig R. Conradi, "Winter Conferences in Germany," *ARH*, March 10, 1910, 12.?
4. "Bavarian Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington D. C.: Review and Herald, 1912), 122.?
5. Geber, "Heinrich Erzberger," 14.?
6. *Ibid.*?
7. W. A. Spicier, "To the Field in 1913," *ARH*, January 1, 1914, 8.?
8. Editorial, *ARH*, April 30, 1914, 24.?
9. Geber, "Heinrich Erzberger," 14.?

10. [Ibid.?](#)
11. Arthur S. Maxwell, "European Division Council," *ARH*, August 23, 1923, 4.?
12. Ludwig R. Conradi, "The European Division," *ARH*, May 6, 1920, 20; Editorial, *ARH*, August 5, 1920, 32; William A. Spicier, "Progress in Europe," *ARH*, August 30, 1923, 1.?
13. Guy Dail, "The Levant Union Mission," *ARH*, October 21, 1920, 17; W. E. Read, "Our Orphanage in the Near East," *ARH*, July 19, 1923, 8.?
14. Geber, "Heinrich Erzberger," 14.?
15. [Ibid.?](#)
16. W. E. Nelson, "Famine Relief Appeals," *ARH*, August 7, 1947, 16; W. E. Nelson, "Help Arrives...More is Needed," *Southern Tidings*, September 11, 1946, 1.?
17. Gerber, "Heinrich Erzberger," 14.?
18. German-Swiss Conference, *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington D. C.: Review and Herald, 1949), 224; "Necrology—1953," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington D. C.: Review and Herald, 1954), 361.?

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