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## Flammer, Ernst A. (1902–1997)

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Ernst A. Flammer was a pioneer missionary in Liberia as well as a pastor in Germany.

## Early Life and Education

Ernst A. Flammer was born in August 1902, in Tübingen, Germany, into a Protestant family. His parents were bakers. After young Ernst completed his primary and secondary education, he took up an apprenticeship in the bakery and confectionery profession in the town of Tuttlingen.

In 1922 he came to learn about the Adventists in the town where he worked. Baptized in 1923, he began training as a Bible worker and pastor at the mission school in Bad Aibling and later at Marienhöhe.<sup>1</sup> Then he attended the Berlitz language school in London to prepare for missionary work.<sup>2</sup>

## Mission Work

In 1924 the Northern European Division of Seventh-day Adventists, headquartered in England, sent three missionaries to Liberia to locate a suitable site to establish a mission. Ernst Flammer and Rudolf Helbig were sent from Germany, while Linford was sent from England.<sup>3</sup>

As soon as they arrived at Lower Buchanan in Grand Bassa County, they were directed to Hartfort and then on to Seahn. The group agreed on a definite portion of land at Seahn in Grand Bassa, and placed a pile of rocks as a marker on the land.<sup>4</sup>

In April 1927 Flammer and Helbig returned to Liberia to secure the land and begin organizing and building the first Seventh-day Adventist mission in Liberia. The services of two Liberians, Willie Helbig and Peter Simonego, were employed to assist in making negotiations.<sup>5</sup> The first Adventist mission station, Palmberg,<sup>6</sup> was opened in Seahn, Grand Bassa. Palmberg became the center of the Adventist work in South Liberia.

One year later, Flammer had to return home to Germany to treat a case of malaria. He married Johanna Pfälzner<sup>7</sup> and the couple decided to go to Liberia to continue the mission work together.

In 1929 a boarding school opened at the mission.<sup>8</sup> Flammer, who was the mission director, became the first principal of the school. Flammer and his missionary associates, R. Helbig and Karl F. Noltze, labored to train young people for gospel service. According to a report by Flammer, the Liberian government at that time did not educate young people en masse; hence "the responsibility of practically all school work in the land" rested "upon the shoulders of the various mission societies."<sup>9</sup> To the Adventist missionaries, this was a heavy burden for the mission, especially in view of the fact that there were no government grants.<sup>10</sup>

Flammer and Helbig continued working to expand the mission. They built housing for workers, a printing house, a dispensary headed by Helbig, a sick room, and more.<sup>11</sup> On April 30, 1930, just as Johanna Ernst returned to Germany due to severe illness, four Liberians were baptized in Seahn.<sup>12</sup>

Flammer carried out evangelistic meetings among the Bassa people. Studying the language, he soon was able to preach in the Bassa, and printed tracts in the Bassa language.<sup>13</sup>

In 1933 Flammer was ordained to the gospel ministry.<sup>14</sup> In 1935 Flammer was called to the mission field in East Africa, teaching in the mission station at Ikizu, Tangayika. This service was cut short at the beginning of the Second World War. In 1940 the Flammers were interned, then repatriated to Germany.

## Second World War, Later Life

After his internment, Flammer taught in a state school in Nürnberg, was conscripted as a soldier, and taken as a German prisoner of war. He was kept in the Fort Benjamin Harrison Prisoner of War camp in Indianapolis, Indiana, United States.<sup>15</sup> In 1947, Flammer was able to commence ministerial work with the Seventh-day Adventists in Germany under the Württemberg Conference.<sup>16</sup>

Until December 31, 1966, Flammer worked as a pastor in Tübingen, Mühlendorf, and Freudenstadt. From 1967 onwards, Flammer, together with his wife Johanna, lived in Tübingen for most of their retirement. Flammer often preached in nearby churches. In 1986 the Flammers moved to the Seniors' Home in Bad Aibling. There Johanna died. On August 31, 1997, Flammer died at age 95 in the Seniors' Home of Haus Wittelsbach, Bad Aibling.<sup>17</sup>

## Contribution

The work of Ernst A. Flammer as a pioneer missionary in Liberia remains evident even today. Liberia boasts more than 20,000 Adventists. While there had been other attempts to establish Adventism in Liberia, Flammer and his colleagues were the first to establish a permanent Adventist mission in that country. As an evangelist and pastor, Flammer played a key role in the establishment of the Adventist Church in that country. As a teacher and educator, Flammer contributed to the training of young Adventists who later became strongholds of the Adventist faith in Liberia.

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## NOTES

1. Kurt Löffler, "Missionar Ernst A. Flammer," *Adventecho*, August 1998, 35.?
2. Ibid.?
3. "35 Year in Liberia," *West African Advent Messenger*, April 1963, 1.?
4. Ibid.?
5. Ibid. These two introduced the missionaries to the District Commissioner of Grand Bassa County, the Honourable Joe Montgomery. Montgomery provided a place for the missionaries to lodge for three days, "as they negotiated for the property at Seahn, and discussed plans for the Mission they had come to establish."?
6. The name came from the many palm trees around the hill there.?
7. Löffler, "Missionar Ernst A. Flammer," 35.?
8. Ernst A. Flammer, "The Advent Movement in Liberia," *The Advent Survey*, January 1935, 5; Ernst A. Flammer, "Liberia, West Africa," *ARH*, July 8, 1937, 24.?
9. Ibid.?
10. Ibid. On the other hand, as Flammer wrote, it was an "opportunity and privilege to implant the Gospel seed in the hearts of the young. When one sees the wonderful transformation that takes place in the hearts and lives of so many young people."?
11. E. D. Dick, "Visiting Our Missions in West Africa," *The Advent Survey*, June 1933, 2.?
12. "35 Year in Liberia," 1; see also, Abiodun Adekunle Adesanya, "Adventist Mission History in Liberia, West Africa, 1927-1990," Research Paper, Friedensau Adventist University, February 2010.?
13. "35 Year in Liberia," 1.?
14. "News Notes," *Lake Union Herald*, December 12, 1944, 4. "From in and Out and Round About," *The Advent Survey*, September 1933, 8.?
15. John W. Howard, "Behind the Wires," *ARH*, April 3, 1947, 13.?
16. "Im Tätigen Ruhestand: Missionar Ernst Flammer Leben für die Mission," *Schwäbisches Tagblatt*, September 23, 1971; "Ein Leben für die Mission," *Schwarzwälder Bote*, September 23, 1971; "Wurtemberg Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (D.C.: Review and Herald, 1949), 90.?
- 17.

Löffler, "Missionar Ernst A. Flammer," 35.?

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