

attempt to do this (although some individual essays do move in that direction). There is no new generalization to put in place of the editors' opening sentence with which this review began. Rather, the collection represents some of the changes in perceptions of cultural worth which emerged in the 1990s and enacts some different forms of worship.

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THE POLITICS OF SCHOLARSHIP

S. REBENICH: *Theodor Mommsen und Adolf Harnack: Wissenschaft und Politik im Berlin des ausgehenden 19. Jahrhunderts: mit einem Anhang: Edition und Kommentierung des Briefwechsels*. Pp. xxii + 1018. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1997. Cased, DM 348. ISBN: 3-11-015079-4.

Adolf Harnack's appointment to a chair at the University of Berlin in 1888 and his election to the Prussian Academy two years later marked the beginning of a close personal friendship and a far-reaching scholarly collaboration between the young and highly controversial historian of early Christianity and the aged and universally admired (but widely disliked) historian of ancient Rome, Theodor Mommsen. Despite the evident differences in age, personality, politics, and religiosity between the two men, their amicable cooperation became ever deeper, broader, and more intimate until Mommsen's death in 1903, and it was Harnack whom friends and enemies alike regarded as the great man's scientific heir. The two scholars, bound by a profound commitment to the positivistic and historicist investigation of the past and by an inveterate allergy against Romantic or religious idealizations of antiquity and of Christianity, invested large amounts of their prestige, time, energy, and diplomatic skill in the organization of large-scale scientific projects directed towards providing the materials to permit an unprejudiced historical understanding of the decline of the Roman Empire and the rise of Christianity—most notably, the series of *Griechische Christliche Schriftsteller* which continues to survive, though not without difficulties, even today, and a *Prosopographia Imperii Romani saec. IV. V. VI* which, massively financed, inadequately theorized, and vastly premature, inevitably ran into ever increasing financial, conceptual, and personal difficulties, and eventually had to be finally abandoned in the 1920s.

Rebenich's massive study of this astonishingly fruitful personal and scholarly association, a *Habilitation* in ancient history at the University of Mannheim, is in fact two books for the price of four: on the one hand (pp. 575–998), an edition with lemmatic commentary of the surviving correspondence between Mommsen and Harnack, consisting of about 300 letters and postcards (a number of closely related letters to and by other correspondents are added to provide useful background and contextualization); and on the other (pp. 1–573), an extensive monographic treatment of some of the central issues and events touched upon in this correspondence, focusing especially upon certain aspects of the organization of large-scale research and of the relations between scholarship and politics in Berlin at the turn of the last century.

R.'s edition of the letters is marked by a meticulous and painstaking precision which neither Mommsen's notoriously illegible handwriting nor Harnack's idiosyncratic system of abbreviations has quite succeeded in frustrating and which provides un-failingly cautious, sensible, often admittedly hypothetical solutions for a myriad of

enigmatic expressions and allusions. The commentary is very full concerning the biographical, institutional, and political circumstances of the letters' composition, but noticeably rather less so regarding the actual scholarly issues which the correspondents ventilate, on which one occasionally misses surer guidance and more recent bibliography.

Regrettably, the editor's intense philological effort has been expended upon a correspondence which not even the most passionate votary of the history of scholarship would include among the masterpieces of scientific epistolary literature. Unlike other German scholarly correspondences of the same period which have been published recently (e.g. that of H. Diels, H. Usener, and E. Zeller, edited by D. Ehlers [Berlin, 1992]), the Mommsen/Harnack correspondence is almost entirely limited in its concerns by its very close attention to specific circumstances of a social, organizational, or scholarly nature: evidently, given the many differences between the two scholars, they chose to concentrate in their correspondence upon narrowly defined areas of mutual interest, leaving larger questions and possible divergences either unexpressed or confined to their frequent oral exchanges. That is why almost all the missives contain invitations, thanks for invitations or publications received, or extremely specific and detailed questions and answers arising from the scholarly work of the two correspondents—and most of them contain little or nothing else. Fewer than forty letters are longer than one page in length; only a very few move beyond the immediate circumstances to consider more general questions (so no. 49, Mommsen on *delatores* in the trials of Christians; no. 124, Harnack on the poet Theodor Storm; no. 129, Mommsen on the deficiencies of Leibniz's character). Few of the letters are quite as devoid of general interest as no. 15—a postcard from Harnack to Mommsen, dated 16 November 1890, and reading in its entirety, 'Nach dem fraglichen Buch [Rebenich notes: 'Es ist nicht deutlich, um welches Buch es sich hier handelt.'] habe ich bei mir gesucht u. glaube sagen zu dürfen, daß es nicht zu mir zurückgelangt ist. Aber bitte suchen Sie nicht weiter. Es wird sich schon finden, u. wenn nicht, ist es kein Unglück. Zum Signalelement desselben bemerke ich, daß es in schwarze Pappe mit schwarzem Leinwandrücken u. weißem Schild gebunden ist. Ich habe es übrigens nicht nötig. Ihr A. H.'—but few if any have an intrinsic interest and value sufficient fully to justify the editor's labors, or the reader's. Even the one pair of letters containing whimsical doggerel by Mommsen (nos. 140, 160) and another containing doggerel by Harnack (nos. 162, 266) are not enough to relieve the general aridity. Nowadays, most of the business transacted in these letters would be entrusted to the ephemeral media of telephones and electronic mail; just as one hopes that future historians of our scholarship (if there are any) will not take the trouble to prepare transcripts of the former and editions of the latter, but will concentrate upon documents of wider and more durable interest, so too one wonders whether the historical accident that, a century ago, such matters were written with ink on paper is reason enough for them now to be edited with such painstaking care and published at such considerable expense.

Upon the slender peg of this unexciting correspondence, R. has hung the rich panoply of a broadly envisioned and deeply learned account of *Wissenschaftspolitik* in Wilhelminian Germany. After a brief survey of the contemporary situation of the University of Berlin and the Prussian Academy and of the two correspondents, R. examines the intricate system of relations between the state and its professors, focusing upon the crucial functionary Friedrich Althoff and portraying convincingly the peculiarly productive mixture of mutual friendship, exploitation, distrust, and idealism that characterized the 'System Althoff'. There follow two lengthy chapters that examine issues raised by the correspondence: one on the 'Kirchenväterkommission' in

the Academy, with its large-scale projects, the *Griechische Christliche Schriftsteller* and the *Prosopographia*, and one on Mommsen's (and, to a lesser extent, Harnack's) enthusiastic political engagement in contemporary controversies. Upon the details of the financing and organization of these scholarly projects and upon the extent, intensity, and bitter disappointment of Mommsen's political activity R.'s archival explorations shed new light—after R.'s detailed, moving, indeed tragic account, it should never again be possible to dismiss Mommsen's politics as marginal.

In general, R.'s is a work of synthesis and compilation, striking more for its detailed archival work and its impressive, sometimes oppressive, elaboration of the secondary literature than for conceptual innovation or historiographical originality. R. scarcely hints at larger questions—the relation between theology and classics after their divorce at the end of the eighteenth century, the motives for and resistances against historicization and positivism, the rôle of the industrial and military models in the organization of large-scale research, the tensions between disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity, the competition for prestige and resources with the burgeoning natural sciences—and seems unfamiliar with recent work in the sociology of knowledge and the history of science. That Mommsen emerges as by far a richer, more substantial, more deeply conceived figure than Harnack may be due as much to the nature of the correspondence as to R.'s own tastes and competence; that the scholarship of the two tends to be overshadowed by their political and organizational activities is a perhaps inevitable, but certainly unfortunate, consequence of R.'s choice of approach. R.'s own apparently unquestioning adherence to the same positivism and historicism which Mommsen and Harnack were busily engaged in institutionalizing leads him to underestimate the sheer improbability of their undertaking and the fierce resistance they confronted inside and outside the academy. Whatever the institutional constraints a *Habilitation* involves, R.'s readers would have been better served by two separate publications—the correspondence in a scholarly journal, and a more comprehensive monograph on the relations between scholarship and political power in Wilhelminian Germany—as well as by more theoretically informed methodological reflection and greater concision.

Not all door-stoppers are heart-stoppers. There is much of value in this book, both for the history of our studies and, at least implicitly, for their current predicaments, but it is not for the faint-hearted or the casually interested. Sometimes, more is less.

Heidelberg-Chicago

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