

blending of classical and Arthurian heroes suggests that ‘classical presences’ were an eclectic amalgam of temporal notions rather than a coherent set of intellectual propositions. Even within the classical discourse, the system of equivalences is neither straightforward nor unambiguous. Soldier poets identified with both the Greeks and the Trojans, the Athenians at Marathon and the Spartans at Thermopylae, and Rome could stand for German ‘frightfulness’ as well as Allied valour.

Classical representations in British war poetry demonstrate the formative influence of the public schools which, as V. rightly notes, offered tuition in little else than classics. Notably the amalgamation of classicism, medievalism, ‘muscular Christianity’ and Englishness betrays its origin in the ethos of the public schools. Yet V.’s claim that the appropriation of classics was a ‘specifically British’ (p. 77) phenomenon does not stand scrutiny. On the contrary, classicism belonged to the intellectual baggage that the European elites carried with them to war – regardless of whether they had attended a public school, a *Gymnasium* or a *lycée*. To be sure, the transnational or pan-European character of the classical tradition disintegrated in the new age of total war.

After reading V.’s in-depth study of classical images and notations in British poetry of the Great War, the *Spectator* correspondence appears not bizarre but indicative of the frame of mind of men brought up on a diet of Homeric warriors and Latin declensions. To them, the purpose of translating Newbolt’s phrase into Latin at a time of war was utterly self-evident. V. is a professor of Latin and classics who has ventured into the increasingly interdisciplinary field of First World War studies. Her research produces further support for the position originally staked out by the cultural historian Jay Winter: that the Great War, the most ‘modern’ of wars, unleashed an avalanche of the traditional. British war poetry was saturated with allusions to ancient Greece and Rome. Some such reconfigurations are still recognisable to the modern-day reader, especially those that invoke the Trojan War or the battle of Thermopylae. However, other references are so subtle (such as imitations of metrical and lexical styles) that they have escaped most modern historians and literary critics, scholars to whom the ancient past is more often than not a ‘foreign country’.

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DEISSMANN

GERBER (A.) *Deissmann the Philologist*. (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche 171.) Pp. xxiv + 649, ills, maps. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010. Cased, €139.95, US\$217. ISBN: 978-3-11-022431-3. doi:10.1017/S0009840X11001971

G. has produced an extraordinarily learned and extensive biographical study of the life and work of Gustav Adolf Deissmann (1866–1937). It is a perfect example of well-researched *Werkbiographie* drawing on some 25 archives, personal letters, diary entries and conversations with Deissmann’s family members, particularly with the late son Gerhard Deissmann to whom the book is dedicated. G. introduces Deissmann’s manifold philological (Part 1), archaeological (Part 2) and ecumenical–political (Part 3) contributions and achievements, and convincingly argues that it

is high time for a rediscovery of this largely forgotten philologist and practical theologian.

Deissmann laid the foundations of the philological study of post-classical Greek and thus revolutionised the theological study of the New Testament; he contributed significantly to the archaeological excavations of ancient Ephesus; he was a key figure in the ecumenical movement and *Völkerverständigung* during and after the First World War; and he held eight honorary doctorates, and was nominated for the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1929 and 1930.

G. divides his work into the three parts mentioned above plus an extensive fourth part of appendices and addenda (258 pages compared with 377 pages of the actual study).

In Part 1 (chapters 1–3), G. demonstrates ‘that Deissmann was the first to apply systematically the inscriptions and papyri to contextualise and illuminate the nature of the Greek of the N[ew] T[estament]’. G.’s argument focusses mainly on Deissmann’s three groundbreaking books: *Bibelstudien*, *Neue Bibelstudien* and *Licht von Osten*. He shows how Deissmann, an ordained Lutheran pastor who worked as a vicar before he was appointed to a chair at the university of Heidelberg and later in Berlin, developed his philological expertise, starting with the analysis of the grammatical peculiarity of the formula *ἐν Χριστῷ*. Contrary to the widely accepted opinion that the Greek of the New Testament was not Greek in its own right, he concluded that its language was an intrinsic part of the broader *koinê*. This philological discovery led him to lexicographical and methodological ideas about the need to read the New Testament within the context of the everyday world, or ‘secular’ texts, as G. anachronistically calls them. His ambition was to compose an original lexicon of the New Testament that drew heavily on inscriptions and papyri. This life’s work he was never able to complete, although he collected more than 8,000 original references (which unfortunately were lost in the aftermath of the Second World War). In the concluding chapter of this essential first part of the book G. elaborates on the title of his study and suggests that Deissmann was the person who bridged the gulf between theological and dogmatic readings of the New Testament and the philological disdain in which it was held.

In this first part it becomes evident how closely connected the study of the Bible in Germany was with research undertaken in the English-speaking world, especially in Great Britain. For example, James Hope Moulton was a close friend, and Deissmann received his first honorary doctorate from the University of Aberdeen (in 1906). The history of German–English New Testament study is not just an interesting illustration of the pre-war academic climate; it is also important for understanding Deissmann’s later ecumenical and political efforts to promote international peace, as outlined in the third part.

1906 was also the year in which Deissmann undertook his first journey to Greece and the Middle East, which left an indelible impression on him. In the second part (chapters 4 and 5), G. explores Deissmann’s archaeological interests and contributions ‘and reveals how significant Deissmann’s role was in the revival of the archaeological work at Ephesus through the Austrian Archaeological Institute’ between 1926 and 1935. This is the shortest part of the book. Nevertheless, Deissmann’s archaeological work is the logical consequence of his plan for an original lexicon of the New Testament.

In the concluding third part (chapters 6–9) G. lucidly describes Deissmann’s political awakening, his involvement with and withdrawal from *Sozialdemokratie*, his friendship with Friedrich Naumann, his ambitions to improve and contribute to

Völkerverständigung, and how his 'political' engagement was always driven by his Christian faith in a utopian unification of all humankind. Chapter 7 is of particular relevance here. G. painstakingly analyses Deissmann's *Evangelischer Wochenbrief* and its English version *Protestant Newsletter*. The aim of these letters, written between 1914 and 1921, was 'to strengthen international Christian solidarity – not to cause political debate'. These letters were written with the American audience in mind but were also received by dignitaries in the United Kingdom like the Archbishop of Canterbury. These letters form the basis of Deissmann's later ecumenical engagement and illustrate the change in his view of politics: 'When the war threatened a European-wide breakdown in Christian solidarity, Deissmann's shift from social politics to the production of regular bulletins was a consistent extension of his innate humanitarianism'.

The last chapter, poignantly entitled 'From Zenith to Eclipse', lists some of the high points of Deissmann's life, such as the nominations for the Nobel Prize for Peace and his appointment as vice-chancellor (*Rektor*) of the University of Berlin, and discusses his forced retirement at the hands of the National Socialists. Deissmann witnessed, during the last year of his life, how the Nazis began to destroy all he had worked and stood for. '[T]his goes a long way', as G. concludes, 'to explain why some of his friends wrote that he had died of a broken heart'.

G., with this truly impressive biography, has collected an enormous amount of material and arranged it in a highly readable manner, illuminating the historical context without losing sight of the main topics. The only possible difficulty for the reader is that G. seems to assume a fluency in both English and German, because the majority of quotations essential to the book's argument are given in German only. Nevertheless, the book convincingly shows the consistency of Deissmann's life and work based on a life-long passion for philology and a theological commitment.

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