

Albrecht Gerber
Deissmann the Philologist

Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die
neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
und die Kunde der älteren Kirche

Herausgegeben von

James D. G. Dunn · Carl R. Holladay
Hermann Lichtenberger · Jens Schröter
Gregory E. Sterling · Michael Wolter

Band 171

De Gruyter

Albrecht Gerber

Deissmann the Philologist

De Gruyter

ISBN 978-3-11-022431-3
e-ISBN 978-3-11-022432-0
ISSN 0171-6441

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Gerber, Albrecht.

Deissmann the philologist / Albrecht Gerber.

p. cm. — (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche, ISSN 0171-6441 ; Bd. 171)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-3-11-022431-3 (hardcover : alk. paper)

1. Deissmann, Adolf, 1866–1937. I. Title.

BX563.Z8D454 2010

230'.41092—dc22

[B]

2009054045

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie;
detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

© 2010 Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin/New York

Printing: Hubert & Co. GmbH & Co. KG

∞ Printed on acid-free paper

Printed in Germany

www.degruyter.com

Dedicated to my dear friend
Gerhard Deissmann,
and to my darling wife
Marianne



Figure 1

Gustav Adolf Deissmann, bronze bust, March 1936 (See ch. 9.2, and Appendix 9, f)

List of figures

Figure 1:	Gustav Adolf Deissmann, bronze bust, March 1936 (Created by Gerhard Schliepstein (1886–1963). Held privately)	v
Figure 2:	Gustav Adolf Deissmann, <i>c.</i> 1895–8 (Used by permission of ZAW, Institut für Papyrologie, Heidelberg)	5
Figure 3:	Henriette Elisabeth Behn in 1891, aged 18 (Held privately)	37
Figure 4:	Gustav Adolf Deissmann in 1926 (Detail from Fig. 8. Used by permission of ÖAI)	125
Figure 5:	Deissmann's farewell letter to Henriette, 1906 and 1909 (held privately)	130
Figure 6:	Map of Deissmann's 1906 journey	134
Figure 7:	Map of Ephesus (From Wiplinger/ Wlach, 43, plate 52; used with publishers' permission)	176
Figure 8:	Diploma collage in honour of Deissmann's role in the Ephesus excavations (Used by permission of ÖAI)	179
Figure 9:	Deissmann at Ephesus (sometime between 1927–9) (From Wiplinger/ Wlach, 34, plate 42; used with publishers' permission)	182
Figure 10:	Detail of Fig. 9 (Used by permission from the publishers)	183
Figure 11:	Gustav Adolf Deissmann, portrait in oil, January 1930 (Painted by Alfred Hamacher (1862–1935). Held privately)	207
Figure 12:	The Deissmann family in front of their house 'Anatolia', Summer 1935 or 1936 (Held privately)	367
Figure 13:	The Deissmann family at the back door of their house 'Anatolia', 1934 (Held privately)	371
Figure 14:	Commemorative bronze plaque at the Langenscheid <i>Pfarrhaus</i>	381

Abbreviations

AA	<i>Archäologischer Anzeiger</i>
AAPS	<i>Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science</i>
ABD	<i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> , 6 vols., D.N. Freedman, ed., New York, 1992
AK	‘Amtskalender’, i.e. Deissmann’s cryptically written private diary, consisting of 38 annual books. Beginning with Jan. 1899, they are complete until his death in 1937, although the one for 1902 is lost. The AK provides significant private and professional background material, but tends to be quite thin in regard to the War, or political events. That it was not intended to be read by outsiders is clearly evident from its frequently messy entries, the enigmatic style of writing, and its many idiosyncratic abbreviations. Held privately.
ALBl	<i>Allgemeines Literaturblatt</i>
APF	<i>Archiv für Papyrusforschung</i>
AR	<i>Antiquitäten Rundschau</i>
ARW	<i>Archiv für Religionswissenschaft</i>
AS	<i>Anatolian Studies</i>
ATLA	American Theological Library Association
BBKL	T. Bautz, ed., <i>Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon</i> , 1–27, 1975–2007 (online databank) http://www.bautz.de/bbkl/
BDAG	F.W. Danker, ed., <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian Literature</i> , Chicago, 2000 ³ (1957)
Berlin AA	Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts, Berlin
Berlin BArch	Bundesarchiv, Berlin
Berlin UArch	Humboldt-Universität Berlin, Universitätsarchiv
BGU	<i>Berliner Griechische Urkunden</i>
BJRL	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i>
BPW	<i>Berliner philologische Wochenschrift</i>

<i>BR</i>	<i>Biblical Review: Interdenominational Quarterly</i>
<i>BS</i>	Deissmann, <i>Bible Studies: Contributions chiefly from papyri and inscriptions, to the history of language, the literature and the religion of Hellenistic Judaism and primitive Christianity</i> , A. Grieve, transl., Edinburgh, 1901 (this is a translation in one vol. of both <i>Bst</i> and <i>NBst</i>)
<i>Bst</i>	Deissmann, <i>Bibelstudien: Beiträge, zumeist aus den Papyri und Inschriften, zur Geschichte der Sprache, des Schrifttums und der Religion des hellenistischen Judentums und des Urchristentums</i> , Marburg, 1895
<i>CcW</i>	<i>Chronik der Christlichen Welt</i>
<i>ChHist</i>	<i>Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture</i>
<i>ChrW</i>	<i>Die christliche Welt</i>
<i>Colloquium</i>	<i>Colloquium. The Australian and New Zealand theological review</i>
<i>Constr.Q</i>	<i>The Constructive Quarterly</i>
<i>CUQ</i>	<i>The Christian Union Quarterly</i>
<i>DAI</i>	Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Berlin
<i>DBW</i>	<i>Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke</i> , 1–17, E. Bethge, et al., eds., Gütersloh, 1986–99
<i>DJZ</i>	<i>Deutsche Juristen-Zeitung</i>
<i>DLZ</i>	<i>Deutsche Literaturzeitung</i>
<i>EB</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia Biblica: a critical dictionary of the literary, political and religious history, the archaeology, geography and natural history of the Bible</i> , 1–3, T.K. Cheyne/ J.S Black, eds., London, 1899–1903
<i>En Chr</i>	Deissmann's Habilitationsschrift, <i>Die neutestamentliche Formel ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ untersucht</i> , Marburg, 1892
<i>ET</i>	<i>The Expository Times</i>
<i>Ev.Th</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
<i>Ev.Wbr</i>	<i>Evangelischer Wochenbrief</i>
<i>Exp</i>	<i>The Expositor</i>
<i>EZA</i>	Evangelisches Zentralarchiv, Berlin
<i>FiE</i>	<i>Forschungen in Ephesos</i>
<i>Forschungen</i>	Deissmann, <i>Forschungen und Funde im Serai; mit einem Verzeichnis der nichtislamischen Handschriften im Topkapu Serai zu Istanbul</i> , Berlin, 1933

GAD	Gustav Adolf Deissmann (used primarily in footnotes, and Index of cited archival material)
GGA	<i>Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen</i>
GRS	<i>German Studies Review</i>
GStA	Geheimes Staatsarchiv, Preußischer Kulturbesitz 1598–1998, Berlin
<i>Haskell Lectures</i>	Deissmann, <i>The New Testament in the light of modern research. The Haskell Lectures</i> , 1929, London, 1929
Heidelb. Stdt.Arch	Stadtarchiv, Heidelberg
Heidelberg UArch	Universitätsarchiv, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität, Heidelberg
Herborn Stdt.Arch	Stadtarchiv, Herborn
Hessen EKZA	Zentralarchiv, Evangelische Kirche in Hessen und Nassau
<i>HJ</i>	<i>Heidelberger Jahrbücher</i>
<i>IEph</i>	H. Wankel, ed., <i>Inscriptionen von Ephesos</i> , 1 a, 20, Bonn, 1979
<i>IK</i>	<i>Inscriptionen griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien</i> , Band 17, 2, Teil 7, 2, <i>Die Inscriptionen von Ephesos</i> , R. Meriç, et al., eds., Bonn, 1981
<i>IMA</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Maris Aegaei</i>
<i>IMW</i>	<i>Internationale Monatsschrift für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Technik</i>
<i>JAC</i>	<i>Journal of Ancient Civilisation</i>
<i>JCSoc</i>	<i>Journal of Classical Sociology</i>
<i>JR</i>	<i>The Journal of Religion</i>
<i>JRH</i>	<i>Journal of Religious History</i>
Karlsruhe Glarch	Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe
Koblenz BArch	Bundesarchiv, Koblenz
<i>LAE</i>	Deissmann, <i>Light from the Ancient East; the New Testament illustrated by recently discovered texts of the Graeco-Roman world</i> , L.R.M. Strachan, transl. of 1 st edn., London, 1910
Lambeth	Lambeth Palace Library, London
<i>LIMC</i>	Ackermann, H.C./ Gisler, J.R., eds., <i>Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae</i> , 8, Zürich, 1997
<i>LR</i>	<i>Literarische Rundschau</i>
<i>LSJ</i>	<i>A Greek-English lexicon</i> , H.G. Liddell/R. Scott/H.S. Jones, eds., Oxford, 1968 ⁹ , with rev. suppl. 1996 (1843)

<i>LvO</i>	Deissmann, <i>Licht vom Osten. Das Neue Testament und die neuentdeckten Texte der hellenistisch-römischen Welt</i> , Tübingen, 1908
<i>LvO</i> ²	1909 edition of <i>LvO</i> , referred to by its publishers as '2./3. Auflage'
<i>LvO</i> ⁴	1923 edition of <i>LvO</i> ; 4 th and most popular edition of <i>LvO</i>
<i>Makk. 4</i>	Deissmann, 'Das vierte Makkabäerbuch', in <i>Die Apokryphen und Pseudepigraphen des Alten Testaments</i> , 2, E. Kautzsch, ed., Tübingen, 1900, 149–77
<i>MAMA</i>	<i>Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiquae</i> , 1–8 Manchester, 9–10 London, 1928–93
Manchester UArch	John Rylands University Library, Manchester
Marburg St.Arch	Hessisches Staatsarchiv, Marburg
Marburg UBibl	Universitätsbibliothek, Marburg
<i>MGWJ</i>	<i>Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums</i>
MHT	Moulton, et al., <i>A Grammar of New Testament Greek</i> , 1–4, Edinburgh, 1908–76
München St.Bibl	Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, München
<i>NBst</i>	Deissmann, <i>Neue Bibelstudien. Sprachgeschichtliche Beiträge, zumeist aus den Papyri und Inschriften, zur Erklärung des Neuen Testaments</i> , Marburg, 1897
<i>NJA</i>	<i>Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum</i>
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NT	New Testament
ÖAI	Österreichisches Archäologisches Institut, Vienna
<i>ÖJh</i>	<i>Jahresheft des österreichischen archäologischen Institutes</i>
OT	Old Testament
<i>Päd. Archiv</i>	<i>Pädagogisches Archiv. Monatsschrift für Erziehung, Unterricht und Wissenschaft</i>
<i>Paulus</i>	Deissmann, <i>Paulus. Eine kultur- und religionsgeschichtliche Skizze</i> , Tübingen, 1911
<i>PBl</i>	<i>Pastoralblätter für Predigt, Seelsorge und kirchliche Unterweisung</i>
<i>Philology</i>	Deissmann, <i>The philology of the Greek Bible: its present and future</i> , London, 1908
<i>Pr. WL</i>	<i>Protestant Weekly Letter</i>

<i>Psenosiris</i>	Deissmann, <i>The epistle of Psenosiris. An original document from the Diocletian persecution (papyrus 713 Brit. Mus.)</i> , London, 1902
<i>Reichsbote</i>	<i>Reichsbote, deutsche Wochenzeitung für Christentum und Volkstum</i>
<i>RETK</i>	<i>Realenzyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche</i> , A. Hauck, ed., 1–22 (3 rd edn.), Leipzig, 1896–1909
Rockefeller FArch	Rockefeller Family Archives, Record Group 2, Office of the Messrs Rockefeller, Cultural Interests Series
<i>RTP</i>	<i>Review of Theology and Philosophy</i>
<i>SD</i>	Deissmann, 'Adolf Deissmann', in E. Stange, ed., <i>Die Religionswissenschaft der Gegenwart in Selbstdarstellungen</i> , Leipzig, 1925, 42–78
<i>Selly Oak Lectures</i>	Deissmann, <i>The religion of Jesus and the faith of Paul. The Selly Oak Lectures, 1923, on the communion of Jesus with God & the communion of Paul with Christ</i> , W.E. Wilson, transl., London, 1923
<i>Septuaginta-Papyri</i>	Deissmann, ed., <i>Veröffentlichungen aus der Heidelberger Papyrus-Sammlung. I, Die Septuaginta-Papyri und andere altchristliche Texte</i> , Heidelberg, 1905
<i>SIG</i>	<i>Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum</i>
<i>Spr. Erforschung</i>	<i>Die sprachliche Erforschung der griechischen Bibel, ihr gegenwärtiger Stand und ihre Aufgaben</i> . Vorträge der theologischen Konferenz zu Gießen, XII. Folge, Giessen, 1898
<i>ThB</i>	<i>Theologische Blätter</i>
<i>ThPh</i>	<i>Theologie und Philosophie</i>
<i>ThR</i>	<i>Theologische Rundschau</i>
<i>ThRev</i>	<i>Theologische Revue</i>
<i>TLZ</i>	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
<i>TLBl</i>	<i>Theologisches Literaturblatt</i>
<i>TRE</i>	<i>Theologische Realenzyklopädie</i>
Tübingen UArch	Universitätsarchiv Tübingen
Uppsala UBibl	Universitetsbibliotek, Handskrifts- och Musikavdelningen, Uppsala
<i>VfZ</i>	<i>Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte</i>
<i>Voss. Zeitung</i>	<i>Vossische Zeitung</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>

<i>Wiss.Z.HU.Berlin</i>	<i>Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin: Philosophie – Wissenschaft– Geschichte. Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften</i>
<i>WKP</i>	<i>Wochenschrift für klassische Philologie</i>
Woodbrooke	Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, Birmingham
Wooster	Wooster College (Special Collections), Ohio
<i>WUNT</i>	<i>Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament</i>
<i>ZKG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte</i>
ZLB	Zentral- und Landesbibliothek, Historische Sonder-sammlungen, Berlin
<i>ZNTbG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für neuere Theologiegeschichte</i>
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>
<i>ZTK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>
<i>ZVS</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung</i>

Preface

2008 marks the centenary of the publication of a book still in print and still much admired: Adolf Deissmann's *Licht vom Osten* (English version, *Light from the ancient East*). With that work he achieved a rare feat – to write a ‘popular’ book without distorting the technical information that provided its substance.

When Deissmann died in 1937 he was acknowledged as the German NT professor whose influence beyond his homeland had spread most widely. His diverse intellectual and humanitarian contributions had ensured him considerable fame, and for many years a high profile internationally. Yet after his death, awareness of his achievements waned rapidly, and within a decade or so very few knew much about him, except perhaps that he was the author of *Licht vom Osten*. Even the publication of a booklet about him in 1967, for the centenary of his birth, did nothing to bring his name back from virtual obscurity.

The present book is the first attempt to look systematically at Adolf Deissmann and his various undertakings and achievements as a whole. While a little more attention has been given to him in recent years, this is predominantly from a theological or ecumenical perspective. Yet Deissmann cannot be narrowly typecast as a theologian or ecumenist, despite holding two Chairs of NT in theological faculties. Although the book deals to some extent with *Forschungsgeschichte* it also includes aspects of NT and religious studies, archaeological work in Turkey, 20th century German social, political and church history, as well as certain aspects of the ecumenical movement and peace studies.

The reader who seeks here a ‘typical’ biography may be disappointed, for while I have provided a great deal of personal information about Deissmann's life, this is to some extent *en passant*. The contribution this man has made to the study of postclassical Greek by seeing the potential of the papyri and inscriptions for the linguistic analysis of the NT (and Septuagint) would be enough on its own to establish his name as a trailblazer. Yet he was also the prime mover in the recommencement of archaeological investigations of Ephesus after the First World War. And, from the start of hostilities in Europe in 1914, he undertook the writing of a regular newsletter in German and English for a period of seven years,

a newsletter which circulated surprisingly widely to Christians on both sides of the conflict. While this undertaking was not *sui generis*, it was unique in its impact, such that after the war Deissmann was the most obvious person in Germany to become involved in reconciliation work between Christians at an international level. And these were only some of his spheres of activities ...

It is curious, then, that this man has been so long overlooked; but the present book seeks to redress that neglect. The origin of my work lies in a PhD thesis presented at the beginning of 2008 in the discipline of Greek at the University of New England in Armidale, NSW. Naturally, it has been much revised for publication in the present form, and I thank the publishers, W. de Gruyter, for accepting my manuscript.

Since this book makes use of a wide range of German primary sources – some dating back to before the orthographical reforms of 1901, or even before 1880, when Konrad Duden (1829–1911) published his pivotal German dictionary – irregular and occasionally idiosyncratic spelling and punctuation occurs in a number of citations. However, the convention I have adopted is to quote excerpts as accurately as possible in their original form (i. e. uncorrected). It is, therefore, not unusual to encounter certain words spelt variously, sometimes even within the same document or citation, particularly in respect to compounds, the ‘eszett’ (‘ß’) as opposed to the double sibilant ‘ss’, or the older ‘th’ as opposed to the newer ‘t’. Deissmann regularly signed his name with an ‘eszett’ (i. e. Deißmann), but in typed correspondence normally opted for the alternative ‘ss’; and, except for citations, this latter spelling is the one preferred here. On occasions where a word is either illegible, or missing because of document damage, it is normally signalled thus: ‘[.?. illegible]’.

Italics are used in the text to indicate published works, individual foreign expressions and – very occasionally – for emphasis, but within the footnotes are reserved for published works to prevent possible confusion.

I am, of course, very grateful to a host of individuals and institutions who have, in one way or another, helped me to bring this project to fruition. But, I owe a special debt of gratitude to Dr. phil. Gerhard Deissmann and to his niece, Angelika Deissmann, for making me feel warmly welcome in their Bremen home on three extended occasions, and for providing a great deal of background information, as well as entrusting me with unfettered access to their private family papers and other personal material.

My research in Europe during 2002 and 2004 has been considerably facilitated by two grants from the University of New England through

the Keith & Dorothy Mackay Postgraduate Travelling Scholarship (2002), and the Maiben Davies Postgraduate Scholarship in Classics (2004), for both of which I am very much obliged.

I am deeply indebted to my teacher and friend, Professor G.H.R. Horsley (Armidale), for paving and directing my way selflessly to the study of Deissmann, and for guiding me patiently from my undergraduate years through to the completion of my PhD and to the publication of this book. I also owe a great debt of gratitude to Professor John Moses (formerly of Armidale, now Canberra) for the insightful counsel with which he has helped me throughout my PhD years in all aspects of modern history pertaining to my work.

Among many others, I am also obliged to Dr. Manfred Kandler (Vienna), Dr. Hartmut Ludwig (Berlin) and Dr. Annette Gerlach (Berlin), for their frequent and much valued assistance. Furthermore, I am grateful to Emeritus Professor Michael Lattke (Brisbane), Dr. Alexander Weiss (Leipzig) and Professor Lars Rydbeck (Lund), who have not only examined my dissertation and encouraged me to publish it, but also provided many valuable suggestions for incorporation into the present book.

Finally, I want to pay tribute to my dear and longsuffering wife Marianne, since I could not possibly have completed this work without her unwavering support.

Albrecht Gerber

Woodvale, 7 December, 2009

Sadly, Dr. Gerhard Deissmann died very shortly before this book went to print.

Contents

List of figures	ix
Abbreviations	xi
Preface	xvii
Introduction	1

Part 1

Δύο τάλαντά μοι παρέδωκας

1. Deissmann the discoverer	7
1.1. The language of the New Testament in the late 19 th century	7
1.2. Academic preparation	9
1.3. The formula ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ	14
1.4. <i>Bibelstudien</i> : breakthrough to discovery	23
1.5. Backdrop to <i>Neue Bibelstudien</i>	36
1.6. Consolidation of discovery: <i>Neue Bibelstudien</i>	40
1.7. Popularisation of discovery: <i>Licht vom Osten</i>	48
1.8. Conclusion	58
2. Deissmann the lexicographer	61
2.1. The state of Greek lexicography in the 19 th and early 20 th century	61
2.2. Preparations for a new lexicon	67
2.3. Gearing up for lexicography	69
2.4. Berlin: a crucial decision	81
2.5. Frustration and disappointment	89
2.6. The fate of Deissmann's lexicon	99
2.7. Conclusion	102
3. Deissmann the philologist	104
3.1. <i>Philologie</i> and the NT in late 19 th century Germany	104

3.2. Deissmann's philological background	108
3.3. <i>Die sprachliche Erforschung der griechischen Bibel</i> (1889)	112
3.4. <i>Die Septuaginta-Papyri und andere altchristliche Texte</i> (1905)	114
3.5. <i>The philology of the Greek Bible: its present and future</i> (1908)	118
3.6. Turning point	120
3.7. Conclusion	123

Part 2

ἡ ἱερὰ μητρόπολις τῆς Ἀσίας ... ἐτείμησεν Ἀδολφον
Δεισσμάνν

4. From the study to the <i>realia</i>	127
4.1. Study tour 1906: Anatolia, Greece and Crete	127
4.2. Study tour 1909: the Levant and Egypt	137
4.3. <i>Paulus</i>	144
4.4. Conclusion	152
5. The Ephesus excavations	155
5.1. Archaeology at Ephesus: background to its revival	155
5.2. Raising awareness and funding	159
5.3. 1926 Ephesus expedition	174
5.4. 1927 Ephesus expedition	184
5.5. 1928 Ephesus expedition	191
5.6. 1929 Ephesus expedition	196
5.7. <i>Forschungen und Funde im Serai</i>	198
5.8. Ephesus after 1931	201
5.9. Conclusion	205

Part 3

Deissmann in his contemporary context

6. From postclassical Greek to <i>Sozialpolitik</i>	209
6.1. Political awakening	209
6.2. Social Democracy: the Naumann connection	213
6.3. Naumann's vision of European integration: <i>Mitteleuropa</i>	227
6.4. Deissmann's political disengagement	230
6.5. Belgian invasion, and first cracks in confidence	233
6.6. Conclusion	243

7. <i>Evangelischer Wochenbrief</i> and <i>Protestant Weekly Letter</i>	245
7.1. Genesis of Deissmann's <i>Evangelischer Wochenbrief</i>	245
7.2. Target readership, objectives, and editorial constraints	249
7.3. Content of the <i>Wochenbriefe</i>	259
7.4. Changing perspectives in the <i>Wochenbriefe</i>	263
7.5. Deissmann's sources for his <i>Wochenbriefe</i>	268
7.6. Appraisal of the <i>Wochenbriefe</i>	273
7.7. Conclusion	280
8. Ecumenical humanitarianism	283
8.1. Faith, War and the Quakers	283
8.2. War theology and the German God	300
8.3. Anti-Semitism? 'Socialismus der dummen Kerle'	307
8.4. Utopian ecumenism and the elusive 'Una Sancta'	313
8.5. Deissmann bridges the gap to America	334
8.6. Conclusion	340
9. From zenith to eclipse	343
9.1. Berlin <i>Rektorat</i> : professional life's crowning point	343
9.2. Retirement, and 70 th birthday honours	351
9.3. 'Have pia anima'	356
9.4. Obscurity	361
9.5. Epilogue to an anachronistic life	366
9.6. Conclusion	369
General conclusion	373
G. A. Deissmann genealogy	379

Part 4

Appendices and Addenda

Table of contents for Appendices and Addenda	383
Appendices to chapters 1–9	387
Addenda	541
Chronological bibliography of Deissmann's published material . . .	591
Bibliography	599
Index of archives from which material has been drawn	613
Index of cited archival material	615
Name Index	627
General Index	637

Introduction

Gustav Adolf Deissmann, third of five children, was born on 7 November 1866 in the Lutheran *Pfarrhaus* of the small Hessian village Langenscheid, where his father was Pfarrer of a small congregation. At the end of 1873 the family moved to Erbach (Rheingau), a predominantly Roman Catholic community, where Deissmann grew up. From 1879–85 he attended the Wiesbaden Gymnasium, followed by theology studies at Tübingen (1885–8), a *Kandidatenjahr* at the Herborn Theological Seminary (1889), and the final theological examination at Wiesbaden. During the ensuing winter he acted as Vikar at Dausenau, on the river Lahn, to relieve the small community's sick Pfarrer, after which he began to study for his licentiate at Marburg. Instead of a theological dissertation on baptism, as initially planned, he produced a philological *Habilitationschrift* on the Greek preposition ἐν in its postclassical usage, and by doing so set his course for an academic, instead of ecclesiastical profession. For reasons that were personal no less than strategic for his career he subsequently took up a position as Pfarrer for the Herborn parish, to which was attached a tenure as lecturer at the town's influential Theological Seminary. Two-and-a-half years later he became professor for NT at the University of Heidelberg (1897–1908), as well as Geheimer Konsistorialrat; and in 1908 succeeded Bernhard Weiss on the Chair for NT theology at Berlin. He was the recipient of many national and international distinctions, including eight honorary doctorates from six different countries, and was twice nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

While it is in the nature of this study to touch on a number of specialist fields, its focus is strictly on Deissmann's intellectual contributions; and although it is biographical to some degree, it is intentionally not designed as a 'cradle-to-grave' account of his life. Instead, it aims to demonstrate both the breadth and far-reaching impact of his various outstanding achievements and pioneering ideas, on both a national and international level. My central thesis is that he has played a pivotal role in several wholly different fields of scholastic inquiry and that it is, therefore, high time that both the man himself and his extraordinary contributions be properly recognised.

Deissmann has largely been neglected by modern scholarship, and although an upsurge of interest in certain facets of his work has occurred during the past decade – driven primarily by research from German theological faculties – this has tended to stereotype him over-narrowly as an ecumenist. However, since the remembrance of him has faded quickly not long after his death (especially in Germany), the question must be posed whether his contribution might perhaps have been of little consequence after all – despite the worldwide recognition he received during his lifetime. Moreover, his long but unsuccessful struggle to complete a pioneering and internationally anticipated NT lexicon could further suggest to some that he was a failure in terms of his own goals. Neither supposition paints a true picture. For the causes of his eventual obscurity were primarily circumstantial, rather than of his own making; and the same can also be said, even though to a lesser degree, with respect to his inability to finish the lexicon. As with many other German academics at that time, WWI and the subsequent decade completely dislocated his personal goals and caused him to redirect his energies into other fields. Thus, Deissmann's strong prewar engagement with the philology of postclassical Greek lessened, while his international profile as a humanitarian 'voice of reason' began to grow by way of his regular bulletins he sent primarily to America – i.e. the *Protestant Weekly Letter*. This, in turn, generated an extensive network of well-connected individuals, which put him in an ideal position for his self-appointed task of building bridges of understanding (*Verständigungsarbeit*), and later also enabled him to help initiate the revival of the archaeological excavations of Ephesus.

Numerous scholars have been able to lay claim to dominance of a particular branch of erudite learning. What set Deissmann apart was his ability to perform at such a high level in each of several disparate disciplines and undertakings. The following selection of his national and international intellectual associations illustrates this: he was a member of both the German and Austrian Archaeological Institutes; a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in Lund; a foreign member of the Royal Swedish Academy in Stockholm; a member of the German Commission for Academic Cooperation; an honorary member of various overseas bodies, such as the Oxford Society of Historical Theology, and the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis of North America; chairman of the Branch Committee for Evangelical Theology in Germany's Notgemeinschaft; the president of the ecumenical 'Life and Work' Theological Commission; vice-president and executive member of

the 'Faith and Order' movement, and chairman of the 'Life and Work' Committee for East-West Cooperation.

The book itself is constructed in three parts:

Part One demonstrates how Deissmann's innovative philological approach to the language of the NT has led to a rethinking among researchers of postclassical Greek, and shows that despite the loss of his almost completed NT lexicon, his lexicographical contributions remain fundamental for the understanding of *koine* Greek.

Part Two makes the point that Deissmann's extraordinary interest in the archaeology of Ephesus is directly traceable to his philological study tour of the Middle East in 1906, and argues that were it not for his high international profile and energetic intervention for the salvaging of the ancient city's archaeological remains, inestimable and irreversible historical losses would have been inevitable.

Part Three shows that even though Deissmann was one of the foremost supporters of Friedrich Naumann's social reforms, by 1933 he had become sceptical of German politics. This part further demonstrates that his *Evangelischer Wochenbrief* (with its English translation, *Protestant Weekly Letter*) was not written as war propaganda, but rather as an innovative forum for *Völkerverständigung*. It argues that, his subsequent leading role in the ecumenical movement notwithstanding, Deissmann was not a 'true' ecumenist, and establishes that his fading into oblivion was due to a combination of his own character traits and uncontrollable external circumstances.

Numerous appendices to each chapter are included; these consist of complete transcripts or excerpts, drawn largely from hitherto unpublished or difficult to access primary source documents which substantiate many of the statements made within this book.

The research for this study is based heavily on a sizeable databank of source material, obtained in the first instance from some 25 archives in countries including America, Australia, Austria, England, Germany, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. To this is added a large collection of valuable information from non-archival and private sources, and also incorporates information gleaned from personal interviews with family members and friends, as well as from an unfettered access to Deissmann's private library, memorabilia and diary.

Part 1
Δύο τάλαντά μοι παρέδωκας



Figure 2
Gustav Adolf Deissmann, *c.* 1895–8

1. Deissmann the discoverer

*Die Sprache des Neuen Testaments
und damit auch die in dieser Sprache
gefaßte Sache des Neuen Testaments wurde
nunmehr geschichtlich und lokal in der
Welt des Vorderen Orients der Spätantike
angesiedelt. Diese Sprache wurde von
Deissmann entdeckt und festgelegt als
spätgriechische Umgangssprache.¹*

1.1. The language of the New Testament in the late 19th century

Before Deissmann's seminal book, *Bibelstudien*, was published in 1895, the language of the NT was routinely isolated from 'profane' Greek, as a separate 'biblical', 'Jewish', 'Christian', 'Hebraistic', or even 'Holy Ghost' Greek, and considered to be seriously indebted to the Alexandrian translation of the OT that had become known as the Septuagint. This general consensus was based on the fact that the writers of the NT had made copious use of this Greek translation, and because their language did not seem to fit the grammatical conventions of classical literature. Confirmation for this could readily be found in contemporary Greek grammars and lexicons, which helped to perpetuate this misconception.

In 1822 Georg Benedikt Winer (1789–1858) published his *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Sprachidioms*, an epoch-making work for NT studies. Although Winer was a product of the Cartesian-rationalist tradition and saw no connection between the Greek of the NT and that of the vernacular *koine*,² his grammar brought about 'an

1 G. Harder/ G. Deissmann, *Zum Gedenken an Adolf Deissmann. Vortrag anlässlich des 100. Geburtstages von Adolf Deissmann am 7. November 1966, gehalten am 26. April 1967 vor den Dozenten und Studenten der Kirchlichen Hochschule in Berlin*, Bremen, 1967, 3.

2 I shall use the term 'koine' in this book in line with Albert Thumb's definition: "hellenistisch" ist also alles, was dieser Culturepoche angehört, und "hellenistische Sprache" ist nichts anderes als was wir sonst kürzer mit *Koiné*

enlightened philology', which triumphed over the previously 'unbridled [grammatical] license'.³ His work was subsequently revised by Georg Konrad Gottlieb Lünemann (1819–94), and later again by Paul Wilhelm Schmiedel (1851–1935), who published his first instalment of the eighth revision, but stopped mysteriously in mid-sentence on page 192, and never completed the task.⁴ Yet the latter's introductory paragraphs showed, according to Deissmann, '... still too much Winer and too little Schmiedel,' although, he conceded that the book itself 'marks a characteristic and decisive turning point in NT philology'.⁵ The grammar's title remained the same, however, revealing the author's and editor's fundamentally unchanged assumption that the Greek of the NT was an isolated language, separate from the rest of ancient Greek. The book's influence quickly spread beyond Germany, especially after 1859, when Edward Masson's English translation was published.⁶ This, too, was later revised, first by Joseph Henry Thayer (1828–1901), and then by William Fiddian Moulton (1835–98). But despite the book's fundamentally sound philology, it did little to dispel the notion of a separate, 'biblical' Greek. In 1859, Alexander Buttmann (1813–93) produced another such grammar in Germany, entitled, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Sprachgebrauchs*; Thayer's translation appeared in 1891 as *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*. In 1896 yet another one appeared, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*, by Friedrich Blass (1843–1907), but it barely took Deissmann's groundbreaking philology into account.

Each of these grammars was a monumental work, and their philological methodology moulded the sociolinguistic perception of the following generations of scholars – particularly in the fields of

bezeichnen'. *Die griechische Sprache im Zeitalter des Hellenismus. Beiträge zur Geschichte und Beurteilung der KOINH*, Strassburg, 1901, 9.

3 A.T. Robertson, *A grammar of the Greek New Testament in the light of historical research*, London, 1919³ (1914), 4.

4 Robertson, 'New Testament grammar after thirty years', in K.L. Schmidt, ed., *Festgabe für Adolf Deissmann, zum 60. Geburtstag 7. November 1926*, Tübingen, 1927, 83.

5 *Philology*, 114, 115.

6 W.F. Moulton had begun to re-edit Masson's translation, but died before its completion, leaving the work to his son, James Hope Moulton (see below). New linguistic discoveries convinced the latter to abandon the project, and he created an entirely new work: *A grammar of New Testament Greek, based on W.F. Moulton's edition of G.B. Winer's grammar. Vol. 1: Prolegomena*, Edinburgh, 1906. Robertson, 'New Testament grammar', 82–3.

philology and theology. For if lexicons are the lifeblood of ancient linguistic studies, grammars are their very heart, since they provide the underpinning systemic structures for these disciplines. Yet they all shared an elemental flaw: the commonly held assumption that the language of the NT was a grammatical peculiarity and, therefore, subject to its own laws.

In bold opposition to this consensus, Deissmann wrote with youthful zest (1898): 'Theoretisch lässt sich eine NT Grammatik ebensowenig rechtfertigen, wie etwa ein Hierozoikon. Es gibt so wenig eine NT Sprache wie es biblische Tiere gibt.'⁷ His three major philological books on the Greek of the NT, *Bibelstudien*, *Neue Bibelstudien* and *Licht vom Osten*, have conclusively succeeded in proving the truth of his graphic metaphor. It was with these works that Deissmann has opened the door to a new era in postclassical Greek studies and systematically set the language of the biblical books into their correct historical setting.

1.2 Academic preparation

When Deissmann arrived at the Marburg University during the Easter break in 1891, having enrolled for the regular licentiate, the young Pfarrer – a graduate from Herborn and Wiesbaden – had no lofty aspirations. The Faculty of Theology offered three separate degrees: the lesser licentiate, the somewhat more prestigious Doctor of Theology, and the purely academic *Habilitation*,⁸ but he later affirmed: 'an Habilitation dachte ich zunächst noch nicht'.⁹

In the course of the previous twelve years, the Theological Faculty of Marburg's nearly 400 year-old Philipps-University had gained a steadily growing reputation for academic excellence and openmindedness to new ideas.¹⁰ The fundamental criteria for the selection of lecturers were

7 GAD, *Schulblätter*, 1898.

8 E.C. Ranke, *Bestimmungen über die Promotionen und die Habilitation bei der theologischen Fakultät zu Marburg*, Marburg, 1874, §1, §8–9.

9 SD, 50. For a full transcript of SD see Addendum 2.

10 G.A. Jülicher, 'Zur Geschichte der Theologischen Fakultät', in H. Hermelink/S.A. Kaehler, eds., *Die Philipps-Universität zu Marburg 1527–1927: Fünf Kapitel aus ihrer Geschichte (1527–1866)*, Marburg, 1927, 569. From its beginning in 1866 until 1879, when J.W. Herrmann's influence ushered in a new era, the Faculty was seriously fragmented by infighting: 'die einzelnen

no longer allowed to depend on a candidate's theological or political views, but rather on their research productivity, academic objectivity and teaching qualification. Enrolments rose from sixty in 1878 to 241 a decade later,¹¹ boosted particularly in 1886 by the arrival of Adolf Harnack (1851–1930).¹² He was 'der fleißigste, originellste Kirchenhistoriker von ungewöhnlicher Produktivität und wissenschaftlicher Forschungsgabe sowie der anregendste Dozent unter ihnen [i.e. German theology professors]'.¹³ During his three years at Marburg, students kept flocking in from every part of Europe as well as the USA; nevertheless, in 1889 he transferred to Berlin, where he remained until his retirement 32 years later. Therefore, Deissmann missed him at this early point in his intellectual development.¹⁴

It was to this thriving University that Deissmann wrote a lengthy autobiographical application letter on 14 April 1891, in which – on the grounds of parental financial strains – he successfully requested a stipend that would enable him to pursue further studies for the licentiate. The application ended with an earnest undertaking that 'in jedem Falle, sollte ich die Licentiatenprüfung bestehen oder nicht, ist es meine Absicht, zunächst wieder in den Dienst der Nassauischen Landeskirche zu treten'.¹⁵

Since Deissmann wanted to focus his studies more deeply on the NT, his main teacher at Marburg was Carl Friedrich Georg Heinrici (1844–1915), who had held the NT Chair since 1874 and was also a member of the Kassel Consistory. At the very end of his life, in spring of 1915, he founded the Religionsgeschichtliches Forschungsinstitut at the Leipzig University, with the specific task of re-editing¹⁶ the mid-18th century

Professoren lasen über die verschiedensten Dinge, wie wenn jeder das Ganze allein zu vertreten hätte und dem anderen nichts überlassen dürfte; unmöglich können dabei ihre Vorlesungen gleichwertig geworden sein.' Ibid.

11 Jülicher, 569–70.

12 The preposition 'von' was added to his name at his ennobling on 22.3.1914.

13 F.W. Bautz, 'Harnack, Adolf v. (1851–1930)', *BBKL*, 2, 1990, 556.

14 In *SD* (49) GAD wrote: 'Adolf Harnack, der im Sommer 1888 noch nicht in Berlin gewesen war, wirkte [in Herborn, 1889] zum ersten Male auf mich, indirekt, durch einen seiner Marburger Schüler.' See further, ch. 1.3.

15 For a transcript of GAD's 'Lebenslauf', dated 14.4.1891, see Appendix 1, a.

16 Heinrici's real objective was far grander, although ultimately unrealistic; for he had decided 'eine möglichst vollständige Sammlung der Parallelen für das Neue Testament aus dem Gebiete des Hellenismus herzustellen'. G. Strecker/U. Schnelle, *Neuer Wettstein. Texte zum Neuen Testament aus Griechentum und Hellenismus*, 1, Berlin, 1996, x.

Wettstein.¹⁷ To achieve this, he set up a small team under his leadership, and with Deissmann's collaboration.¹⁸ Although Heinrici's main interest was in early Christianity, with a particular penchant for the Apostle Paul, regarding whom he had written several books, he was also an outstanding classical scholar.¹⁹ It was, therefore, no surprise when he suggested to his young *protégé* that he should consider for his research topic a study on Paul's teachings on water baptism.

Heinrici's colleague, Wolf Wilhelm Graf von Baudissin (1847–1926), specialised in OT theology, but stood in decisive opposition to Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918). Some 26 years after attending his lectures Deissmann celebrated Baudissin as a founding father of modern religious history, and eulogised him as one who had done more than others to liberate the OT from isolation, by bringing it into line with Semitic and general religious history.²⁰

Church history was Deissmann's third subject, taught by Carl Mirbt (1860–1929), who had only recently (20 December 1890) been appointed Ordinarius. He was a zealous Protestant, whose passion for missionary work was equalled only by his ardent anti-Roman Catholic

17 In 1751–2 Johann Jakob Wettstein (1693–1754), one of the most noteworthy 18th century NT text critics, produced a monumental edition of the Greek NT, in opposition to the commonly accepted Textus Receptus. Beneath his Greek text he provided a comprehensive running commentary, with masses of parallel material drawn from classical and rabbinical sources.

18 In *LvO*⁴ GAD added an informative footnote that shows his erstwhile enthusiasm for this project: 'Gewiß, es wäre eine Aufgabe, wohl wert der Lebensarbeit eines Forschers, das großartige über anderthalb Jahrhunderte alte Neue Testament von Johann Jakob Wettstein ... neu herauszugeben.' 2, n. 3. It is worth pointing out that he only meant an updated re-edition and not, as Heinrici wanted, a complete reworking, based on the old Wettstein. It cannot be determined with any certainty when GAD's role in this team ended, but from the tenor of this footnote, it appears that the extremes of Germany's postwar economic conditions caused the project's temporary suspension. Although it recommenced in 1921, Heinrici's unworkable ideal proved too overwhelming, and the work lapsed for almost three-quarters of a century, despite numerous later attempts. The *Neuer Wettstein*, published in 1996, finally succeeded because it consciously followed GAD's above-mentioned narrower parameters, instead of Heinrici's unrealistic goals. See *Neuer Wettstein*, xi.

19 e.g. he edited *Die Leipziger Papyrusfragmente der Psalmen. Beiträge zur Geschichte und Erklärung des Neuen Testaments*, 4, Leipzig, 1903.

20 GAD gave this tribute at Marburg (26.9.1917), in honour of Baudissin's 70th birthday. The address is reprinted in *Ev. Wbr*, 21.10.1917, 4–5 (for *Ev. Wbr*, and *Pr. WL* citations, see explanation, ch. 7, n. 2).

convictions (attested by his many writings on the topic).²¹ Despite his robust orthodoxy, he had obtained some distinction through his new historical methodology that integrated church and secular history.

Deissmann's fourth field of study was systematic theology, the domain of Johann Wilhelm Herrmann (1846–1922), who had occupied this Chair since 1879. He was a foremost disciple of Albrecht Ritschl (1822–89), but had also studied under Friedrich August Gotttreu Tholuck (1799–1877) – who, incidentally, had also been one of the teachers of Deissmann's father.²² A pious evangelical, Herrmann's emphasis on the relationship between religion and ethics was akin to Harnack's and Ritschl's and brought him widespread prestige. Several of his students eventually surpassed him in achievement and public profile, among them Karl Barth (1886–1968), Rudolf Karl Bultmann (1884–1976) and Deissmann himself.

Finally, there was Ernst Christian Achelis (1838–1912), who taught applied theology and simultaneously acted as university chaplain. In 1890 and 1891 he published the first two of his three-volume *Lehrbuch der praktischen Theologie*, for he had more than two decades experience in pastoral work and successfully established a new church in Hastedt near Bremen.

However, these five teachers were not the only ones to influence Deissmann's intellectual development at Marburg, for in his later years he also paid tribute to three other professors who had acted as 'leuchtende gute Sterne'. There was Julius Wellhausen, a philologist who taught with 'einsame[r] Wucht';²³ the church historian Adolf Jülicher (1857–1938), an independent and self-professed liberal theologian²⁴ and representative of the strictly historico-critical school,

21 These include: *Quellen zur Geschichte des Papsttums und des römischen Katholizismus*, Tübingen, 1967⁶ (1895); *Die Entstehung des Papstthums*, 1890; *Der deutsche Patriot und die Jesuitenfrage*, 1893; *Die preußische Gesandtschaft am Hofe des Papstes*, 1899; *Geschichte der katholischen Kirche von der Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts bis zum Vatikanischen Konzil*, 1913.

22 SD, 46. For GAD's father, see ch. 3.2.

23 *Ev. Wbr.*, Apr., 1921, 185.

24 Unlike the later 'Ritschlian liberalism of the 1880s, early 19th century German liberalism was a two-pronged philosophical trend: 1) Liberalism of doctrine, which questioned and rejected traditional Christian beliefs. 2) Liberalism of biblical scholarship, which challenged the historicity and divine inspiration of Scripture. Although David Friedrich Strauss (1808–74) published his dissenting landmark, *Das Leben Jesu*, in 1835, its roots were in the 18th

with his ‘geschliffene[m] Scharfsinn’, and Hermann Cohen (1842–1918), a neo-Kantian philosopher, logician and authority on Judaism, full of ‘ironische[m] Pathos’.

Returning now to Deissmann’s aforementioned application: he had evidently made contact with Heinrici some time before his Dausenau *Vikariat* of 1890/1, in the hope of furthering his NT knowledge. At first he tried to take up Heinrici’s challenge, but soon became disheartened with the difficulties of ‘home studies’ and, for practical reasons concluded that he should enrol at a university once again:

Herr Consistorialrat Professor D. Heinrici zu Marburg hatte die Güte, mir vor einiger Zeit “die Aussagen des Apostels Paulus über die Taufe” als Thema für dieses Examen zu empfehlen, und ich habe bereits angefangen, dieses Thema zu bearbeiten. Während meines Vikariates zu Dausenau hat sich mir jedoch die Erfahrung aufgedrängt, daß man fernab von jeder besseren Bibliothek nicht in der zureichenden Weise wissenschaftlich arbeiten kann und daß man auch sonst durch die großen Schwierigkeiten, welche das praktische Amt für den Anfänger hat, zu einer planmäßigen und intensiven Wissenschaftlichen Arbeit von sonst kaum gelangen wird. So habe ich dann nach reichlicher Überlegung den Entschluß gefaßt, nochmals an einer Universität zu studieren. Ich gedenke das kommende Sommersemester mich in Marburg zum Licentiatenexamen vorzubereiten.²⁵

Deissmann had not rushed lightly into this decision, but first sought advice from some of his earlier teachers, namely, Emil Kautzsch (1841–1910), Max Wilhelm Theodor Reischle (1858–1905) and Eugen Friedrich Ferdinand Sachse (1839–1917).

He had initially come under Kautzsch’ tutelage in summer of 1885, during his theology training at Tübingen, where he studied three semesters under this Hebraist and OT exegete.²⁶ For Deissmann it was Kautzsch’s literary criticism and captivating OT exegesis which had ‘die größte Anziehungskraft’ and impressed on him the historical value of the OT.²⁷ Max Reischle also came to know him at Tübingen, but only during Deissmann’s last semester, when he attended his classes on ‘Dogmatische Controversfragen der Gegenwart’.²⁸ But Reischle’s easy-going geniality endeared him to his students and also had an effect on

century Enlightenment. C. Clark, *Iron Kingdom: the rise and downfall of Prussia, 1600–1947*, London, 2006, 247–83.

25 GAD’s ‘Lebenslauf’, 14.4.1891; see Appendix 1, a.

26 For GAD’s subject enrolment lists at Tübingen see Appendix 3 (I–VI).

27 GAD, ‘Lebenslauf’, 27.3.1889. For a transcript see Appendix 1, b.

28 Subject enrolment list, WS 1887/8.

Deissmann's later style of teaching in his own classes.²⁹ Eugen Sachse met him first in 1889 at the Herborn Theological Seminary,³⁰ which the former directed, but other than encouraging the young graduate to undertake further studies, he appears to have had no perceptible impact on his academic development. These then, were the three men who, more than others, guided him towards the crucial decision to enrol in the Marburg University.

1.3. The formula ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ

Immediately after Easter 1891, Deissmann made a renewed start on Heinrici's suggested dissertation apropos early apostolic baptism³¹ – this time at the University itself, where he had access to an extensive library. It was not long, though, before the innocuous but constantly recurring Pauline formula ἐν Χριστῷ – which had possibly come to his notice through Harnack³² – began to draw his attention away from his broadly exegetical topic towards the minutiae of Greek philology. A quick commentary search revealed that disappointingly few analytical studies had been made on the unpretentious ἐν with a singular dative, but for Deissmann it looked like a much more stimulating problem than the project topic he had accepted from Heinrici.

He was, of course, not the first to be struck by Paul's unorthodox grammatical construction, for some 164 instances are known in which the Apostle employed this oddly worded phrase, and that despite the fact that ἐν with a singular personal name rarely occurs in other Greek literature. In particular, however, it was Paul's metaphysical application

29 A quarter of a century later, GAD wrote of Reischle that he 'früh erkannt hatte, daß ein von jugendlicher Begeisterung mit fröhlichen Augen vorgetragenes Problem junge Menschen mehr anzieht und fördert, als der spitze höhnische Schulmeisterton des übergescheiten Griesgrams'. *Ev. Wbr.*, 14.5. 1917, 4. For GAD's own teaching style see Appendix 9, 1.

30 Before a graduate theologian could be licensed as Pfarrer within the duchy of Nassau, he had to complete two semesters of supplementary studies at this institution. J. Wienecke, ed., *Mitteilungsblatt des Geschichtsvereins Herborn e. V.*, 40, 1, Herborn, 1992, 5.

31 GAD recalled: 'Er hatte mir schon vorher geraten, über die urchristliche Taufe zu arbeiten, und es lag in diesem Rat zugleich der Hinweis auf eine Untersuchung der antiken Mysterien und ihres etwaigen Ertrags für das Verständnis der altchristlichen Sakramente.' *SD*, 50.

32 See ch. 1, n. 14, and also Appendix 1, c.

of this preposition in relation to a person that caught his attention. A little over a year later, when Heinrici assessed Deissmann's new and upgraded dissertation, he made the point that this small preposition had long baffled NT commentators, and stated: 'Der Verfasser bestätigt durch seine Leistung das Urtheil Buttmanns, daß die Präposition ἐν ein Buch erfordere'.³³ Notwithstanding, it was not Buttmann, but the versatile Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768–1834), who first realised the far-reaching consequences this construction could have for NT hermeneutics,³⁴ and any topical commentaries written in the intervening decades between him and Deissmann rested squarely on the former's inconclusive observation.

In den Kommentaren oftmals übergangen oder mit einer gewaltsamen dogmatischen Interpretation des 'in' auf den 'historischen' Christus und sein Heilswerk gedeutet, erschien [die Formel] mir je länger je mehr als eine eigenartige inhaltsschwere Schöpfung wahrscheinlich des Apostels Paulus selbst, als das eigentliche Kenn- und Losungswort seiner Gemeinschaft mit dem pneumatischen, ihm gegenwärtigen Christus, seiner Christumystik.³⁵

Even so, it was no mean task to produce a thorough study on this topic, not least because of the relative scarcity of experienced and willing philologists the young researcher could turn to, for these traditionally tended to patronise theologians and generally distanced themselves from biblical language studies.³⁶ Moreover, despite the intensive multilingual training theologians underwent in at least three ancient languages (Greek, Hebrew, Latin), no specific branch of learning existed in Germany that specialised in the philology of the Greek Bible.

Nevertheless, Heinrici agreed to continue the supervision of Deissmann's new topic, although its philological character was somewhat alien to him, and the latter – probably on his *Doktorvaters* suggestion – made frequent visits by train to the aged Karl Johannes Tycho Mommsen (1819–1900) in Frankfurt. Although retired by then, the latter had been a very successful director of the Gelehrten-schule³⁷ in Frankfurt since 1864, and over the decades had sedulously

33 Heinrici, 'Referat über die Probeschrift des Repetenten G.A. Deißmann: Die Formel ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ untersucht', 9.6.1892. For a transcript see Appendix 1, d.

34 *En Chr*, 71.

35 *SD*, 50.

36 *SD*, 51.

37 i.e. roughly corresponding to English Grammar Schools.

accumulated a comprehensive collection of Greek prepositions from classical literature, which he now made freely available to his young colleague. It was here where Deissmann first began to comprehend 'was treue Kleinarbeit im Laufe eines Gelehrtenlebens leisten kann'.³⁸ The septuagenarian's indefatigable methodology greatly facilitated Deissmann's research in the non-biblical literary corpus, but it also inspired him with resolve for his own research, for to be able to make a thoroughgoing and well-grounded evaluation of the prepositional *ἐν* required precisely this kind of systematic tenacity.

In den Monaten, als ich mich als Spezialisten für das Wort 'in' gern necken ließ, habe ich versucht, den Sprachgebrauch der gesamten literarischen Gräzität, soweit die Präposition *ἐν* mit dem persönlichen Dativ in Frage kam, festzustellen.³⁹

With 'gesamte Gräzität' he also included the Septuagint and NT, which Mommsen did not seem to have trawled. When Deissmann embarked on this wearisome undertaking, the Hatch and Redpath concordance for the Septuagint had not even reached the letter epsilon. Thus, although the double-columned layout of the old Leander von Ess edition made his task somewhat easier, he was forced to search through the entire 650,000 words, to hunt down where the tiny two-letter preposition occurred.⁴⁰ Despite its mechanical aspect, Deissmann was unabashedly proud of this particular achievement and claimed, not without some justification, that he had begun,

... um des *ἐν* willen, die ganze Septuaginta rasch im Fluge durchzulesen und habe sie in einigen Wochen auch glücklich bewältigt ... Man kann zweifeln, ob es viele abendländische Zeitgenossen gibt, die den ganzen Septuagintatext gelesen haben. Meist wurde und wird er nur stellenweise oder buchweise benutzt ... und ich übertreibe nicht, wenn ich sage, daß mir jene Septuagintawochen die Entdeckung einer griechischen Weltbibel bedeuteten, ohne welche die andere griechische Weltbibel, diejenige, die den Nachlaß der Evangelisten und Apostel gerettet hat, nicht verstanden werden kann.⁴¹

38 *SD*, 52.

39 *SD*, 51.

40 'My work was much helped at that time by the fact that there was no possibility for me to use the Septuagint Concordance. That seems to be a paradox; but it is true: Hatch and Redpath in those days had not got as far as the preposition "*ἐν*", and in consequence I was driven to reading through the whole of the Septuagint for myself, with the special view of discovering the uses of "*ἐν*." I wonder whether it would have been possible for me to read the whole Old Testament in Greek otherwise.' *Selly Oak Lectures*, 165. See further *SD*, 52.

41 *SD*, 52.

Even though he wrote this almost thirty years after the event (1925), he appears to have inflated the undertaking in his mind, for instead of reading ‘den ganzen Septuagintatext’ he had merely trawled it, to discover how its writers had employed the prepositional ἐν. By Deissmann’s own account, he scanned with rapid speed but little concern for textual comprehension, and scoured ‘nicht nur Wortbilder, sondern auch Zeilenbilder mit einem einzigen Blick’.⁴² Ironically, since his scanning was narrowly focused he subjected himself to the very same charge of selective content utilisation that he would later bring against his colleagues. To be sure, he engaged sufficiently with the wider context of each ἐν to discover that the Septuagint was something other than a Semitic book in Greek dress, as was commonly taught at that time.⁴³ Even thirteen years later, Frederick Cornwallis Conybeare (1856–1924) and St. George William Joseph Stock (1850–1922) still clung with stubborn determination to the by then largely discredited view that:

If we want to understand the Greek of the New Testament, it is plain that we must compare it with the Greek of the Old, which belongs, like it, to post-classical times, is colloquial rather than literary, and is so deeply affected by Semitic influences as often to be hardly Greek at all, but rather Hebrew in disguise.⁴⁴

However, Deissmann’s systematic scanning had convinced him that, far from being ‘Hebrew in disguise’, the Greek of the Septuagint reflects the process of the Hellenisation of Semitic monotheism, and consequently it should be read and understood as a Greek book in its own right. That it is a translation goes without saying, yet since it does not slavishly follow Hebrew *Vorlagen* (as Aquila’s, for example), its text is frequently ‘ersetzend’ instead of ‘übersetzend’.⁴⁵ His initial findings were later confirmed by his papyrological research (see ch. 1.4), and in 1902 he presented a paper at the International Congress for Oriental Studies in Hamburg, where he urged that Septuagint studies be reoriented in line with his findings.⁴⁶ Yet three years later Conybeare and Stock were still arguing that

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ F.C. Conybeare/ St.G.W.J. Stock, *Grammar of Septuagint Greek. With selected readings, vocabularies, and updated indexes*, Peabody, 1995 (1905), 21.

⁴⁵ *SD*, 53.

⁴⁶ *SD*, 53.

the language of the Septuagint, so far as it is Greek at all, is the colloquial Greek of Alexandria, but it is Biblical Geek, because it contains so large an element, which is not Hellenic, but Semitic ... One of our difficulties in explaining the meaning of the Greek in the Septuagint is that it is often doubtful whether the Greek *had* a meaning to those who wrote it.⁴⁷

Despite a general lack of enthusiasm for Deissmann's chosen research topic amongst theologians, historians and philologists alike, he had succeeded in upgrading his status midstream from *Lizentiaten* to *Habilitand*, and on 14 May 1892 successfully submitted his completed *Habilitationsschrift*. Still, it must be emphasised that he neither aimed for nor obtained a doctoral degree with his habilitation, although Marburg certainly offered this option (see ch. 1.2). In fact, he received his first doctorate *honoris causa* – from Marburg – at Christmas 1897, in recognition of his two *Bibelstudien* books, when he was already teaching at Heidelberg.

He had originally started on a 'sensible' theological dissertation for his licentiate, but this was now transformed into an unconventional but respectable philological *Habilitationsschrift*. It took Heinrici three and a half weeks to assess it, before he concluded:

Fasse ich mein Urtheil zusammen, so darf ich sagen, daß die Abhandlung mir eine fruchtbare und förderliche Behandlung einer wichtigen exegetischen Frage darzubieten scheint und ich daher sie als ein Specimen eruditionis im Sinne und nach der Bitte des Verf.[assers] anzusehen beantrage.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, the dissertation failed to excite his enthusiasm, for he remained unconvinced by its fundamental argument that Paul had created the ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ formula as a 'bequemer Ausdruck' for his Christology. On the other hand, he commended Deissmann's methodical treatment of the Septuagint, as well as his observations and rejection of 'Judengriechisch'.⁴⁹

The dissertation, together with Heinrici's written assessment, was then passed on to the 34-year-old Dekan of the Faculty, Adolf Jülicher,⁵⁰ who endorsed Heinrici's general appraisal, adding: 'Der

47 Conybeare/ Stock, 22–3 (Italics their own).

48 Heinrici, 'Referat'. See Appendix 1, d.

49 GAD had cautioned: 'Das Griechisch der LXX darf nicht mit dem von den jüdischen Hellenisten gesprochenen Griechisch identifiziert werden'. *En Chr*, 134.

50 Although young, he had a reputation as an analytical thinker: 'wer etwas lernen und nicht gerade sich unterhalten will, wird viel besser an Jülicher gewiesen, als

Fleiß und die Sorgfalt D's verdienen die höchste Anerkennung'. Yet he too was not overly impressed, and went so far as to say:

Die sprachgeschichtlichen Untersuchungen D's in dem ersten Teile der Arbeit erscheinen mir fast als etwas Überflüssiges, denn ich meine, dass man zu dem richtigen Sinne des paulinischen ἐν χρ. auch ohne diese [?. illegible] durch die griechische und judengriechische Litteratur gelangt wäre.

Notwithstanding this critique, Jülicher's report is particularly significant in that he was the first to recognise formally Deissmann's aptitude for postclassical Greek philology and lucid writing style, for he concluded his *Referat* with the prescient prediction: 'Wenn er eine gewisse Steifheit überwinden haben wird, so darf man – anliegende Arbeit gibt dazu das Recht – noch recht tüchtige Leistungen von ihm erwarten.'⁵¹

When Deissmann received the news that his *Habilitationsschrift* had been accepted, he immediately began preparations to have it printed by the Marburg publishers, N.G. Elwert, hoping that it may appear in bookshops with the beginning of the winter semester in October. However, to save costs with the copies he was expected to provide at his dissertation defence, Heinrici suggested that he print only a small number of part one for that event,⁵² but since Jülicher considered that section as almost superfluous Deissmann ended up producing merely the second, a copy of which is still held at the Marburg State Archive.

The public dissertation defence was his final hurdle before he could be formally habilitated, and took place at noon on Thursday, 20 October, in the University's assembly hall. An open invitation had been posted and details printed on the front cover of the inaugural dissertation itself;⁵³ his

an Harnack'. F. Overbeck, cited by H.J. Klauck, in G. Schwaiger, ed., *Historische Kritik in der Theologie. Beiträge zu ihrer Geschichte*, Göttingen, 1980, 99.

51 Jülicher, 'Correferat über die Probeschrift des Repetenten G.A. Deissmann: "Die Formel ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ untersucht"', 3.7.1892. For a transcript see Appendix 1, e.

52 GAD, letter to Theological Faculty, 8.8.1892. The dissertation's first part dealt primarily with Greek philology, the second with GAD's thesis that Paul had conceived the formula ἐν Χριστῷ specifically for his Christology.

53 Besides the title, the cover stated that it was an 'Inaugural-Dissertation, welche samt den beigefügten Thesen zur Erlangung der Würde eines Licentiaten der Theologie sowie der *venia docendi* mit Genehmigung der Hochwürdigen Theologischen Facultät zu Marburg am 20. Oktober 1892, 12 Uhr, in der Aula der Universität öffentlich verteidigen wird G. Adolf Deissmann, Repetent an dem Seminarium Philippinum. Opponenten: Lic. theol. Johannes Bauer, Privatdocent an der Universität Marburg; Lic. theol. Bernhard Bess, Privatdocent an der Universität Marburg.'

two disputants were *Privatdozenten* and licentiate theologians. Johannes Bauer (1860–1930), whose recent *Habilitationsschrift* had only just been published,⁵⁴ and Bernhard Bess (1863–?), whose first monograph appeared less than a year earlier.⁵⁵ No record of the *apologia* appears to exist, but Mirbt, who had by now succeeded Jülicher as Dekan, wrote a brief note, probably to the Kultusminister, confirming that ‘... am heutigen Tage Herr Lic. theol. Adolf Deißmann als Privatdozent an der geistigen theologischen Fakultät sich habilitiert hat’.⁵⁶

Deissmann had never thought of his habilitation as an end in itself, but rather as a necessary learning exercise to gain clearer insight into the language, culture and history of early Christianity, since he fully intended to return to the *Pfarramt* after completion of his studies (see ch. 1.2). Nonetheless, his dissertation initiated him into the world of academia and drew him away from parish ministry even though his prepositional research had created little interest and few recognised its implications. However, since not even his *Doktorvater* and Faculty Dekan showed much enthusiasm for the topic, it is no wonder that it took some time before its significance began to be understood by other scholars. Yet three decades later he listed 27 separate works, which either sprang from, or were influenced by his *Habilitationsschrift*.⁵⁷

Deissmann was fighting an uphill battle against deeply entrenched beliefs within the international fraternity of biblical scholarship. In England, for instance, the Grammarian Samuel Gosnell Green (1822–1905) argued that the NT writers only used ἐν with the dative because a similar Hebrew preposition had affected early Greek speaking Christians via the Septuagint. His explanation of the Pauline formula bordered on mysticism:

54 *Die Trostreden des Gregorius von Nyssa in ihrem Verhältnis zur antiken Rhetorik*, Marburg, 1892.

55 *Zur Geschichte des Constanzer Konzils, Studien I; Frankreichs Kirchenpolitik und der Prozess des Jean Petit*, Marburg, 1891. Bess was editor of *ZKG* since 1891, and in Feb. 1912 wrote a ten-page letter to GAD (‘Du’ form), together with a preliminary contract, in an unsuccessful attempt at securing his co-editorship of a new publication, the *Theologische Zeitschrift*, planned to be launched that summer.

56 Mirbt, note (unaddressed), 20.10.1892.

57 The lengthy listing of what he termed the ‘wichtigsten Arbeiten’ occurs in the second edition of *Paulus* (1925), 111–2, n.1, whereas the first edition (1911) merely refers to his *Habilitationsschrift*.

The frequent phrase ἐν Χριστῷ (so ἐν Κυρίῳ, &c.), means, not simply attached to Christ as a follower, but *in Christ*, in the most intimate abiding fellowship. So “Christ in you, me,” [*sic*] Rom. viii. 10 ...⁵⁸

Two years after Deissmann’s *Habilitationsschrift* was published, Friedrich Blass – a widely respected classical philologist at the University of Halle, and one of the foremost authorities on the language of the NT – wrote an article in which he declared, ‘das neutestamentliche Griechisch ist als ein besonderes, seinen eigenen Gesetzen folgendes anzuerkennen’.⁵⁹ His grammatical dominance was so pervasive that his views left a very long shadow indeed. For more than eighty years later, the standard (revised) Blass-Debrunner Greek grammar – by then in its tenth edition – still claimed that the NT ‘use of ἐν owes its extension especially to the imitation of Hebrew constructions ...’; Deissmann’s work received only grudging acknowledgement:

The phrase ἐν Χριστῷ (Κυρίῳ), which is copiously appended by Paul to the most varied concepts, utterly defies definite interpretations; cf. Deissmann, *Die nt. Formel ‘in Christo Jesu’*, Marburg, 1892.⁶⁰

This continual, almost defeatist, shoulder-shrugging by theologians and philologists alike, was perhaps most colourfully described by the theologian and philosopher August Detlef Christian Twisten (1789–1876), when he asked:

Was heisst das: in Gott leben? Ein hebraisierender Ausdruck, den zu meinem Ärger auch Fichte⁶¹ immer im Munde führt. Von gleicher Art ist das Aufgehen in Gott. Das sind hohle Worte, die kein Mensch versteht, und vor denen gerade deswegen jeder Ehrfurcht hat, als läge recht etwas Hohes darin.⁶²

Deissmann repeated these same sentiments in his dissertation, but concluded with a stern challenge against such arcane presuppositions.

58 S.G. Green, *Handbook to the grammar of the Greek Testament, together with a complete vocabulary, and an examination of the chief New Testament synonyms*, London, 1880, 261–2.

59 *TLZ*, 19, 1894, 338.

60 F. Blass/ A. Debrunner, *A Greek grammar of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*, R.W. Funk, transl., London, 1961^{9/10} (1896), 117–8. The 17th German edition of 1990 makes use of GAD’s *Bst* and *LvO*.

61 Immanuel Hermann Fichte (1797–1879), German philosopher.

62 A. Twisten, cited by GAD, in *En Chr*, 73. Twisten succeeded Schleiermacher and was the immediate predecessor of Bernhard Weiss at Berlin (see ch. 1.4) who, in turn, was succeeded by GAD.

Hört man z. B. in einer Predigt, dass der Sünder seinen Frieden “in Christo” findet, dann weiss man weder, wie das zu denken ist, noch auch – und das ist das Schlimme – wie das zu erreichen ist. “In Christo”? Soll das heissen: “in einem Raisonement über den Menschen Jesus der evangelischen Geschichte” oder “in dem Vertrauen auf eine Thatsache, durch welche Gott versöhnt ist und die ich kurzerhand “Christus” nenne”, oder “in einem persönlichen Gebetsverkehre mit dem lebendigen Christus”? Die Wendung “in Christo” gehört heute zu den vieldeutigsten unserer gesamten religiösen Terminologie ... Jedenfalls darf keiner, der das “in Christo” gedankenlos braucht, sich einbilden, er rede paulinisch.⁶³

Deissmann's study offered for the first time a systematic linguistic explanation of what hitherto had been primarily based on tradition. He demonstrated that the Greek preposition ἐν must be understood in a locative sense, but also relate to a living person; it was not meant to be a replacement for διὰ, or any other preposition, and the accompanying dative of the formula does not signify the ‘historical’ Christ or his work.⁶⁴ Instead, it characterises the metaphysical relationship of a Christian's spiritual being (*Sichbefinden*) with a living but spiritual Christ. In an attempt at elucidating this idea Deissmann resorted to metaphorical language: air is inside us, he wrote, since we inhale it, yet at the same time we are also ‘in’ air (locative), since it fully envelopes us.⁶⁵ His research further convinced him that Paul's formula is neither a Semitism, nor Septuagint-dependent Greek, but the Apostle's own creation in the particular way in which he used it for his fundamental Christological philosophy.⁶⁶

Despite the value of Deissmann's research, *Die neutestamentliche Formel ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ untersucht* was not one of his enduring works and is barely known today. Nevertheless, he successfully accomplished with it what many before him had shied away from: a systematic

63 *En Chr*, 133.

64 *En Chr*, 79–80.

65 *En Chr*, 98. He also employed this metaphor in *Paulus*, 87. D.J. Timms, in his unpublished PhD dissertation, ‘The Pauline use of ἐν Christo: Re-examining meaning and origins – a linguistic analysis’, concluded: ‘It is appropriate to regard Adolf Deissmann as the father of the modern mysticism interpretation of ἐν Χριστῷ.’ Macquarie University, 2000, 237.

66 ‘Paulus hat ihn gebildet, um dadurch irgend etwas Eigentümliches, was nur ihn interessierte, auszudrücken. Er ist der Bildner der Formel, nicht in dem Sinne, als hätte er zum ersten Male ἐν mit dem persönlichen Singular verbunden, sondern so, dass er unter Benutzung eines bereits vorhandenen Sprachgebrauches einen ganz neuen terminus technicus schuf’. *En Chr*, 70.

philological study of an apparently unfruitful grammatical peculiarity within the Greek NT texts. Although his findings created no headlines, it was a crucial first step towards his subsequent discovery that the commonly-held idea of widespread Semitisms in the NT is unsupportable.⁶⁷

1.4. *Bibelstudien*: breakthrough to discovery

After his habilitation Deissmann began to work almost immediately at the Marburg University as *Privatdozent*; at first it was only a part-time job for non-staffed teaching, and paid for by private tuition fees. At the end of January he applied to the Faculty for an additional subsidy, but it took another three months before the university registrar replied that his request was granted and he entered into contractual state employment. It was a modest stipend,⁶⁸ for his position had not changed; but at least it enabled him to continue his philological research for a new and much more consequential book than his initial one. Moreover, he had now, as it were, a 'foot in the university door'. The agreement was backdated to 1 April, 1893 and for administrative purposes, this became the official starting date from which Deissmann's employment as a civil servant was reckoned; it ended only upon retirement 41 years later to the day (see ch. 9.2). Although he was now

67 K. Beyer wrote: 'So standen am Anfang dieses Jahrhundert zwei Lager gegenüber, die etwa durch die Namen Wellhausen – Torrey – Burney auf der einen und Deissmann – Moulton – Radermacher auf der anderen Seite charakterisiert werden können. Und daran hat sich im wesentlichen bis heute nichts geändert. Ja, man muß sagen, daß Skepsis gegenüber allen Versuchen, eine neutestamentliche Stelle vom Semitischen her zu erklären, die Regel ist.' *Semitische Syntax im Neuen Testament*, I, *Satzlehre*, Teil I, Göttingen, 1968² (1962), 7–8. But G.H.R. Horsley observed: 'Despite the promises of the title of K. Beyer's *Semitische Syntax im NT* ... this book does not provide that demonstration, even for the temporal and conditional clauses which he investigates in such detail. Indeed, it is clear that his concern is not really with Jewish Greek as such but with Semitic influence on the NT.' 'The fiction of "Jewish Greek"', *New Documents illustrating early Christianity*, 5, Sydney, 1989, 31, see also 82.

68 The official letter states: '... [ich] benachrichtige hierdurch ... daß der Herr Minister ... Ihnen ein Stipendium von jährlich 500 M. vom 1. April d. J. ab auf zwei Jahre bewilligt ... und dieselbe durch ihre Hauptkasse in viertel-jährlichen Raten praenumerando zahlen zu lassen'. Steinmetz to GAD, 26.4.1893.

formally employed as a Repetent,⁶⁹ he also taught concurrently at the Faculty's closely linked Seminarium Philippinum.

While doing some research in the University library, some time during 1893, Deissmann – by a fortunate stroke of serendipity – briefly noticed a new publication, which his colleague, the Indogermanist Wilhelm Schulze (1863–1935), was reading; it was a philological volume on papyri entitled, *Berliner Griechische Urkunden*.⁷⁰ The photographic reproductions of ancient autographs immediately caught Deissmann's attention. But no sooner had he begun to thumb through its pages than he noted a curious Greek phrase, and, as he later pointed out, it is this chance find that marks a watershed in his life:

Dieser Augenblick bedeutete mir eine plötzliche Befruchtung, für die ich nicht dankbar genug sein kann: er wies mich in die Papyri, oder besser gesagt, zu den unliterarischen Resten der Umwelt der Septuaginta und des Neuen Testaments.⁷¹

What he saw was the phrase ἔτους ἑ[κ]του καὶ τριακοστοῦ [τῆς] Καίσαρος κρατήσεως θεοῦ υἱοῦ.⁷² Its honorific epithet (θεοῦ υἱοῦ) fed his growing suspicion that the Greek of the NT might, in fact, not be so very different from the *lingua franca* of early Christians, and if this proved to be true, the NT could then be read as a kind of repository of 1st century Hellenistic (i.e. *koine*) Greek.⁷³ Such an idea flew directly in the face of contemporary consensual teaching on the character of that language. One long 'established' tenet was: "das Neue Testament" redet die Sprache der Septuaginta, implying that the latter was written in a distinctively idiomatic language, well known to the NT writers, but not spoken by the general public.⁷⁴ The corollary of this kind of reasoning was that no parallels of such 'biblical' Greek should have existed outside the Septuagint and Scripture. But the papyri, whose publications rapidly became a torrent of texts with considerable linguistic prospects, had the potential to raise serious questions which

69 This academic teaching position was primarily provincial and more commonly associated with Tübingen. The position formed an integral part of the academic staff in non-Prussian universities and seminaries. See also *Ev. Wbr.* 14.5. 1917, 4.

70 The item, Pap. Berol. 7006, was edited by Fritz Weber, *BGU*, 1, 6, 1893, 174. 71 *SD*, 53.

72 See further *Bst*, 167, also *LvO*⁴, 294–5.

73 For a concise discussion on koine, see Horsley, 'Koine or Atticism – a misleading dichotomy', *New Documents*, 5, 41–8.

74 *Bst*, 59.

challenged the consensus – but someone was needed to articulate that challenge to the theologians.

The first papyri finds had already been made in the 18th century, but the strongest influx to reach European museums began to arrive during the last two decades of the 19th century. This unexpectedly large quantity of ancient texts provided a new lease of life for the study of antiquity, including its languages, history, culture, law, economics and religion. By the late 1900s, many thousands of papyri had been found and catalogued, with a considerable number published.⁷⁵ Deissmann began to immerse himself in the mass of these published papyri, as well as some of the published inscriptions.

Ich las mich bald in viele ägyptische Papyrusblätter und Mittelmeerweltinschriften ein und konnte die Fülle des auf mich einströmenden Materials an sprach- und religionsgeschichtlichen Parallelen ... zur griechischen Bibel kaum bergen.⁷⁶

Most of his textual database had, therefore, been available for some time,⁷⁷ but it was his methodical analysis of this material that was to distinguish his work.⁷⁸

It was around this time that he first began to correspond with the historian and papyrologist, Ulrich Wilcken (1862–1944).⁷⁹ But from

75 Stuart Pickering's claim that 'by the late 1900s ... some 40,000 had been published' appears excessive. See, 'Papyri, Biblical and early Christian', in J.D. Douglas, ed., *New twentieth-century encyclopedia of religious knowledge*, Grand Rapids, 1991² (1955), 626.

76 *SD*, 53.

77 e.g. *BGU*, *SIG*, or *IMA*.

78 J.S. Banks wrote: 'He sets himself to illustrate from the great collections of inscriptions and papyrus records published at Berlin and Vienna in 1895 the orthography, grammatical forms, and especially the meanings and idioms, of the N.T. text.' 'New Testament Greek', *ET*, 9, 6, 1898, 272. J.H. Moulton later wrote: 'But the use of the papyri is the most characteristic feature of the book [i.e. *BS*]. There the material has been accumulating during the last ten years with bewildering rapidity. How rapid the growth has been is best realized by observing that in the four years since Deissmann's *Neue Bibelstudien* was published there have appeared four goodly volumes of papyrus texts from Drs. Grenfell and Hunt, – apart from the theological *Amherst Papyri*, – while the Berlin papyri have grown from one and a half volumes to two and a half big folios; moreover, the *Inscriptiones Maris Aegaei*, from which Deissmann gathers great spoil, are now in three volumes instead of one.' *ET*, 12, 8, 1901, 362.

79 See G. Poethke, 'Ulrich Wilcken (1862–1944)', in M. Capasso, ed., *Hermæ: scholars and scholarship in papyrology*, Pisa, 2007, 81–96.

Deissmann's writings it appears that it took another decade before the two professors met each other for the first time: when Wilcken came to visit Heidelberg for a few days in early October 1901.⁸⁰ Deissmann proudly acknowledged the latter's influence on his philological work, and wrote of '... zahlreichen immer ergiebigen Begegnungen und einem dreißigjährigen brieflichen Austausch, bei dem ich immer der Nehmer war ...'.⁸¹

He had somewhat oddly – but quite deliberately – entitled his new book *Bibelstudien*, although this technical work is not a devotional nor inspirational aid to the Bible.⁸² It is the wordy subtitle⁸³ that was meant to alert the reader that the book is a philological treatise on a historical aspect of the Greek language and has little to do with religion itself.

Bibelstudien is dedicated to one of Deissmann's former teachers at Tübingen, Carl Heinrich von Weizsäcker (1822–99), and also to his *Doktorvater* at Marburg, Georg Heinrici. The book is divided into six chapters, with the third one taking up some 40% of the entire work and entitled: 'Beiträge zur Sprachgeschichte der griechischen Bibel'.⁸⁴ It is in this chapter where the author developed and tested his new methodology for his thesis that the language of the NT reflects the contemporary vernacular, and successfully began to demolish the deep-rooted myth of a 'biblical' Greek. He did this through philological discussions of 75 Septuagint words, idioms and phrases,⁸⁵ most of

80 So the AK, 7–9.10.1901; see further *SD*, 55.

81 *SD*, 55.

82 'Bibelstudien nenne ich die folgenden Untersuchungen, weil sie sich alle mehr oder weniger mit den geschichtlichen Fragen beschäftigen, welche die Bibel, insbesondere die griechische Bibel, der Wissenschaft stellt. Ich bin freilich nicht der Ansicht, als gebe es eine besondere Bibelwissenschaft. Wissenschaft ist Methode ... die Wissenschaft, die hier in Betracht kommt, ist dieselbe, mag sie sich mit Plato oder den siebenzig Dolmetschern und den Evangelien beschäftigen. Das sollte selbstverständlich sein.' *Bst*, vii.

83 *Beiträge, zumeist aus den Papyri und Inschriften, zur Geschichte der Sprache, des Schrifttums und der Religion des hellenistischen Judentums und des Urchristentums*.

84 The other chapters are, I: Griechische Transkriptionen des Tetragrammaton; II: Ein epigraphisches Denkmal des alexandrinischen Alten Testaments; IV: Zur biblischen Personen- und Namenkunde; V: Prolegomena zu den biblischen Briefen und Episteln; VI: Spicilegium.

85 i.e. ἀγάπη, ἀγγαρεύω, ἀδελφός, ἀναστρέφωμαι, ἀναφάλατος, ἀναφέρω, ἀντλήμι-πτωρ, ἀντλήμις, ἀξίωμα, ἀπό, ἀρεταλογία, ἀρετή, ἀρχισωματοφύλαξ, ἄφεις, βασιάζω, βεβαίως, γένημα, γογγύζω, γραμματεὺς, γράφω, διάδοχος, διαδεχόμενος, δικαίος, διῶρυξ, εἰς, ἐκτός, εἰ μή, ἐν, ἐνταφιαστής, ἐντυγχάνων, ἐντευξίς,

which occur in the NT as well, but had thus far been considered as exclusively ‘biblical’ or ‘Hebraistic’. Yet by comparing their usage with a range of contemporaneous non-literary and often fragmentary texts from papyrus or inscriptional sources he demonstrated successfully that each one of them belonged, in fact, to the *lingua franca* of that time. What Deissmann did, in essence, was to amalgamate papyrology – which scholars like Wilcken regarded simply as a branch of philology – with NT linguistics; and through this he originated the academic discipline of NT philology (see ch. 3.6).

The point Deissmann made with his new methodology was sound, although it could perhaps be argued that isolated occurrences of individual words outside the ‘biblical’ corpus are insufficient evidence for the existence of an entire language branch (i.e. late Greek vernacular). However, he did not merely write comparative philology, centred on a few papyri, or amass pointless examples; instead, he focused on noteworthy words contained within non-literary texts; on morphology, orthography and syntax – and that not only from Egyptian papyri and ostraca, but also of inscriptions from diverse other locations. By demonstrating their common, ‘secular’ usage – ranging from funerary stelae to reminder lists, and from building inscriptions to personal letters – he was able to contextualise these words philologically for the first time, and thereby disprove the whole idea of a ‘biblical’ Greek.

It was not a smooth battleground that Deissmann had picked, and he described what he was up against as follows:

So kam es zu den in meinen ‘Bibelstudien’ (1895) und ‘Neue Bibelstudien’ (1897) niedergelegten Forschungen, die vor allem die eine Wirkung hatten, daß das von Theologen und Philologen unnötig und gewaltsam isolierte besondere ‘Bibelgriechisch’ ... aus dieser Einzelhaft befreit wurde.⁸⁶

Nevertheless, his broad generalisation could give the impression that no other serious philological work was being done on the Greek Bible, or that he was a lone voice within the halls of academia. This was far

ἐντυχία, ἐργοδιώκτης, εὐύλατος, εὐχαριστέω, τό θεμέλιον, ἴδιος, ἱλαστήριος, ἱλαστήριον, ἰστός, καρπώω, κατά, λειτουργέω, λειτουργία, λειτουργικός, λίψ, λογεία, μείζοτερος, ὁ μικρός, νόμος, ὄνομα, ὀψώνιον, παράδεισος, παρεπίδημος, παστοφόριον, περιδέξιον, περίστασις, περιτέμνω, πῆχυς, ποτισμός, πράκτορ, πρεσβύτερος, πρόθεσις, πυρράχης, σιτομέτριον, σκευοφύλαξ, σπυρίς, σφυρίς, στάσις, συγγενής, συνέχω, σῶμα, ὑποζύγιον, φίλος, υἱός (τέκνον), ὁ υἱός τοῦ θεοῦ.

86 SD, 53–4.

from true, as his closest British friend, James Hope Moulton (1863–1917), rightly observed: ‘Deissmann was not of course the original patentee of his central thesis’.⁸⁷ The first ‘modern’ scholar, who used Greek inscriptions to elucidate parts of the NT, is likely to have been the German classicist and palaeontologist, Johann Ernst Immanuel Walch (1725–78), whose work, *Observationes in Matthaeum ex graecis inscriptionibus*, was published posthumously in 1779. This was followed in 1814 by *Observationum ex marmoribus graecis sacrarum specimen*, written by the Danish bishop Friedrich Münter (1761–1830).⁸⁸ Fifty years later, Joseph Barber Lightfoot (1828–89), professor of divinity at Cambridge University, commented presciently on a NT word that had until then only been found in Herodotus:

You are not to suppose that the word had fallen out of use in the interval, only that it had not been used in the books which remain to us: probably it had been part of the common speech all along ... if we could only recover letters that ordinary people wrote to each other without any thought of being literary, we shall have the greatest possible help for the understanding of the language of the New Testament generally.⁸⁹

According to James Rendel Harris (1852–1941),⁹⁰ it seems that Lightfoot may, in fact, have been indebted to Edward Masson for this often quoted prediction.⁹¹ For two years earlier, the latter had published substantially similar thoughts in the prolegomena to his translation of Winer, a grammar with which Lightfoot was certainly

87 Moulton, ‘Deissmann’s “Bible Studies”’, *ET*, 12, 8, 1901, 362. See also W.L. Lorimer, ‘Deissmannism before Deissmann’, *ET*, 32, 7, 1921, 330. It appears that the pejorative term ‘Deissmannism’ was coined by Lorimer, see also ch. 9.4. On Moulton, see Horsley, ‘Moulton, James Hope (1863–1917)’, in S.E. Porter, ed., *Dictionary of Biblical Criticism and Interpretation*, London, 2007, 230–1.

88 Compare *LvO*, 7, n. 1.

89 Quoted in G.R. Treloar, *Lightfoot the Historian: the nature and role of history in the life and thought of J.B. Lightfoot (1828–1889) as churchman and scholar*, *WUNT*, II/103, Tübingen, 1998, 319. Also cited in German by GAD, *LvO*, 42, n. 3.

90 Harris had held various distinguished academic positions in succession, at the Johns Hopkins University, Haverford College, Cambridge University and Leyden University (NT Greek, theology and paleography). After rejecting Congregationalism during the 1880s he joined the Society of Friends (see ch. 8.1) and in 1904 became the first director of studies at the Quaker’s ‘Woodbrooke’ study centre in Birmingham.

91 J.R. Harris, ‘The so-called Biblical Greek’, *ET*, 25, 2, 1913, 54–5.

familiar. However, because of the highly compressed translator's prolegomena, where Masson fleetingly stated his own understanding of Greek linguistic history, Harris speculated that since the translator's views clashed with the original author, Masson may have been editorially curtailed. Writing a full generation prior to Deissmann, Masson had not arrived at his conclusions via the papyri, but used his knowledge of Modern Greek instead;⁹² nevertheless, his linguistic conclusions were astonishingly advanced.

The diction of the New Testament is the plain and unaffected Hellenic of the Apostolic Age, as employed by Greek-speaking Christians when discoursing on religious subjects. It cannot be shown that the New Testament writers introduced any word or expression whatever, peculiar to themselves; ... the history and doctrines of Christianity had been for some years discussed in Greek before any part of the New Testament was written ... Apart from the Hebraisms – the number of which has, for the most part, been grossly exaggerated – the New Testament may be considered as exhibiting the only genuine *facsimile* of the colloquial diction employed by *unsophisticated* Grecian gentlemen of the 1st century, who spoke without pedantry – as ἰδιῶται and not as σοφισταί.⁹³

These brief excerpts lead to the plausible conclusion that Moulton alluded to Lightfoot and Masson as 'the original patentee[s] of [Deissmann's] central thesis', for Harris' assumption that Moulton would have been unaware of Masson's prolegomena, in the front pages of the very book he was to re-edit himself, is certainly untenable.⁹⁴ Deissmann was, therefore, not unique in his work on the language of the NT, but thus far no one had been able to come up with a tangible methodology that could systematically prove what this 'biblical' language really was.

Whether from a philological or a theological perspective, linguistic research was not lacking for the NT, but most newer publications of the late 1880s and early 1890s were still very much under the spell of 'biblical' Greek, as a few of the more prominent titles demonstrate. In

92 He was professor of modern history at Athens University in the 1830s.

93 E. Masson, cited in Harris, 'The so-called Biblical Greek', 55.

94 Harris knew Moulton well, but concluded his brief article with: 'Even Professor Moulton, who had the re-editing of Winer in hand, does not seem to have been aware that any one had arrived some fifty years since, by the road of modern Greek, at the main conclusions of the papyrologists.' Harris, 'The so-called Biblical Greek', 55.

1889 Edwin Hatch (1835–89) published *Essays in Biblical Greek*,⁹⁵ seven years later, Hermann Cremer (1834–1903) produced his eighth edition of *Biblisch-theologisches Wörterbuch der neutestamentlichen Gräzität* (Gotha, 1866). Furthermore, two NT grammars also came on the market, both with similarly revealing titles: *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Sprachidioms* (1894 and 1897), by Paul Schmiedel,⁹⁶ and the first edition of Blass' *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch* (see ch. 1.1).

Deissmann's closest English counterpart was certainly James Moulton at Cambridge (1887–1901), and later (1908–17) Greenwood Professor of Hellenistic Greek and Indo-European philology at Manchester. In the same year in which Deissmann published *Bibelstudien* he, too, had his first major book printed: *An introduction to the study of NT Greek*. The two scholars agreed on their central philological postulates; but it was Deissmann, not Moulton, who first developed the method of systematic papyrological comparison with the NT texts to demonstrate the latter's vernacular roots, an achievement for which Moulton explicitly credited his German friend. Thus, he wrote in a review of the combined 1901 English translation of his *Bibelstudien* and *Neue Bibelstudien*:

Of course there are few scholars who would dare to confess that they had not read the books in the original, for they undeniably belong to the exceedingly small class to which the much-abused term 'epoch-making' properly belongs ... Deissmann ... is the first to seize upon the new material that the last decade provided, and use it in a way which gives us a wholly new and indispensable tool for the study of the Greek Bible ... the use of the papyri is the most characteristic feature of the book.⁹⁷

Since Deissmann's philological approach to the study of the NT language was novel for theologians as well as philologists, it made him vulnerable

95 Full title: *Essays in biblical Greek. Studies on the value and use of the Septuagint, on the meanings of words and psychological terms in Biblical Greek, on quotations from the Septuagint, on Origen's revision of Job, and on the Text of Ecclesiasticus*, Amsterdam, 1970 (1889). Hatch's book is squarely founded on the presumption of Semitic Greek.

96 Schmiedel's complete revision of Winer's *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Sprachidioms als sichere Grundlage der neutestamentlichen Exegese*, Leipzig, 1830, appeared in two parts: *Einleitung und Formenlehre*, Göttingen, 1894, and *Syntax. Erstes Heft*, Göttingen, 1897.

97 Moulton, *ET*, 12, 8, 1901, 362. GAD's first publication in English was probably 'Prolegomena to the epistle to the Romans – a word to students of theology', *ET*, 11, 3, 109–11.

to opposition from either camp. On one side arose theological conservatives with strongly traditional views concerning the sacredness of ‘biblical languages’, and on the other were progressive philologists, whose ‘linguistic supremacy’ was based on their claim to specialist knowledge of these newly discovered texts. The latter’s low opinion of theological researchers as a group was evident, but Deissmann singled out two of his main opponents:

Ähnlich ging es mir mit der Veränderung der Gesamtauffassung vom Charakter der Sprache des Neuen Testaments. Als sich mir die Überzeugung mehr und mehr aufdrängte, daß die Apostel in der Hauptsache das unliterarische Griechisch des Volkes gesprochen und geschrieben haben, wurde diese Theorie von Hermann Cremer und Friedrich Blaß als Depravation des Neuen Testaments scharf bekämpft.⁹⁸

Cremer was professor of systematic theology in Greifswald, but served simultaneously as acting senior pastor of the local St. Mary’s Church until 1890. His thinking was underpinned by a deeply religious conviction of the inerrancy of Scripture and Paul’s teaching of justification by faith in Christ. Moreover, he enjoyed a distinguished reputation ever since his highly successful lexicon was first published in 1867. In contrast, Blass was not a trained theologian, but a leading classical philologist with a well-established name as a NT linguist. Nevertheless, as a deeply religious man, he was opposed to liberal Christianity and critical theology and, therefore, not favourably inclined towards Deissmann’s research. Even though he was in the process of changing his views on Semitisms in the NT, his *Grammatik* still betrayed his earlier convictions that the ‘New Testament Greek’ was a distinctive language with unique grammatical rules.⁹⁹ It was because of these men’s predominant but disparate philosophical viewpoints that Deissmann singled them out as chief opponents of his work.

However, similar notions were also held by the Septuagint lexicographer Edwin Hatch, who lamented that philological research in the NT was being neglected and that ‘there is no good lexicon. There is no philological commentary. There is no adequate grammar’.¹⁰⁰ Yet he did not call for a changed approach to the study of postclassical Greek; on the contrary, what he advocated was that ‘the NT language’

⁹⁸ *Ev. Wbr.*, 19.10.1918, 6.

⁹⁹ Blass, *TLZ*, 19, 1895, 487. For Blass’ philological about turn, as documented by GAD in *NBst*, see Appendix 1, f.

¹⁰⁰ Hatch, 1.

be taken seriously as a philological subject in its own right, and as historically distinct from 'secular' Greek; 'Biblical Greek', he wrote, 'is thus a language which stands by itself'.¹⁰¹

As mentioned above, the implications of the emerging mass of published papyrological and inscriptional data had also stirred the imagination of other researchers in NT linguistics, yet none had made the necessary systematic research to prove a connection between these non-literary writings and the NT texts. What Deissmann achieved was remarkable because of his innovative philological methodology by which he was able to demonstrate that the language of these ancient texts had clear parallels in the NT and Septuagint. His philological comparison between the biblical texts and the language used in the papyri, ostraca and inscriptions was a completely new approach to an old problem. Yet it provided conclusive evidence that the Greek of the NT was not dependent primarily on the Septuagint, but was squarely based on the language commonly used by Greek speakers of the 1st century, namely the Hellenistic *koine*. *Bibelstudien*, therefore, dealt a major blow to the traditional argument that the Bible was written in some kind of special language.

Deissmann's findings provoke the question how one is to account for the various grammatical styles and idiosyncratic vocabularies within the NT. He attempted to answer this in his second largest chapter (pp. 187–252), entitled 'Prolegomena zu den biblischen Briefen und Episteln'. The book's fundamental argument that the sociolinguistic and religious history of early Christianity can be studied via the vernacular usage of contemporaneous papyri and inscriptions depends to a large extent on the treatment of the idiomatic distinctions between these colloquial writings and the extra-biblical literature of that time. The corollary to his argument, however, is that since the bulk of these non-literary papyri was demonstrably written in *koine* – whose grammar, syntax, form and vocabulary are clearly reflected in the NT – the latter, as a whole, must be rooted in the same colloquial language. Since at least 21 of the 27 NT books are either letters or epistles, Deissmann reasoned that it was essential to make a distinction between these two kinds of communications, as only 'true' letters would be written in the vernacular of the day. He defined letters, therefore, as 'something non-literary', intimate and personal, intended only for the eyes of specific recipients and never for a wider public. In

101 Ibid., 11.

contrast, he described epistles as a literary art form; a genre within literature that shares with letters only their external appearance, while their content is always intended for the ears of a wider public. Form never differentiates between letters and epistles, as Isocrates' letters prove, 'sondern in letzter Linie nur die Absicht des Verfassers'.¹⁰² Although Deissmann cited various authors who had written on this topic, a difficult dilemma lay in the questions of how a writer's actual 'Absicht' could be determined, and at what point a private letter would turn into a public epistle. He reasoned that even if someone were to write to a group of people (a church or club, for example), it could be done in the form of a 'personal' letter and, therefore – depending on the writer's intent – would not necessarily constitute a public epistle, but as a letter could serve to illustrate the writer's everyday language.¹⁰³

With this weak argument Deissmann attempted to bolster his contention that most NT 'letters' were written in the non-literary *koine* instead of a special kind of Greek. However, perhaps his boldest assertion (and also one of the most difficult for him to maintain), occurred when he asserted:

Der Brief unterscheidet sich seinem innersten Wesen nach in nichts von der mündlichen Zwiesprache; er ist persönliche, vertraute Mitteilung so gut wie diese, und je mehr der Brief den Ton der Zwiesprache trifft, um so brieflicher das heisst besser ist er.¹⁰⁴

102 *Bst*, 218. Even three decades later, he wrote: 'nach dreißig Jahren dauernder Beschäftigung mit diesem Problem glaube ich sagen zu sollen, daß hier alles abhängt von der Frage der Absicht des Briefschreibers.' *SD*, 56. Eighty years thereafter, H.-J. Klauck writes: 'A. Deissmann sought to cut through the knot involved in letter classification by positing a simple dichotomy between a letter and an epistle ... An essential part of Deissmann's categorization lives on the distinction between non-literary and literary letters, which nobody denies today, and therefore Deissmann hardly deserves the sharp censure he gets in some of the more recent literature. That Deissmann's simple bifurcation of letter types is insufficient in the long run and that he made too little use of transitional categories goes without saying. Nevertheless, more sympathetic recent scholarship has demonstrated a simple way of making Deissmann's two categories of the "letter" and "epistle" more flexible, namely by combining them to make four categories.' *Ancient letters and the New Testament: a guide to context and exegesis*, D.P. Bailey, transl. and ed., Waco, 2006, 70.

103 *Bst*, 229.

104 *Bst*, 189. Thirteen years later he had become somewhat less rigid on this distinction, writing: '[ein Brief] unterscheidet sich in keiner wesentlichen Weise von der mündlichen Zwiesprache'. *LvO*, 158.

In his attempt at justifying the argument that epistles are philologically distinct from letters, he compared them with the differences between formal dialogues and private conversations, historical dramas and actual past events, or stylistic obituaries and the comforting words of a father. Epistles, he claimed, were as different from letters 'wie die Kunst von der Natur';¹⁰⁵ for letters were a reflection of the writer's actual speech, while epistles were a calculated creation of literary art. From this he concluded that letters could be used to reconstruct the 'true' vernacular of a language. But it was a rather narrow-minded thesis and heavily dependent on his tenuous notion of intent versus spontaneity. What mattered to Deissmann's mind was primarily whether the writer *intended* his work to be read by (or rather, to) a broad public audience, or by a privately casual one. This could include a family, a club, a church, or an association – regardless of size. Style, form, syntax, grammar, address, content, or vocabulary itself, are of no immediate consequence in making a distinction. For he argued that while some letters read like *libelli*, certain epistles could be full of endearing prattling with an engaging style to mask ultimately insincere motives.¹⁰⁶ As unconvincing as his basic premise may appear, he certainly did not dissociate himself from traditional systematic epistolography, for he had in mind to write a separate book on this very topic himself.¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately, like so many other commendable projects he had envisaged – one need only call to mind his lexicon (see ch. 2.6) – the consequences of WWI caused this to come to nothing as well.

The young theologian was certainly not the first to research, or indeed, to write about epistolary genres in the NT; even Eusebius had long ago shown some awareness of such matters.¹⁰⁸ Where Deissmann differed was in how he applied this knowledge to his sociolinguistic

105 *LvO*, 159.

106 *Bst*, 218. GAD made no mention of the ancient practice of reading even private letters aloud, with the corollary that they were usually written to be heard. 'Throughout antiquity even private reading was done aloud – Augustine found it strange that Ambrose read in such a way that his "eyes glanced over the pages", while "his voice and tongue were silent".' W. Doty, *Letters in primitive Christianity*, Philadelphia, 1973, 7.

107 *Bst*, 235, n. 1. GAD had already collected some material, and made a rough plan for this book, in which he intended to treat subjects such as addresses, introductions, endings and style. This is doubtless why he revisited this topic in *LvO*.

108 Eusebius, *HE*, 7.26.2.

research with regard to the *koine* of the NT. In 1699 the English philologist Richard Bentley (1662–1742) had published his *Dissertation upon the epistles of Phalaris*, in which he presented the hypothesis that Deissmann now expanded and adopted for his own use.¹⁰⁹ The latter's predecessor in Berlin, Carl Philipp Bernhard Weiss (1827–1918) had also written on this, but held firmly to the commonly accepted idea that an epistolary distinction was only necessary in private letters, as distinct from *Gemeindebriefe*.¹¹⁰ However, for Deissmann this was not specific enough, since it failed to deal with the essential nature of the manuscripts themselves and was solely conditional on who their recipients were.¹¹¹ But it appears that a few pages from Wilamowitz have managed to give him a clearer grasp of this topic than those from any other writer,¹¹² for of the sixteen times he cited him in *Bibelstudien*, ten were from these nine pages. Besides, he lamented, 'Schade, dass manche der neusten Kritiker der Paulusbriefe diese paar Seiten nicht vor sich hatten. Sie hätten dann vielleicht gemerkt, was ein Brief und was Methode ist'.¹¹³ Although his 'intent hypothesis' is too nebulous, he did succeed in calling attention to what had been overlooked before, namely that unpretentious letters could be used to demonstrate the vernacular of a language.

Deissmann had never intended *Bibelstudien* to be 'the final word' with regard to this aspect of the historical development of the Greek language. On the contrary, in the preface of the first volume he cautioned:

Wie viel ist allein noch zu thun, bis die Sprache der Septuaginta, das Verhältnis des sogenannten neutestamentlichen Griechisch zu ihr, die Geschichte der religiösen und ethischen Begriffe, des griechischen Judentums und des älteren Christentums auch nur in ihren Grundzügen deutlich geworden ist ...¹¹⁴

Five years later, when the English edition of *Bible Studies* appeared, he made it known that those ancient texts he had made use of were but a

109 *Bst*, 207, n. 2.

110 *Bst*, 205.

111 *Bst*, 205.

112 *Bst*, 218. GAD referred to Enno Friedrich Wichard Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1848–1931), one of Germany's most influential classical philologists (see also ch. 3.1). The relevant pages are from Wilamowitz's *Aristoteles und Athen*, II, Berlin, 1893, 391–9.

113 *Bst*, 218, n. 3.

114 *Bst*, vii–viii.

minute selection of a much greater quantity of historical material, for which reason he appealed for researchers to engage in this new work that he had pioneered yet could not possibly complete on his own.

I have so far availed myself of portions of the more recent discoveries ... but what remains for scholars interested in such investigations is hardly less than enormous, and is being augmented year by year. I shall be greatly pleased if yet more students set themselves seriously to labour in this field of biblical research.¹¹⁵

It is undeniable that *Bibelstudien* was a philologically groundbreaking work, and the author successfully demonstrated the overarching implications his new comparative papyrological and inscriptional methodology had for the study of early Christianity and its linguistic history. When the book appeared it began to open substantial new horizons among theologians and philologists alike; but Deissmann knew that his work had only just begun.¹¹⁶ It was crucial to keep the momentum going, especially since some leading religious conservatives remained unconvinced on account of their personal belief in divine inspiration.¹¹⁷ To persuade such influential sceptics it was imperative that he consolidate the gains made by his research, which is why *Neue Bibelstudien* followed so hard on its heels.

1.5. Backdrop to *Neue Bibelstudien*

While Deissmann was working on *Bibelstudien*, his income came from the two part-time teaching positions at the Marburg University and the local Seminary. His private life was about to change considerably, for he had fallen in love with Henriette Elisabeth Behn (1873–1955), the

115 *BS*, viii. Re: 'augmented', see Moulton, *ET*, 12, 8, 1901, 362–3.

116 In the introduction to *Bst* GAD wrote metaphorically: 'da, wo ich gearbeitet habe, muss noch mancher Quader zurecht gemacht werden, ehe man an die Aufführung des Baues denken kann'.

117 e.g. Hermann Cremer (see ch. 1.4, also ch. 2.1). On 19.2.1908 GAD wrote to his friend Moulton: 'Ich bin anlässlich der Berufung [Berlin] von der konservativen [kirchlichen] Presse heftig angegriffen worden, da ich überhaupt kein Theologe sei und keine Beiträge zum Verständnis des N.T. gegeben habe, sondern bloß zum Missverständnis des N.T. und gewagt hätte, die beiden größten Sprachforscher Cremer und Blass anzugreifen.'



Figure 3
Henriette Elisabeth Behn in 1891, aged 18

daughter of Theodor August Behn (1816–86)¹¹⁸ and his third wife Eleonore Henriette Katharine Wendt (1848–1926).¹¹⁹

The prospect of matrimony had compelled the young Privatdozent to search for a better-paid position, and towards the end of 1894 an

118 A Hamburg shipping magnate, judge, and then-autonomous Bremen's first consul in Singapore (1844–51).

119 In a private letter to this author, GAD's youngest son, Gerhard Deissmann (1911–), wrote (30.3.2003): 'Die Mutter meiner Mutter war die dritte Ehefrau von Theodor August Behn, der 1886 verstarb. Sie hat nach seinem Tode, soweit ich mich entsinnen kann, noch zweimal geheiratet ... Offenbar begegnete GAD bei seinem Aufenthalt in Marburg an der Lahn der damaligen Henriette Wendt (verwitwete Behn) und ihrem Mann sowie ihrer Tochter Henriette Behn aus ihrer ersten Ehe, meiner Mutter, gesellschaftlich und lernte sie schätzen. Als sie sich kennen lernten, war meine Mutter 19 (1892) und als sie in der Elisabeth-Kirche Marburg 1895 heirateten 22 Jahre alt.'

opportune vacancy presented itself as Pfarrer of the Herborn parish.¹²⁰ The wedding date had already been set for 18 April 1895, but the preceding three months became very hectic for Deissmann. Not only was he labouring over the final proofs for *Bibelstudien*, but his new post as Pfarrer had come into effect on 1 January, although he still lived at Marburg and continued to teach there.¹²¹

For thirteen weeks he commuted regularly between the two towns by train, yet in spite of giving sermons in the one and lectures in the other, he managed to finalise his proofs well before the wedding, and concluded the preface as follows:

Ich habe das Buch nicht als Pfarrer sondern als Marburger Privatdocent geschrieben, aber freue mich es als Pfarrer veröffentlichen zu können. Herborn (Bezirk Wiesbaden), den 7. März 1895.¹²²

The first printed copy of *Bibelstudien* arrived in his mail three weeks later, a mere five days before his termination at Marburg. During that week he had begun to move into the Herborn manse to make it ready for his bride, and on the same day when he left Marburg he also commenced as resident Pfarrer at Herborn, where one of his more enjoyable concomitant duties entailed teaching at the Theological Seminary (see below).

The Herborn parish included not only the town itself, but also the three nearby farming communities Hörbach, Sinn and Hirschberg. According to the national census of 1880 Herborn's population was 3044, while Hörbach consisted of 394, Sinn of 674 and Hirschberg of 175. It is safe to say, therefore, that Deissmann's responsibility fifteen years later probably included some 5000 individuals, as the overwhelming majority of these towns were made up of Lutherans.¹²³

Hörbach is situated along the Rehbach, a small tributary of the river Lahn. Since the village had no public transport, it took a good half-hour's walk from the manse to its mid-13th century chapel that, with partial

120 In later years, GAD described Herborn as 'meine Heimat', because 'wie mein Vater und mein Großvater, so war auch ich selbst als Kandidat sein [i.e. Predigerseminar] Schüler gewesen und hatte von beiden Eltern her, die hier jung gewesen waren und sich, wie schon die Großeltern, hier gefunden hatten, eine Fülle verwandtschaftlicher und persönlicher Beziehungen zu dem alten schönen Städtchen und seiner Nachbarschaft.' *SD*, 58–9.

121 *SD*, 58–9. Also in an undated Standesliste (Karlsruhe GArch.).

122 *Bst*, x.

123 *Kreisblatt für den Dillkreis, Amt Herborn*, Herborn, 14.9.1882.

modifications, survives intact to this day. Hirschberg was even more difficult of access, for Deissmann regularly had to walk for more than an hour to get to its tiny 14th century chapel. Sinn, on the other hand, was easily reached by train, and the trip took less than five minutes from Herborn. Today an impressive stone church (built in 1900) dominates the town, but the little hillside chapel in which Deissmann preached remains well preserved and stands just a few metres across the road from the church itself. Years later Deissmann described his ministry among these villagers as an important part of his theological maturing process.

Für besonders wichtig halte ich es, daß ich damals in meinen Dörfern Hörbach, Hirschberg und Sinn, besonders in den beiden ersten, inmitten einer aus Kleinbauern und zwergbäuerlichen Hüttenarbeitern gemischten Bevölkerung, den Laienpietismus der Stillen im Lande, der Gemeinschaften, in einer kirchentreuen, biblisch nüchternen und doch (namentlich im Missionsgeiste) überaus aktiven Lebendigkeit kennen lernte. Schon mein Vater hatte mir mit großer Bewegung von diesen Bauernpietisten des Dilltales erzählt.¹²⁴

These hardworking farmers revered the position of Pfarrer, since they believed it existed by divine appointment, but this had the effect of generating a strong dependence on the clergy's spiritual guidance, which could be extremely demanding, especially for a young and newly married man like Deissmann.¹²⁵ Some of his Marburg colleagues were of the opinion that this *Pfarramt* was 'eine Art von Erniedrigung'.¹²⁶ Nevertheless, he decided in its favour because it offered an immediate opportunity for him and Henriette to establish their own household; later he described his decision as one of the better ones he had made, and explained: 'mir ist dadurch ... die Begründung meines Hausstandes möglich geworden und eine vielleicht lange und lähmende Wartezeit als Privatdozent erspart geblieben'.¹²⁷ But besides the financial appeal, he also believed that the position would help him to keep his newly found academic momentum going, at least until such

124 *SD*, 60.

125 'Ich gestehe offen, daß mir, ganz erfüllt von wissenschaftlichen Interessen wie ich war, die mannigfachen ungeistlichen Tätigkeiten, die der geistliche Beruf mit sich brachte, nicht ganz leicht geworden sind. Und das regelmäßige und viel zu häufige Predigenmüssen (nicht das Predigen als solches) hat mir wieder schwere Nöte bereitet.' *SD*, 59.

126 *SD*, 59.

127 *SD*, 58.

time as some university would offer him a professorship, for he had already begun to work on a follow-up volume for *Bibelstudien* and aimed at completing it as soon as possible. Another consideration for them was the fact that Henriette fell pregnant almost immediately with their first child: Henriette Marie was born on 27 January 1896.

Deissmann came to Herborn for the practical *Pfarramt*, but it was his academic *Nebenamt* as teacher at the Theological Seminary that tipped the scales in favour of making this move, as it gave him an opportunity to continue his work within a scholarly environment. The Seminary, a former Gothic palace adjacent to the church, had gained a somewhat misleading reputation for conservatism during the latter half of the 19th century. But in 1890, when Eugen Sachse was succeeded by the new director, Karl Friedrich Zimmer (1855–1919),¹²⁸ the latter was certainly not a conservative but rather a liberal theologian, who wrote of the Seminary: ‘man brachte dem Herborner Seminar das Vorurteil entgegen ... es sei eine orthodoxe Presse’,¹²⁹ but then proceeded to make the case that this bias had been ill-founded for some time. Besides Zimmer, there were three other principal teachers: Heinrich Maurer (1834–1918), Karl Haussen (1855–1943) and Deissmann himself;¹³⁰ these men enjoyed an academically stimulating camaraderie among themselves.

This, then, is the backdrop to Deissmann’s companion volume to *Bibelstudien*. It was here, in the relatively well-stocked library and tranquil study rooms of the Herborn Theological Seminary, that he was able to complete his *Neue Bibelstudien*,¹³¹ which was published in May 1897.

1.6. Consolidation of discovery: *Neue Bibelstudien*

Neue Bibelstudien is essentially an expansion of *Bibelstudien*, for it provides additional discussions on another 92 words, idioms, technical expressions, or phrases, which were generally accepted as ‘biblical’ or ‘Hebraistic’ peculiarities. Importantly, it is in this second work where Deissmann first publicised his principal objective, namely that the two

128 Sachse accepted a professorship at the University of Bonn.

129 Wienecke, 25.

130 *SD*, 58. See also Wienecke, 32–3, 36.

131 *SD*, 58–9.

Bibelstudien should establish an initial basis for a forthcoming NT Lexicon, founded on an entirely new lexicographical methodology (see ch. 2.2). ‘Derartige Untersuchungen auch fernerhin anzustellen, ist meine Absicht: sie sollen – sub conditione Jacobea – dereinst zu einem Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament führen.’¹³²

This second volume consists of three parts; the first deals with orthography, particularly vowel and consonant changes, while the second focuses on morphology, declensions, some personal names and verbs. Most of the book, however, is taken up by the third (pp. 22–96), which is subdivided into six chapters wherein the author expands on the topic he first raised in *Bibelstudien*, namely that the new papyrological evidence demanded a thorough revision of the linguistic history of the Greek language in the postclassical period. The alleged high number of biblical Hebraisms, and the notion of ‘Jewish Greek’, with its ‘biblical’ or ‘New Testament’ words and grammatical constructs, were clearly no longer tenable (see ch. 1.3). Even though *Neue Bibelstudien* is smaller than its predecessor, it achieved its purpose of consolidating Deissmann’s position as a philological trailblazer in NT studies. The combined effect of these two books was pervasive throughout Germany; even in England Moulton gave a glowing report and referred to them as genuinely ‘epoch-making’ (see ch. 1.4).

Since Deissmann’s language studies had opened up new papyrological and methodological possibilities, he became an international trendsetter among biblical and postclassical Greek scholars. He had developed a new empirical rationalism for the philology of the NT, and with it demystified its language. Widespread and supportive international interest was fast becoming the norm for the author, who looked back many years later on this era and somewhat lyrically wrote:

Unter der Sonne der Welt erlebte die lange steril gewesene biblische Philologie eine Zeit hoher Blüte. Eine ganze kleine Bibliothek von Einzeluntersuchungen und zusammenfassenden grammatischen und lexikalischen Arbeiten wurde uns geschenkt, und besonders auch in den neueren Kommentaren zum Neuen Testament wirken diese ganzen Forschungen sehr stark mit.¹³³

132 *NBst*, vii. The Latin caveat, with its intimation of mortality, is based on James 4:14–15. GAD used this same qualifier at other times as well; e.g. letter to Söderblom, 29.7.1908. GAD clearly planned to expand on *Bst* and *NBst* and reiterated this intention in the preface to *BS*: ‘I must, however, reserve further items for future Studies’.

133 *SD*, 54.

On 17 June 1897, only days after publishing *Neue Bibelstudien*, Deissmann presented an address at a theological conference in Giessen,¹³⁴ 55 km south-east of Herborn. His one-hour paper was not only compelling by virtue of its extraordinary content, but also because it dared to challenge some of the most elementary theological and philological presumptions of the time, and singled out several of their most ‘sacrosanct’ proponents by name. He drew attention to the recent upswing in linguistic biblical research and literature, but argued that – to the detriment of the Greek of the Bible – the large bulk of these books ‘dienen ... der Erforschung nicht der griechischen Bibel, sondern des biblischen Griechisch’. He posited as erroneous the philological presuppositions on which most of these works were based,¹³⁵ and referred specifically to Hatch, Cremer and Blass – the latter two still alive and generally held in high regard throughout Germany.¹³⁶ The single most visionary challenge Deissmann delivered that day was his urgent call for a complete overhaul of the entire existing Greek NT lexical corpus;¹³⁷ many of his listeners would not yet have read his preface to *Neue Bibelstudien*.

Deissmann’s distinctive approach to the Greek of the NT had also come to the attention of Baden’s Kultusminister;¹³⁸ and when Karl Christian Johann Holsten (1825–97), NT professor ordinarius at Heidelberg’s Ruprecht-Karls-Universität, suddenly died on 26 January, the Marburg graduate seemed a suitable replacement for him. Thus, on 18 July 1897 the Grand Duke of Baden formally approved Deissmann’s appointment to the ‘Professur für neutestamentliche Exegese und Kritik’ – just one month after the Giessen conference – although his commission became effective only with his release from the Herborn *Pfarramt* on 1 September.¹³⁹ Since his classes were to commence with the winter semester on 1 October he used the intervening time to relocate his young family from Herborn to Heidelberg and make himself acquainted with the workings of the University. Their new flat at Brückenstrasse 10 was pleasantly situated

134 The paper was later published as a booklet (1898), entitled: *Die sprachliche Erforschung der griechischen Bibel, ihr gegenwärtiger Stand und ihre Aufgaben*. For a full transcript see Addendum 1. See further, ch. 3.3.

135 *Spr. Erforschung*, 6, 7.

136 Neither was present at the conference.

137 *Spr. Erforschung*, 24; see also ch. 2.2.

138 *SD*, 62. See also n. 140 below.

139 Kultusministerium, letter to Heidelberg University Senate, 23.7.1897.

in a quiet side street on the opposite side of the river Neckar, but settling into the Faculty proved more difficult, for almost from the start he clashed with what he called the ‘mehr oder weniger doktrinen Gesamt-auffassung des älteren Liberalismus ...’.¹⁴⁰ Yet he was not alone, for Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923) was also a young theologian there, and he had held the Chair in systematic theology since 1894. Thus, it is not surprising that the two quickly formed a close friendship.¹⁴¹ The Faculty had changed little since Troeltsch had written a colourful letter to Wilhelm Bousset (1865–1920) three years earlier, in which he described its environment as well as his colleagues with undisguised antipathy.

Die Fakultät ist höchst kurios zusammengesetzt und durchaus kein Genuss. Merx¹⁴² ... ist für mich die reine Qual, von einer so lächerlichen Eitelkeit und Vielwisserei ... man kann ihn nur durch schwere Beleidigung sich einigermaßen vom Halse halten. Hausrath¹⁴³ ist absolut ungeniessbar, mit Gott und der Welt zerfallen, ein ... reizbarer und ungleicher Unterhalter, ein vollkommener Vernichter aller Theologie und aller Theologen ... Nun kommt noch der holdselige Lemme,¹⁴⁴ der von einer unglaublichen Unver-

140 *SD*, 62. Although faculties submitted their candidates’ proposals for a Chair to the Kultusminister, professors were commonly appointed at the latter’s personal discretion, which could lead to internal discord within faculties. Thus, ‘wenn z.B. heutigen Tages die evangelisch-theologische Fakultät in Bonn notorisch unheilvoll in Partien zerklüftet ist, so trägt einen grossen Teil der Schuld davon das vom Ministerium befolgte Verfahren, Professuren ohne Rücksicht auf die Wünsche und Vorschläge der Fakultäten zu besetzen. Um so grösser ist die Befriedigung darüber, dass der neue Herr Kultusminister [Ludwig Holle, see ch. 2.4] in den bisher zu seiner Entscheidung gekommenen Besetzungsfällen, erst in Breslau und dann in Berlin und Halle, verständnisvoll den Vorschlägen der Fakultäten Rechnung getragen hat.’ *ChrW*, 8, 18, 1908, 99. The same anonymous writer also claimed that when he once asked: “Hat mich denn die Fakultät vorgeschlagen?” – die brüske Antwort zuteil wurde: “Die Staatsregierung beruft Sie, was gehen Sie die Vorschläge der Fakultät an?”. Wir haben daher in den letzten Zeiten ma[n]che Ernennung erlebt, die gegen die Vorschläge der Fakultäten erfolgte.’ 98.

141 Later they fell out with each other for several years, over GAD’s unwillingness to support Troeltsch’s appointment as successor for Edvard Lehmann at the Berlin Theological Faculty. *SD*, 62–3.

142 Adalbert Merx (1838–1909), professor of OT.

143 Adolf Hausrath (1837–1909), professor of church history and NT exegesis.

144 Ludwig Lemme (1847–1927), professor of systematic theology and a passionate opponent of Harnack.

schämtheit und Unkollegialität ist ... und hält sich für den Retter Gottes in Baden ... Es ist klar, dass es eine ziemlich krumme Fakultät ist.¹⁴⁵

Ten months after Deissmann's arrival Troeltsch wrote in another letter to Bousset: 'Ein Glück ist nur, dass Deissmann ein sehr angenehmer College ist, ja mir bereits mehr als das ist. Durch ihn habe ich endlich wieder wissenschaftliche Anregung und Aussprache.'¹⁴⁶

Despite the somewhat strained Faculty environment, *Neue Bibelstudien* had demonstrated that the new professor was a force to be reckoned with. Moreover, his rather extraneous paper¹⁴⁷ at Giessen – that could almost have been perceived as a kind of inaugural lecture – had left no one in doubt that his two books were merely the groundwork for an undertaking of far greater consequence: an entirely novel Greek NT lexicon (see ch. 2.2). Nevertheless, his confidence in his new philological approach to the NT, together with his relatively young age (30), was perceived as theological ignorance by the Faculty members and contributed to the initial friction.

He had barely begun his teaching at Heidelberg, when Jülicher, his erstwhile *Habilitationsschrift* examiner at Marburg, wrote a memo to his Faculty in regard to Deissmann.¹⁴⁸ He had been the first to spot the young theologian's potential, and now advocated that his *Alma Mater* become the first to acknowledge their alumnus, by considering him for a Doctorate of Theology (*honoris causa*) at their next meeting. They quickly resolved to grant this sign of their recognition for the rising star, and on Christmas Day he received a surprise package that he described as 'die höchste Ehre ... welche die Theologie ihren Jüngern zuteilen läßt'.¹⁴⁹ It was the first of a string of academic honours he was to receive during his lifetime.

Earlier that year, when Deissmann was still at Herborn, the Scot, James Hastings (1852–1922), editor of *The Expository Times* and various major biblical dictionaries, had sent a letter to him – almost immediately after reading *Neue Bibelstudien* – in which he wrote:

145 Troeltsch, letter to Bousset, 12.10.1894, in E. Dinkler-von Schubert, 'Ernst Troeltsch. Briefe aus der Heidelberger Zeit an Wilhelm Bousset, 1894–1914', *HJ*, 20, 1976, 23–7.

146 Dinkler-von Schubert, 32.

147 See Addendum 1. For a comparison with other Giessen papers see Appendix 1, g.

148 A. Jülicher, memo to Marburg Theological Faculty, 14.11.1897.

149 GAD, letter to Marburg Theological Faculty, 31.12.1897.