

## Ch. 7: *Evangelischer Wochenbrief* and *Protestant Weekly Letter*

*Die Wochenbriefe sind in einem so ökumenischen, wahrhaft versöhnenden Geiste geschrieben, daß sie tatsächlich ein Kristallisationspunkt der Friedens- und Versöhnungsbestrebungen wurden, welchem kein anderes derartiges Unternehmen an die Seite gestellt werden kann.<sup>1</sup>*

### 7.1. Genesis of Deissmann's *Evangelischer Wochenbrief*

Chapter 6 has referred to, and occasionally quoted, Deissmann's *Evangelischer Wochenbrief*, or *Protestant Weekly Letter*, but it is time now to give this important production some detailed attention. These bulletins<sup>2</sup> are remarkable not merely for their conception, range of topics, and continuity, but also for the fact that one man, who was busy with other commitments, was able to produce such a volume of material under the constraint of wartime and the immediate postwar years in defeated Germany. What follows does not claim to be an exhaustive treatise on the corpus of Deissmann's bulletins, it is, however, intended to establish a general but solid preliminary working platform, in the hope this might encourage that long overdue full-scale investigation that this extraordinary work has deserved for more than 80 years.

The moderate leader of the Roman Catholic *Deutsche Zentrumspartei*, Matthias Erzberger (1875-1921), had for years advocated a nationally controlled press service and in 1911 succeeded in establishing a fund 'zur Verbreitung deutscher Nachrichten im Ausland'.<sup>3</sup> Although this was sanctioned by the *Reichstag*, once the Kaiser declared Germany to be in a state of impending war (31 July 1914) the military immediately issued an order that 'keine einzige deutsche Zeitung über die Grenzen gehen sollte', and

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<sup>1</sup> W. Hadorn. *Kirchenfreund*, Basel, 1.10.1918, cited in *Ev.Wbr.*, 30.11.1918, 6.

<sup>2</sup> Except for titles and citations – and in cases where a distinction between the English and German version is required – I shall henceforth refer to both editions as 'bulletins'. Citations drawn from those written before America severed diplomatic relations with Germany (Feb. 1917) are normally from the *Pr.WL*, while those written after come from the *Ev.Wbr*.

<sup>3</sup> M. Erzberger, *Erlebnisse im Weltkrieg*, Stuttgart, 1920, 3.

this ‘trotz der Zensur im Innern’.<sup>4</sup> Thus, newspapers began to accumulate in massive piles at custom houses, and Erzberger complained that when ‘Amerikaner in ihre Heimat zurückkehren wollten, fehlte es an allem und jedem Material, um einem fremden Volk zu zeigen, wie das deutsche Volk in den Weltkrieg hineingeraten war’.<sup>5</sup> In a hasty reaction to this militaristically enforced censorship a senior captain of the *Reichsmarineamt* called on him and a group of unnamed politicians, to write within 48 hours a practical booklet for departing Americans that would present Germany’s perspective on how the war had come about. This booklet was identified by Erzberger as ‘... die erste deutsche Aufklärungsschrift während des Krieges’, and formed the basis for Germany’s subsequent war propaganda. However, during the early stages of WWI neither the *Reichstag*, nor the military, or any other official organisation, showed – with a few individual exceptions – the slightest interest in how foreign nations perceived Germany. Only when business people began to return from neutral countries and

über die dortige Stimmung berichteten, sah man ein, daß man in den ersten drei Wochen wohl militärische Erfolge erzielt, aber gleichzeitig eine politische Niederlage nach der anderen erlitten hatte. Es war ein Hamburger Weltkaufmann, der aus Holland kam und einigen amtlichen Stellen darlegte, wie dringend notwendig es sei, eine einheitlich zusammengefaßte Aufklärungsarbeit für das Ausland zu schaffen. Während man an einigen Stellen dem Vorschlag achselzuckend gegenüberstand, nahmen zwei Marineoffiziere denselben auf und traten an mich mit der Aufforderung heran, ich möchte die Leitung der Auslandspropaganda übernehmen; der Stellvertreter des Reichskanzlers ... habe nicht nur hierzu seine Zustimmung gegeben, sondern wünsche aufs dringendste, dass ich mich dieser Arbeit unterziehe.<sup>6</sup>

Despite Erzberger’s objection that such *Aufklärungsarbeit* would already be too late, and that the German military, with its overarching wartime powers on the domestic front, would make any such task impossible, he finally acceded – under strong pressure – to take charge of foreign propaganda.<sup>7</sup> That October he discovered that under the widely repeated catchcry, ‘Die Wahrheit ins Ausland!’, some 27 independent and ‘wilde Propagandabureaus’ had been established throughout Germany. Tens of thousands of newspapers with nationalistic propaganda were now being released into neutral countries, but ‘dabei wurde so gedankenlos verfahren, daß man z. B. Blätter ... welche die schärfste antidänische Politik in Nordschleswig vertraten, massenhaft nach

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<sup>4</sup> Erzberger, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>7</sup> By appealing to his Vaterlandsliebe and after discussions with the Auswärtiges Amt. Ibid., 5.

Dänemark sandte'.<sup>8</sup> In November 1914 after he had brought these counterproductive publications under the control of the *Zentralstelle für Auslandsdienst*,<sup>9</sup> Erzberger approached Deissmann with the proposal that he consider writing a Protestant-oriented weekly bulletin specifically for an American readership. Some time later, Deissmann readily acknowledged that what he himself had named 'Evangelischer Wochenbrief', and its English edition, 'Protestant Weekly Letter', came about not on his own but on Erzberger's initiative:

Der Gedanke, die kirchlichen und theologischen Beziehungen zwischen Deutschland und Amerika zur Stärkung des guten Verhältnisses beider Länder auszunutzen, muss als ein sehr glücklicher bezeichnet werden. Schon als er mir im November 1914 durch Herrn Reichstagsabgeordneten Matthias Erzberger, der seit dem Spätsommer 1914 einen Zweig des Auslandsdienstes leitet und einen „Katholischen Wochenbrief“<sup>10</sup> bereits organisiert hatte, geäußert wurde, leuchtete er mir ungemein ein. Je mehr ich dann die Methoden seiner Ausführbarkeit überdachte, umso zeitgemässer erschien er mir. Ein christlicher Theologe konnte sich auch mit umso grösserer Freudigkeit in den Dienst dieses Gedankens stellen, als er damit Gelegenheit hatte, die durch den Krieg schwer erschütterte internationale christliche Solidarität stärken zu helfen.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, Deissmann's bulletins began as an afterthought by Erzberger, who wanted them to complement Germany's already existing Roman Catholic war-literature.<sup>12</sup> However, although the concept originated with this politician, Deissmann accepted his challenge primarily because it presented him with a splendid opportunity to help strengthen international Christian solidarity. Erzberger was willing to give him wide-ranging editorial powers so that he could make his voice heard, '... unter eigenster, persönlichster und alleiniger Verantwortung'.<sup>13</sup> Certainly, it would also allow him to portray Germany in a favourable light; but it was the international breakdown of Christian solidarity and consequent paucity of ecclesiastical cooperation that motivated him to take on the challenge. He had no inclination to add just another paper to the vast morass of existing war propaganda: 'ich habe mir in diesen Briefen kein kriegspolitisches Programm zu vertreten vorgenommen, sondern ein religions- und

<sup>8</sup> Erzberger, 5.

<sup>9</sup> This was dissolved in 1917 and brought under military control.

<sup>10</sup> 'Eine weitere beachtenswerte Kundgebung waren die „Katholischen Wochenbriefe“, welche in erster Linie für Klöster und Kongregationen und für katholische Wochenschriften des Auslandes bestimmt waren und in Dr. Schnitzler einen sachkundigen Berater fanden.' Erzberger, 16.

<sup>11</sup> 'Bericht des Professors Geh. Konsistorialrats D. theol. Adolf Deissmann über seine „Evangelischen Wochenbriefe“ ("Protestant Weekly Letters") nach Nordamerika 1914/16', 4.7.1916, 1.

<sup>12</sup> On this topic see Erzberger, 1-20.

<sup>13</sup> *Ev. Wbr.*, Oct./Nov. 1921, 271.

kulturpolitisches'.<sup>14</sup> This led Deissmann's friend, Valentin Schwöbel,<sup>15</sup> to ask the obvious question:

zu welchem Zweig der Theologie gehört denn diese Deine Tätigkeit [i.e. Wochenbriefe]? Wo bleiben die neutestamentlichen Studien und Kritiken? Ist das die politische Theologie? Aber so, wie Du sie treibst, stehst Du mit beiden Füßen im Neuen Testament.<sup>16</sup>

The bulletins are indeed not easily pigeonholed, but seem best included within the genre of 'religions- und kulturpolitische' literature, as their author has indicated.

Although Deissmann bore sole responsibility for the production, content, timing, format and circulation of his bulletins they were to be distributed through Erzberger's office, thus circumventing the censorship machinery of the domestic press. The *Reichstag* had allocated to the *Auswärtiges Amt* an annual propaganda budget of M. 300,000 'zur Verbreitung deutscher Nachrichten im Ausland';<sup>17</sup> from this Erzberger received a distribution, of which a small portion was earmarked to cover stationery and postage costs for Deissmann's bulletins. However, the *Auswärtiges Amt* also assisted the latter directly by providing some basic equipment, including a storage cupboard. Although there were no subscription fees, by 31 December 1920 private donations had raised the bulletins' account (held in trust at the *Auswärtiges Amt*) to M. 16,481,<sup>18</sup> and in his last issue Deissmann wrote:

Beim Abschied habe ich viel und vielen zu danken. Für ein hohes Maß freiwilliger äußerer Förderer aus dem In- und Auslande zuerst; sie hat es ermöglicht, daß das Unternehmen bis zuletzt weitergeführt werden konnte und daß in einem Zeitalter des Zusammenbruchs wichtiger anderer christlicher Organe nicht finanzielle Not es ist, die zum Abschluß drängt.<sup>19</sup>

## 7.2. Target readership, objectives, and editorial constraints

The bulletins' seven-year-long publication began with an unpretentious, typed issue,

<sup>14</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 26.8.1917, 3.

<sup>15</sup> Schwöbel's name occurs first in GAD's writings in 1900 (AK, 11.5.1900) when he invited the latter for tea. He was Pfarrer in Mannheim (died 1921) and GAD described him as '... mein alter Freund, Dr. Valentin Schwöbel, Geistlicher an einem großen Landesgefängnis und hervorragender Palästinakenner'. *Ev.Wbr.*, 26.8.1917, 3.

<sup>16</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 26.8.1917, 3.

<sup>17</sup> Erzberger, 3.

<sup>18</sup> *Auswärtiges Amt*, letter to GAD, 18.2.1922. While Germany's inflation was on the rise since 1918 at the end of 1920 it had 'only' reached c. M. 70 to the US dollar (although by 16.11.1923 this figure soared to M. 4,200,000,000,000).

<sup>19</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, Oct./Nov. 1921, 277.

mailed to approximately 300 addresses and dated 6 December 1914.<sup>20</sup> Eighteen months later Deissmann wrote that four-fifths of his American recipients were Anglo-Americans and one-fifth German-Americans.<sup>21</sup> Numerically the circulation remained far smaller than Roman Catholic publications, such as the *Katholische Monatsbriefe*, edited by Engelbert Krebs (1881-1950), published in seven languages and with a circulation of 30,000.<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately, it is now no longer possible to determine a precise distribution rate for Deissmann's bulletins, nor the exact peak of their circulation, other than to say that his readership kept increasing.<sup>23</sup>

Series one was specifically produced for an American audience and consisted of 111 bulletins.

Die Erste Reihe (Nr. 1-111), deutsch und englisch, reichte bis zum Eintritt Nordamerikas in den Krieg; die „Neue Folge“ (Nr.1-150), deutsch, von da bis zur Ratifizierung des Vertrags von Versailles; die „Dritte Reihe“ (Nr. 1-104) deutsch, setzte Anfang 1920 ein und schließt Ende 1921 mit dieser Sammlungsnummer ab.<sup>24</sup>

Despite his claim of 111 editions the Zentral- und Landesbibliothek in Berlin has an apparently unpublished yet complete 11-page double-issue (112/13) of a *Protestant Weekly Letter*, dated 15 January 1917. The precise reason for Deissmann's silence on the existence of this bulletin, and its withdrawal from publication, is not certain; but it seems probable that it was frozen by the *Auswärtiges Amt*. For a war-council meeting on 9 January 1917, presided over by *Reichskanzler* von Bethmann Hollweg, had agreed to resume unrestricted U-boat warfare on 1 February 1917, in the full expectation that this would draw America into the war. Moreover, Deissmann's bulletin was written

<sup>20</sup> Besides individual recipients this number included a list of 78 different theological schools in Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Columbia, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. Rockwell, letter to GAD, 8.2.1915.

<sup>21</sup> *Pr.WL*, 10.5.1916, 2-3.

<sup>22</sup> Erzberger, 16. Krebs was associate professor of theology (1915-9) and later professor ordinarius (1919-36), both at Freiburg. Strongly opposed to anti-Semitism, he was dismissed from his position in 1936 and placed under *Reदेवेववot*. The full title of his *Monatsbriefe* was, '*Katholische Monatsbriefe zur Verteidigung deutscher und katholischer Interessen im Weltkrieg*'. It was produced in Freiburg and Berlin (1915-9); English title: *Catholic Monthly Letters*. See also below, n. 59.

<sup>23</sup> The ZLB holds a substantial amount of material in relation to GAD's bulletins. However, due to water damage during WWII, countless glue-backed address labels have become laminated into semi-solidified slabs. There are also large quantities of either handwritten or typed addresses on loose sheets; or random scraps of paper, with messily written names and/or addresses, frequently unrelated, incomplete, or physically damaged (e.g. ZLB DEI 139, 147, 148, 149). It is, therefore, unlikely that a complete list of all subscribers to GAD's bulletins can be reconstructed. See also below, n. 127. Further to GAD's *Nachlass* in the ZLB, see ch. 9, n. 61.

<sup>24</sup> Preliminary to *Ev.Whr.*, Oct./Nov. 1921.

(not printed<sup>25</sup>) on 15 January, four days before the ignominious Zimmermann note<sup>26</sup> was intercepted by the British and handed to the American Ambassador in London.

Deissmann wrote every bulletin in German and then had the English version translated faithfully, so that there is no substantive difference between the two versions.<sup>27</sup> Thus, despite a claim in *The Constructive Quarterly* that ‘the English is Dr. Deissmann’s own’, he clarified this:

My “Letters” owe their English-American garment to a friend of mine Rev. J. Quiring, A.M. (University of Chicago). B.D. (Mc Cormick [*sic*] seminary). This American gentleman has been attending our Berlin University since the fall of 1913 and under Dr. Friedrich Delitzsch, Dr. Eduard Sachau, Dr. Hermann Strack and Dr. Eduard Meycr is pursuing a course of studies in Semitics and Orientalia. My ability to speak and write English is not yet as great as my desire to master the English as well as Mr. Quiring does the German.<sup>28</sup>

The first 44 issues were typewritten by Deissmann himself, a practice he only changed with the 45<sup>th</sup> edition, in which he also provided a hint of the almost overwhelming manual labour these bulletins demanded:

You will of course have at once noticed the new dress in which the “Weekly Letters” now appear. I confess the old garb was distasteful to me. Strictly speaking “letters” ought not be multiplied through the typist, if new copies are needed they should be autographed in order to preserve their intimate character. But unfortunately I have no time to rewrite the first draft of my letters with autographic ink; my fingers are stiff enough as it is, they are almost callous like the knees of a camel. The method of multiplication employed thus far became more and more unsatisfactory and painful to me on account of its technical imperfections; from now on I will therefore try this new way and hope to use less space and render the letters more legible.<sup>29</sup>

Series two, or ‘Neue Folge’ 1, began on 21 February 1917, two weeks after America had formally broken diplomatic relations with Germany. Later, Deissmann explained the shift to this new series – from then on produced only in German – by stating:

Es kam der Eintritt Nordamerikas in den Krieg. Eine völlig neue Lage, deren furchtbaren Ernst ich im Gegensatz zu vielen, die die moralischen,

<sup>25</sup> GAD provided an important explanation regarding the dates printed on the bulletins’ front-pages: ‘Ihr Datum bezeichnet nicht, wie einige meiner Leser annahmen, den Tag des Reindrucks, sondern den Beginn der Abfassung des Manuskriptes. Zwischen Manuskript und Absendung liegt daher immer ein gewisser Zeitraum.’ *Ev.Wbr.*, 30.11.1919, 3.

<sup>26</sup> See Snyder, 361; also B.W. Tuchmann, *The Zimmermann Telegram*, New York, 1958.

<sup>27</sup> e.g. some addresses received both the English and German version simultaneously; e.g. Alexander, letter to Rosenberg, 6.4.1916, states: ‘Ich erlaube mir, Ihnen in der Anlage No. 68 dieser “Evangelischen Wochenbriefe” in deutscher und englischer Sprache zu überreichen’.

<sup>28</sup> *Pr.WL*, 30.10.1915, 4.

<sup>29</sup> *Pr.WL*, 9.10.1915, 4.

wirtschaftlichen, militärischen und politischen Kräfte der Vereinigten Staaten nicht kannten und darum unterschätzten, sofort zu erkennen glaubte! Ich stellte daher den “Evangelischen Wochenbrief” auf andere Grundlagen. Die schon bis dahin durch ausgewählte Adressaten mitbedachten Kirchen der neutralen Länder Europas wurden ... mehr und mehr das Feld der Briefe ... auch hier dürfte sich mein Grundsatz bewährt haben, nicht wahllos zu versenden ... So habe ich wieder persönliche Beziehungen, insbesondere zu Freunden, Kollegen, ehemaligen Schülern aus Marburg, Heidelberg und Berlin und zur christlichen Presse ausnutzend, mir damals einen deutschen Adressatenkreis geschaffen, der allmählich den ausländischen an Zahl überstieg.<sup>30</sup>

His claim to have recognised what many of his countrymen neglected to see was no mere boast, for he possessed a relatively uncommon proficiency in the English language and had developed close personal connections with many influential Americans, among them Brent (5.2), Gibbons (8. n. 24) and Macfarland (6.5).

‘Neue Folge’ 2 commenced on 1 January 1918, and while its initial target audience remained unchanged, Deissmann widened the bulletins’ circulation from 8 June 1918 to include ‘christliche Persönlichkeiten’ in Estoria, Livonia<sup>31</sup> and the Courland,<sup>32</sup> although some Baltic theologians had already been on his mailing list before. Altogether uncharacteristically he superscribed this particular edition with the modified Johannine greeting: ‘Den evangelischen Glaubensgenossen in Kurland, Livland und Estland Gnade und Friede von Dem, der da ist, und der da war, und der da kommt!’<sup>33</sup> This series concluded on 31 December 1919, and on 2 February 1920 – under the Weimar Republic – was superseded by the ‘Dritte Reihe’, which Deissmann terminated in early November 1921.

Throughout their entire seven-year production the bulletins were judiciously targeted at a restricted but usually influential number of recipients, the selection of whom was based on the following criteria, which the editor gave as follows in 1916:

1. Meine früheren Schüler und die mir sonst befreundeten Amerikaner.
2. Eine Anzahl von theologischen Kollegen an amerikanischen Universitäten, mit denen ich schon früher im literarischen Austausch gestanden hatte.
3. Kollegen, von denen ich annehmen konnte, dass sie mich literarisch kennen.

<sup>30</sup> *Ev. Wbr.*, Oct./Nov. 1921, 273.

<sup>31</sup> A Baltic region encompassing most of present-day Latvia and Estonia.

<sup>32</sup> A region in Western Latvia.

<sup>33</sup> *Ev. Wbr.*, 8.6.1918, 1; see also Rev. 1:4.

4. Führende Persönlichkeiten aus den amerikanischen Missionskreisen aller Denominationen.
5. Sonstige mir von Sachkundigen als besonders geeignet namhaft gemachte Persönlichkeiten, namentlich die Schriftleiter kirchlicher Blätter.<sup>34</sup>

Some of his more distinguished readers were: Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850-1937), founder and first president of Czechoslovakia; Nathan Söderblom; Charles Brent; the archbishop of Canterbury, Randall Thomas Davidson (1848-1930), and Charles Macfarland.

The idea of a select readership came from Deissmann himself, who reasoned that ‘eine an unbekannte Massen wahllos gerichtete Propaganda mehr schaden, als nützen könne’.<sup>35</sup> However, the choice of ‘appropriate’ addressees was no easy task, and consequently he sought advice from various colleagues in Germany and the United States.<sup>36</sup> Erzberger wrote: ‘... [Deissmann] hat die Auswahl der Adressaten mit großem Geschick vollzogen. Er wandte sich fast durchweg an seine früheren Schüler, befreundete und bekannte Institute und hervorragende Einzelpersonen’.<sup>37</sup> There were many advantages to this selective approach, although it depended significantly on an implied presumption of Deissmann’s high reputation among his professional colleagues and former students. However, since these recipients could be expected to consider his bulletins to be a reliable news source with ‘inside knowledge’, they would likely also read them with considerable care. On the other hand, a heavy onus rested on their author to maintain his prewar credibility, since his semi-private publication was vulnerable to quick collapse should his readers perceive it as mere nationalistic propaganda (see ch. 7.3). However, because the bulletins spread chiefly by reputation, and amongst a generally well-educated readership, it implies that the editor was deemed to be a trustworthy source of information. Moreover, it was also essential that he be regarded as a man with the moral right to produce such material for a foreign

<sup>34</sup> Bericht, 4.7.1916, 7-8. Nineteen months later GAD emphasised: ‘Ich habe mir zum Grundsatz gemacht, meine „Wochenbriefe“ nicht wahllos an leicht ermittelbare Adressatenmassen zu senden ... Meine Briefe gehen nur an Adressaten, die sorgfältig ausgewählt sind, und ich bin, wenn mein eigenes Wissen naturgemäß oft versagt, von Kennern freundlichst beraten worden. Der liebste Zuwachs an Interessenten kommt mir aber durch Empfehlung von Mensch zu Mensch.’ *Ev.Wbr.*, 9.2.1918, 3.

<sup>35</sup> Bericht, 4.7.1916, 7.

<sup>36</sup> Among his German advisors were Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze (see below, ch. 7.2), Ernst von Dobschütz (1870-1934), Siegfried Graf von Lüttichau (1877-1965), Karl Axenfeld, August Wilhelm Schreiber (1867-1945) and Julius Richter (1862-1940). His American advisors included William Walker Rockwell (1875-1958); Clarissa H. Spencer (YWCA general secretary); Herbert Adams Gibbons, Jacob Quiring, and perhaps most importantly, Charles Macfarland.

<sup>37</sup> Erzberger, 19.



readership. Of this he was acutely aware, and reasoned that he would only have this right ‘... wenn ich mich als den Sprecher einer ... Gemeinschaft von gesinnungsverwandten Landsleuten fühlen könnte’.<sup>38</sup> This is the logic that underpinned his push in early 1917 to broaden the circulation within Germany itself and not to restrict it to the neutral countries alone.

The initial scope of the bulletins was outlined in an accompanying letter to the first edition<sup>39</sup> and later paraphrased by Deissmann to explain that he had given

... den Adressaten meine Absicht, dass ich mich auf das Thema “Der Krieg und die Religion” beschränken wolle. Dass nebenbei auch manches Politische mit einfluss, ist selbstverständlich, und wurde, als die amerikanischen Antworten einsetzten, auch noch notwendiger; das Politische wurde aber stets nur mehr indirekt behandelt, eine Methode, die ich für wirksam halte.<sup>40</sup>

Until January 1917 the bulletins’ linguistic register was specifically aimed at an American Protestant audience, although Deissmann had arranged for some copies to reach England as well.<sup>41</sup> The fundamental objective was to strengthen international Christian solidarity, and not to cause political debate.<sup>42</sup>

Three weeks before writing his first edition Deissmann gave a speech at the Berlin University, entitled *Der Krieg und die Religion*, in which he acknowledged a personal struggle with this problematic topic.

Die Religion ist der flammende Protest gegen den Krieg, und der Krieg ist der schmachliche Bankrott der Religion; die Kriegsartikel und das Vaterunser stammen aus zwei unüberbrückbar voneinander geschiednen Welten ... Denn ... ich für meinen Teil kann jetzt nicht über den Krieg und die Religion theoretisch reden ... ich erlebe das Ereignis mit. Ob ich will oder nicht, ich erlebe es mit.<sup>43</sup>

While this may sound like mere wartime rhetoric, it signified a genuine swing in Deissmann’s intellectual values, for the increasing barrage of inexplicable theological, philosophical and ethical perplexities of the war had begun to repress his earlier

<sup>38</sup> *Ev. Wbr.*, Oct./Nov. 1921, 273.

<sup>39</sup> For a transcript of this letter see Appendix 7, a.

<sup>40</sup> Bericht, 4.7.1916, 11.

<sup>41</sup> Davidson, letter to GAD, 22.9.1915, in Besier, *Quellen- und Arbeitsbuch*, 132. Moreover, Siegmund-Schultze wrote to GAD: ‘Wie Sie wissen, haben inzwischen Ihre amerikanischen Briefe auch in England viel Aufsehen erregt; übrigens sowohl in dem Sinne, daß sie den Engländern als abträglich für ihre Interessen erschienen, wie auch in dem Sinne, daß man sich über den vornehmen Stil der deutschen Darstellung darin verwundert und erfreut hat.’ Letter, 18.6.1915.

<sup>42</sup> Bericht, 4.7.1916, 1. Or, as Erzberger put it: ‘... [um] die kirchlichen und theologischen Beziehungen zwischen Deutschland und Amerika zu stärken’. Erzberger, 18.

<sup>43</sup> *Der Krieg und die Religion*, 3-4.

philological objectives (see ch. 2.6). Now that the international Christian *Gemeinbürgerschaft* was breaking up, in that Christian nations opposed each another in mortal combat, he became so preoccupied with the necessity for *Völkerverständigung* that he wrote: ‘So schweigt bei mir ... das theoretisch-wissenschaftliche Interesse völlig’.<sup>44</sup> Yet it was this shift in analytical focus that allowed him to embark on the production of his bulletins, in a twofold effort to seek an answer to what he termed ‘the problem of Christian solidarity still unsolved’.<sup>45</sup> Deissmann’s primary objective was, therefore, neither political nor nationalistic, but socioethical (humanitarian) and theological.<sup>46</sup>

Although he produced these bulletins in three distinct series they remained consonant with his initially formulated (yet at that time still inadequately defined) subject matter of ‘der Krieg und die Religion’, and the original goal, ‘die durch den Krieg schwer erschütterte internationale christliche Solidarität stärken zu helfen’.<sup>47</sup> For the first two-and-a-half years they appeared weekly, but from 28 May 1917 he began to produce them only once a fortnight. During 1919 he wrote and mailed them approximately once a month, on account of the ‘gegenwärtige Schwierigkeiten und Kosten des Druckes’.<sup>48</sup> Until 1917 they were written without explanatory superscript, but after 21 February 1917 each issue was headed with Deissmann’s now sharply crystallised statement of purpose:

Die am 1. Advent 1914 begonnenen „Evangelischen Wochenbriefe“ sollen der Verständigung unter den Völkern und der Stärkung der christlichen Solidarität dienen. Für offenen Meinungs-austausch ist der Verfasser stets dankbar; er bittet auch um Nennungen von Persönlichkeiten (Männer und Frauen), die mit der Absicht dieser Briefe sympathisieren.

Editorial work itself was not entirely new to Deissmann, as he had been on the editorial board of the American *Constructive Quarterly* since early 1913.<sup>49</sup> James Moulton had

<sup>44</sup> *Der Krieg und die Religion*, 4. This did not mean that he ceased his routine duties as professor (see Appendix 9, e), but rather that he was no longer able to work on his opus vitae, i.e. the NT lexicon.

<sup>45</sup> *Pr.WL*, 25.4.1916, 1. The extent to which he engaged in this task can only be described as astounding: see below, ch. 7.5.

<sup>46</sup> Although Erzberger and the Auswärtiges Amt originally intended these bulletins to be part of Germany’s propaganda machinery, by giving GAD almost unfettered editorial powers he made them into an organ for *Völkerverständigung* and Christian solidarity (see ch. 7.6). The reason why the Auswärtiges Amt did not shut him down can be explained in that GAD’s work was conceived to be in Germany’s national interest.

<sup>47</sup> Bericht, 4.7.1916, 1.

<sup>48</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 30.11.1919, 3, n\*. For statistics on the bulletins’ production, see Appendix 7, b.

<sup>49</sup> The journal’s stated purpose was ‘that the constructive treatment of Christianity would make for a better understanding between the isolated communions of Christendom, and ... that an atmosphere of mutual confidence might be created and a better understanding and a truer sense of fellowship be

first introduced him<sup>50</sup> to the journal's founder, Silas McBee (1853-1924), and after the latter had briefly visited Deissmann in Berlin on 27 November 1913, the two remained corresponding friends until McBee's death on 3 September 1924. Significantly, the underlying intent of Deissmann's bulletins was not only wholly compatible with the *Constructive Quarterly*, but seems indebted to it in that it helped Deissmann to crystallise his own goals.

His semi-personal bulletins could only measure up to their declared mediatory role on a basis of perceived editorial veracity, yet despite the carefully selected (and mostly Germanophile) recipients – some concerns were voiced regarding censorship. When Deissmann addressed these in his September 1915 bulletin he was still unaware of Erzberger's later expressed view that German censorship was at that time 'frisiert' and 'gefährlich nach innen wie nach außen',<sup>51</sup> since he reasoned defensively:

Dr. Gibbons, like some others of my correspondents, fears his letters might not pass the German censor. This apprehension is unwarranted. In all my comprehensive foreign correspondence I do not know of a single instance where any of my letters were cancelled by the German censor. Certainly, I have lost mail but not through German censorship; it occurred outside the German frontier. Only a people with a sense of its own weakness, will have a strict censorship at a time of war.<sup>52</sup>

Deissmann's unsophisticated sentiments reflect the arguments Erzberger was making in parliament, for the latter was an outspoken opponent of Germany's extremely short-sighted censorship-rulings and contended that his country was damaging itself badly with their 'official' attitude of 'Uns kann keiner!'. He himself allowed his own (small) propaganda staff considerable liberties, insisting only that 'absolut wahre Tatsachen' were written for foreign readers. Although Deissmann, as an independent editor, was not part of this group, he enjoyed Erzberger's full support and patronage and, therefore, was somewhat shielded from the *Militärzensur*,<sup>53</sup> especially since his bulletins were

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induced.' *Constr.Q.*, editorial board circular, 1.8.1922. GAD was also on editorial board of the Baltimore based *CUQ*, see ch. 8.4.

<sup>50</sup> He wrote to his friend: 'May I introduce to you Mr. Silas McBee, late Editor of an influential church paper in New York, who is gathering with wonderful success a representative Advisory Board for a new enterprise which will I am sure win your hearty sympathy? No one can advise him better than you can in his search for the best men to invite in Germany for this international and interconfessional Christian journal.' Moulton, letter to GAD, 4.6.1912.

<sup>51</sup> Erzberger, 7.

<sup>52</sup> *Pr.WL*, 11.9.1915, 2. For Gibbons, see ch. 8, n. 224.

<sup>53</sup> The following extract from Erzberger's memoirs demonstrates this: 'Alle Schilderungen über Mangel im deutschen Volk, seine Unternährung, sein Leiden und Darben, wurden verpönt und verboten. Deutsche Ärzte und Wissenschaftler mußten schreiben und schreiben, daß es für den Deutschen sehr gesund sei, wenn er weniger als vor dem Kriege esse. Man machte umfangreiche Statistiken darüber

sent as private mail and, therefore, normally avoided the rigorous scrutiny imposed on the public press. This explains why Deissmann's bulletins include some remarkable data on German losses and social conditions, even though his colleague in the ecumenical work, Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze (1885-1969), cautioned him rather critically that America should not know the real German casualty rate.<sup>54</sup>

Despite Deissmann's patently wrong assertion that German censorship was minimal, he had been instructed to avoid the topic of the Belgian invasion, or otherwise handle it only with the greatest restraint.<sup>55</sup> Another case of editorial gagging is the Armenian genocide in which up to a million people perished. Although Deissmann was one of only six who on 10 March 1916 signed a petition, addressed to von Bethmann Hollweg, that an emergency relief team should be sent to the region, no mention was made of this in his bulletins.<sup>56</sup>

It was not until November 1916 when he first conceded that censorship was distorting reality, since 'public opinion as reflected in the press, is, generally speaking, hardly representative, for military and political reasons demand the existence of a censorial office in some form or other'.<sup>57</sup> Only when censorship was in the process of being lifted by the provisional Weimar Government in November 1918 did he express the wish, '... bestimmte, seither nicht frei diskutierbare Einzelfragen, die ungeklärt und störend zwischen den deutschen und den ausländischen Christen stehen, in voller Offenheit zu behandeln'.<sup>58</sup> The absence of certain topics in his bulletins – such as the Belgian invasion – is, therefore, not necessarily a reflection of Deissmann's character,

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auf, mit wie wenig der Mensch durchkommen könne; man wollte so dem Ausland beweisen, daß die Vorräte an Lebensmitteln und an Gegenständen des täglichen Bedarfs so groß seien, daß Deutschland nie ausgehungert werden könne. Dieselbe Stelle [i.e. Militärzensur] dachte aber nicht daran, daß das Ausland die deutsche Speisekarte, die deutschen Rationen mit Leichtigkeit erfahren konnte ... Wie ganz anders ging die Entente vor! Sie hat das Mitleid, das das härteste Herz erweicht, in ihren Dienst gestellt. Wenn kein Propagandastoff für Erregung des Mitleids da war, so wurde solcher erfunden. Es sei nur an die belgischen Kinder mit abgehauenen Händen erinnert ... Die deutsche Propaganda durfte unter dem Druck militärischer Stellen kein Gegengewicht schaffen.' Erzberger, 8.

<sup>54</sup> 'Es ist im allgemeinen nicht gut, die Größe der Verluste in Briefen nach Amerika hervorzuheben, weil die Verluste drüben so fabelhaft übertrieben werden ...'. Siegmund-Schultze, letter to GAD, 15.3.1915. GAD replied: 'Über die Verluste schrieb ich absichtlich um den im satten Comfort ihrer überflachten Christlichkeit erstickenden Brüdern eine Ahnung von dem furchtbaren Ernst des Krieges zu geben.' GAD, letter to Siegmund-Schultze, 18.3.1915. For Siegmund-Schultze, see Jenkins.

<sup>55</sup> Erzberger, 15-16.

<sup>56</sup> See Appendix 7, c. In *Pr.WL*, 18.12.1915, 3, 4, GAD referred cautiously to the 'Armenian problem' and 'Armenian disturbances', and in 18.3.1916, 3, to the 'Armenian cause'. Only after the lifting of censorship was he able to expand on the topic; see *Ev.Wbr.*, 16.11.1918, 7-8; 30.6.1919, 18.

<sup>57</sup> *Pr.WL*, 15.11.1916, 2.

<sup>58</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 16.11.1918, 3.

academic integrity, or political perspective, but rather symptomatic of the editorial constraints under which he laboured.

### 7.3. Content of the *Wochenbriefe*

According to their author, the bulletins consist essentially of discussions on Germany's morale (*Gesamtstimmung*), religious or church related topics and numerous statistics, interspersed with personal war experiences; and although it was predominantly a Protestant paper he readily cooperated with Roman Catholics.<sup>59</sup> At the urging of American academics he also began to include material that demonstrated the effects of the war on Germany's scholastic body and on their international research.<sup>60</sup> Since Deissmann's editorial horizons were expansive, his bulletins were more suitable as a source of information for intellectual individuals, or larger religious papers, than localised church bulletins, or the general public. Neither were they mere wartime publications, for he continued to produce them until the end of 1921 with the same unabated passion for maintaining and rebuilding international Christian cooperation and mutual trust as he had at the outset, and that despite an ongoing inner turmoil.

The promotion of our international, Christian relationship to my mind occupies a very important place within the sphere of religious interest, which forms the principal subject of these letters. The reader of my "Weeklies" will have noticed, how much I am not only interested, but even much concerned as to whether we will succeed in keeping the invincible threads of Christian fellowship between the nations amid the raging of this terrible world-struggle and even to do preparatory work for the strengthening of the same after the conflict is over.<sup>61</sup>

Deissmann's motivational conviction was that the NT message had the power to bridge national borders, political impassés, language barriers and social strata. This fundamentally optimistic *Weltanschauung* enabled him throughout the seemingly endless global conflict to maintain a philosophical outlook and focus on the problem of a fragmented postwar Christianity. What he wrote in his bulletins was, therefore, not

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<sup>59</sup> 'In der Regel beschränkte ich mich auf das innere Leben des protestantischen Deutschlands einschliesslich der protestantischen Freikirchen, habe gelegentlich aber auch, wo es mir richtig zu sein schien, auch [*sic*] charakteristische Äusserungen des christlichen Lebens der römisch-katholischen Kirche mit berührt.' Bericht, 4.7.1916, 12. He was also a regular reader of what he described as 'the excellent "Catholic Monthly Letters" of my colleague Professor Dr. Engelbert Krebs'. *Pr.WL*, 25.10.1916, 2. See also above, n. 22.

<sup>60</sup> Bericht, 4.7.1916, 11-12.

<sup>61</sup> *Pr.WL*, 12.6.1915, 1.

primarily intended for the 'here and now', but should be understood within this framework of the reconstruction of ecclesiastical fellowship.

Deissmann drew his confidence from Luther's *Zweireichelehre*,<sup>62</sup> for he believed, 'die Ecclesia Invisibilis bleibt bestehen, trotz aller Irrungen der Visibilis. Darum bleibe ich optimistisch ...'.<sup>63</sup> Although his political perspectives changed during the seven-year span of his bulletins, it is his confidence in God's providence that kept his primary focus unwavering, despite the Church's failure to prevent the war in the first place.<sup>64</sup> The substance of Deissmann's wartime bulletins constitute, in effect, a farsighted attempt at preparing his readers for the challenging religious intangibles that a political peace would inevitably pose for Christendom after the war.

Sich im Frieden auf den Krieg zu rüsten, gehört für die Völker bei dem jetzigen Tiefstande der Kultur immer noch zu den bitteren Notwendigkeiten ... Sich im Kriege auf den Frieden zu rüsten, ist eine nicht weniger ernste Notwendigkeit. Der Friede ... ist undenkbar ohne eine bestimmte seelische Temperatur derer, die ihn schließen; anderenfalls ist er nur eine Atempause des Krieges. Die Schaffung dieser Temperatur aber muß schon während des Kampfes versucht werden ...<sup>65</sup>

Repairing the shattered cooperation and goodwill between Christians worldwide was no easy undertaking merely contingent on the signing of a peace treaty. For hazy popular notions – such as 'war-guilt', 'vanquished', or 'victor' – would inevitably arise to become *de rigueur* within the international press, and alienate the conflicting nations' major religious organisations even further. Instead, the war's effect on Europe's psyche required an optimistic voice to counteract it, one that could keep alive people's hope for a better future, through what Deissmann termed a 'trotziger Dennochsglaube'.<sup>66</sup> This positive outlook is continually evident throughout the war period of the bulletins,<sup>67</sup> and was buttressed by the editor's recognition that Christian fellowship through shared suffering could be a powerful force to foster mutual understanding among the combating nations. 'It matters not whether it is our people who suffer loss or the hostile

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<sup>62</sup> On this topic, see ch. 8, n. 3.

<sup>63</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 29.7.1917, 2-3.

<sup>64</sup> Three months into the war GAD posed the rhetorical question: 'Was leistet nun die Religion dem Kriege? Sie hat ihm nicht geleistet, daß sie ihn, als er noch ein Gespenst war, bannte. Sie hat ihn nicht verhindert, wie sie in der Vergangenheit Kriege nicht verhindert hat und wie sie vieles nicht verhindern kann ...'. *Der Krieg und die Religion*, 18-19.

<sup>65</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 2.12.1917, 3.

<sup>66</sup> GAD, *De Profundis; ein Dienst am Wort*, Berlin, 1925, 73; see also *Ev.Wbr.*, 12.10.1918, 7.

<sup>67</sup> e.g. *Pr.WL*, 12.3.1915, 5; 20.11.1915, 2; 29.1.1916, 2; 9.12.1916, 6; 24.12.1916, 2; *Ev.Wbr.*, 31.7.1918, 1-2.

party, the awfulness of the tragedy remains the same.<sup>68</sup> It was crucial, therefore, that his bulletins be understood for what they were: regular, informative communiqués, which – by grappling with the problem of war and religion – attempted to foster understanding and cooperation among Christians, in line with the NT instructions on social harmony.<sup>69</sup>

While these bulletins inevitably touched on political topics, such as the Versailles Treaty or the Armenian genocide, they were not politically ‘maskierte Propaganda’ – as, for example, the Swiss radical socialist theologian Leonhard Ragaz (1868-1945) claimed<sup>70</sup> – nor do they show any systematic attempt at fostering diplomatic understanding between nations.

Die Verständigung, an die ich denke, ist eine viel feinere Sache, als es politische Abmachungen über Grenzen und Tarife sein können. Ich denke an seelische Annäherung durch den Kampf gegen die eigene pharisäische Selbstgerechtigkeit, durch den aufrichtigen Willen, dem anderen innerlich gerecht zu werden, durch gemeinsame Beugung unter die ewigen Ideale der Religion.<sup>71</sup>

By these ‘ewigen Ideale’ he meant Christ’s teaching on mutually tolerant and forgiving love, as expanded on by the Apostle Paul.<sup>72</sup> This is the Judaeo-Christian social ethic that underlies Deissmann’s bulletins, and gave him the theological authority to apply its tenets to his reconciliation work, not only during wartime, but leading on into the early 1920s and a new era of unprecedented religious ecumenism. Even when Germany lay in ruins as WWI drew to a conclusion, Deissmann’s spiritual bridge building continued with unabated optimism.

Die Einheit der Christenheit ist mir nach vier Jahren der Vernichtung nicht ein Scherbenhaufen zerstörter Illusionen, sondern ein zwar gefährdetes, aber deshalb um so treuer zu hütendes und auszubauendes Heiligtum. Und es ist ein gefährlicher Irrtum, zu meinen, man müsse erst die internationale Liquidation der harten politischen Interessenprobleme des Weltkrieges abwarten, ehe man wieder an jene feineren Dinge denken könne. Im Gegenteil: gerade um die ungeheure Arbeit des seelischen Wiederaufbaus

<sup>68</sup> *Pr.WL*, 1.4.1916, 4.

<sup>69</sup> e.g. Matt. 5:44, Luke 6:27, John 13:34-5, Gal. 3:26-8, Eph. 4:2-6, Jas. 3:17-18.

<sup>70</sup> *Neue Wege: Blätter für religiöse Arbeit*, Mar. 1918. Ragaz’s vituperative article is partly reprinted in *Ev.Wbr.*, 26.4.1918, 2. See further below, nn. 131-5. That the intent of GAD’s bulletins are still being misunderstood in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and equated with German WWI propaganda is reflected in Jenkins’ comment: ‘While [GAD’s bulletins] undoubtedly served a propagandist purpose, by challenging false enemy reports and currying favour amongst the neutral nations for Germany’s position, nevertheless, they were also intended to help maintain friendly ties between the churches’, 139.

<sup>71</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 2.12.1917, 4.

<sup>72</sup> 1 Cor. 13:1-13.

der Christenheit nach dem Kriege zu ermöglichen, muß schon während des Krieges vor dem Volke ... der Einheitsgedanke auf den Leuchter gestellt werden.<sup>73</sup>

Not only was Deissmann's focus on Christian solidarity – under the umbrella of war and religion – the prime mover of his bulletins, but his unshakable belief in the 'Una Sancta' also kept sustaining his positive outlook throughout the dark years of WWI and can be detected in many of his dispatches, as for example:

... wir können den Gedanken der Gemeinschaft der einen heiligen Kirche nicht abschütteln, wenn die Völker politisch aufeinandertreffen. Ich hätte den Krieg innerlich nicht ertragen, wenn ich mich nicht an dem Gedanken der Una Sancta hätte halten können ...<sup>74</sup>

And in the conclusion to the last of his bulletin he wrote, 'In einer Zeit tiefsten Menschheitselends lege ich die Feder aus der Hand ... [aber] um so strahlender bleibt vor meinem zukunftssehenden Auge das christliche Ideal der Solidarität Aller, die Menschenantlitz tragen'.<sup>75</sup>

#### 7.4. Changing perspectives in the *Wochenbriefe*

While the main theme of the bulletins remained constant throughout the seven years of their publication, many of Deissmann's political, social and religious views shifted considerably between 1914 and 1918.

In his first issue he sought to defend Prussian militarism with the imprudent claim that Germany's army was 'the safest guarantee for the maintenance of peaceful conditions; a bellicose leading statesman or prince, or even a warlike Reichstag are impossible in Germany, thanks to its military organization'.<sup>76</sup> Later he made claims that the Kaiser's command was honourable and a joy to follow,<sup>77</sup> for the war was producing a grand spiritual awakening that would one day be reckoned as one of 'the great religious movements in the history of the world',<sup>78</sup> even leaving its mark on the nation's churches for the next fifty years.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, Germany rejoiced in 'the strongest democracy the

<sup>73</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 12.10.1918, 7.

<sup>74</sup> Cited by Pfarrer W. Brandl, *Ev.Wbr.*, Oct./Nov. 1921, 282.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 277.

<sup>76</sup> *Pr.WL*, 6.12.1914, 1. He had obviously accepted the notion that the army would never allow itself to be used in any frivolous military action.

<sup>77</sup> *Pr.WL*, 31.12.1914, 3; 5.2.1915, 2.

<sup>78</sup> *Pr.WL*, 20.12.1914, 1.

<sup>79</sup> *Pr.WL*, 12.2.1915, 3.



world has seen',<sup>80</sup> for which von Hindenburg<sup>81</sup> had defeated 'the million-armies of Russia',<sup>82</sup> in a military conflict that was purely 'a holy war of self-defence'.<sup>83</sup> However, only a few months after first lauding Germany's military organisation Deissmann referred to it as

... our notorious German militarism. It is an awful fact, but none the less true, our militarism last winter began to influence our Christmas festival and the toys given the children. Even more awful it most certainly was, that innocent American children should have been drawn into the clutches of this German octopus. – My wife, namely, had presented my friend, Dr. Herbert Adams Gibbons, before his departure from Berlin with two soldier dolls in remembrance of his visit to us in the War Year 1914. Later he wrote us from Paris that his children had been charmed by their Christmas gift.<sup>84</sup>

During the first years of the war Deissmann showed distinct confidence in the Kaiser's political integrity by repeatedly endorsing him in his bulletins,<sup>85</sup> yet as 'alter Nationalsozialer'<sup>86</sup> he was never truly Prussian at heart. Thus, on 24 December 1917 he printed a complete speech by Prinz Max von Baden, delivered ten days earlier at Karlsruhe, not only because it contained political criticism of Germany's enemies, but more to the point, because it included the kind of *politische Selbstkritik* he could publish despite censorship.<sup>87</sup>

Ten months later, while Deissmann was on a two-week speaking engagement in Sweden, Wilhelm II abdicated and Prinz Max von Baden took control of the new provisional government in preparation for what was to become the Weimar Republic. Deissmann's reaction to the news is revealing, for it shows no nostalgic emotions in respect to the dramatic collapse of Prussia's royal tradition for which he once confessed 'Liebe zum Kaiser und Reich'.<sup>88</sup> For now he was able to pronounce his view openly that the Wilhelmine *Reichstag* had been 'ungeschickt' in its foreign diplomacy,<sup>89</sup> and

<sup>80</sup> *Pr.WL*, 11.9.1915, 4.

<sup>81</sup> Full name, Paul Ludwig Hans Anton von Beneckendorff und von Hindenburg (1847-1934).

<sup>82</sup> *Pr.WL*, 30.4.1915, 2. A reference to the battle of Tannenberg (17.8-2.9.1914) in which Germany's eighth army defeated Russia's first and second, and also to the subsequent first battle of the Masurian Lakes (9-14.9.1914).

<sup>83</sup> *Pr.WL*, 29.5.1915, 4.

<sup>84</sup> *Pr.WL*, 11.9.1915, 1.

<sup>85</sup> *Pr.WL*, 31.12.1914, 3; 15.2.1915, 2; 19.2.1915, 1; 16.4.1915, 1; 23.10.1915, 1; 6.11.1915, 4; 18.12.1915, 1; 24.12.1915, 4; 18.10.1916, 2; 15.12.1916, 4; 1.1.1917, 2; *Ev.Wbr.*, 28.2.1917, 3.

<sup>86</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 16.11.1918, 2.

<sup>87</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 24.12.1917, 7.

<sup>88</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 28.2.1917, 3.

<sup>89</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 20.12.1918, 8.

had misled the public in regard to Belgium.<sup>90</sup> Thus, he signed a public declaration in support of Max von Baden, ‘mit innerer Freudigkeit’, stating: ‘Wir halten nicht zu dem Zertrümmerten [i.e. Prussian monarchy], sondern zu dem Werdenden [democratic republic] ... im großen Wandel der Dinge, den wir gut heißen ...’.<sup>91</sup>

A similar shift is evident in Deissmann’s evaluation of Germany’s collective religious disposition. Whereas the initial *Siegeslust* phenomenon had engendered an ecclesiastical zealotry – which Deissmann overinterpreted as one of the ‘great religious movements in the history of the world’ (see above, ch. 7.4) – on the whole, this was most evident among the already practising Lutheran population. It was Siegmund-Schultze who pointed this out to Deissmann by reminding him that

Die Arbeiterschaft der Grossstädte ... von der christlichen Bewegung kaum berührt worden [ist] – ausser etwa in Württemberg und im Wuppertal –; und die religiöse Bewegung ist schnell wieder verraucht. Gerade in bezug auf die Arbeiterschaft hat sich die Kirche die grosse Gelegenheit der ersten Wochen entgehen lassen, hauptsächlich auch deshalb, weil die Führer unserer Kirchen sich einbildeten, sie könnten durch die Erregung der ersten sechs Wochen die Arbeiterschaft innerhalb der Kirchen einfangen ...<sup>92</sup>

Deissmann justified his sanguine view by replying somewhat lamely: ‘Über die religiöse Erweckung denke ich günstiger als Sie, da ich das dabei Wildwachsende höher schätze als Sie’.<sup>93</sup> However, once the war was over, his retrospective evaluation of the same phenomenon changed entirely:

Die ersten Kriegsmonate mit ihrem überwältigenden Gefühle der vaterländischen Not hatten zwar einen großen Aufschwung des religiösen Lebens gebracht; die Kirchen waren überfüllt, die Liebesgaben flossen überreichlich ... aber die furchtbaren Rätsel und Schicksale der Kriegszeit haben bei vielen eine Erkaltung des religiösen Gefühls zur Folge gehabt. Die uralten religiösen Zweifel der Menschheit ... brachte[n] Unzählige zur Verzweiflung, Skepsis oder religiösen Apathie. In enger Wechselwirkung stand diese religiöse Ermüdung und Verdorrung mit dem bereits erwähnten moralischen Niedergang.<sup>94</sup>

This collapse of morale was in part due to the overconfident national belief that Germany, by means of her ‘inner attitude’ and vigorous political engagement of all social strata, ‘had proved herself the strongest democracy the world has seen’, a self-

<sup>90</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 20.12.1918, 5.

<sup>91</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 16.11.1918, 2.

<sup>92</sup> Siegmund-Schultze’s letter, 15.3.1915.

<sup>93</sup> GAD’s letter, 18.3.1915.

<sup>94</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, end of July, 1920, 59.

delusion that Deissmann shared during the early stages of WWI.<sup>95</sup> It turned out to be an empty boast, however, for when the revolution came he assessed it as ‘keineswegs bürgerlich-demokratisch’, but still rejoiced in that the new German Republic would and could provide ‘Halt und Zuversicht’ for the future of his shattered nation.<sup>96</sup>

After von Hindenburg defeated Russia in 1914 his victory provided Deissmann with what he thought to be a conclusive demonstration of Germany’s superior might and *Kultur*. Yet his confidence was short-lived, for less than two years later he had come to realise that far from being beaten, ‘the two world-powers, England and Russia, are engaged in a war of conquest pure and simple’.<sup>97</sup>

At about that time he also condemned some British and French atrocities which he believed they had inflicted on German missionaries within Germany’s protectorates Cameroon and Togo, and resolutely asserted:

Mit dieser Veröffentlichung, die einen Einblick in die brutalen Methoden der englischen Organe gegen unsere westafrikanischen Missionare gestattet, ist die deutsche Prüfung der englischen Angaben über die Vorfälle in Kamerun und Togo abgeschlossen.<sup>98</sup>

Here it becomes evident that he also revised his evaluation of documented information – even from governmental sources – since he replaced much of his earlier patriotic enthusiasm with greater caution and even scepticism. For when he wrote about similar war atrocities a year later he handled it with a far more balanced approach.

Ein neues Kapitel der längst zu einer festen Kriegseinrichtung gewordenen Atrozitätenhetze! Ich habe mich außerordentlich viel mit diesen Dingen beschäftigt und bin im allgemeinen sehr ruhig und sehr kritisch, wenn ich von neuen „Fällen“ höre. Es ist z. B. ein kriegspsychologisches Gesetz, dass in einem Kriege jeder Erfolg des Gegners von der unterliegenden Seite als Tiefpunkt diabolischer Verworfenheit empfunden und durch leidenschaftliche Einzelverlästerungen nach einem ganz bestimmten festen Greuelschema quittiert wird: Säuglinge auf Bajonetten, geschändete Nonnen, lebendig gebratene Priester, Pistolenschießen betrunkenener Generäle und Prinzen auf den Kruzifixus usw. Als Zeugen werden in der Regel „Korrespondenten“ zitiert, die tausend Kilometer von den angeblichen Ereignissen entfernt leben.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> *Pr.WL*, 11.9.1915, 4.

<sup>96</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 16.11.1918, 2.

<sup>97</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 15.1.1917, 1 (unpublished; see ch. 7.2).

<sup>98</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 21.3.1917, 1. The ‘Veröffentlichung’ refers to the German White Book, for which see ch. 7.5.

<sup>99</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 15.3.1918, 2.

At the beginning of WWI Deissmann was completely convinced that Germany was in mortal danger from Britain's *Einkreisungspolitik*,<sup>100</sup> brought into effect through the triple *entente*, which, therefore, wholly reinforced and justified his initial belief in the exigency of national defence, to the point where he affirmed: 'from its very beginning before God and the entire world we have declared a holy war for self-defence'.<sup>101</sup> Three-and-a-half years later, however, when von Hindenburg's jubilant victories had been wiped from Germany's collective memories by the tribulations of his beaten, demoralised and 'God-forsaken' country, he expressed the question that plagued the whole nation:

Warum? Die quälende Frage nach dem Sinne des Unheils, die Frage, die unter den grauenhaften Erlebnissen der vier letzten Jahre in Hunderttausenden von Einzelmenschen schon erwacht war, bedrängt uns jetzt alle als Volksgemeinschaft. Warum mußte das alles über uns kommen? Ist denn aller hoher Opfersinn, alle Vaterlandstreue, alle Pflichterfüllung unserer Besten umsonst gewesen? Umsonst das Hinsterben der Blüte der Nation? Hütet euch, in leidenschaftlicher Verbitterung diese Frage rasch zu bejahen.<sup>102</sup>

Like most Germans, he had implicitly trusted that God would liberate their beleaguered nation, vindicate her *Kultur* and establish Luther's homeland amongst the leading nations of the world. Thus fortified with divine authority, how could they possibly lose? Yet now that the reality of their nationwide devastation had begun to set in, euphoria turned into pervasive misery.

Es gibt nur einen Weg, der zu einer Verneinung des „Umsonst!“ und zu einer Bejahung der Sinnfrage führt ... 1914 wurden wir auf den Adlersfittigen einer ungeheuren völkischen Seelenbewegung emporgerissen zu den Höhen der Gnade; 1919 müssen wir auf zerrissenen Sohlen keuchend und stöhnend an schwindelnden Abgründen vorüber langsam den Pfad erklimmen zu den Bergen, von denen unsere Hilfe kommt.<sup>103</sup> Die einzige Möglichkeit, in den Erschütterungen des quälenden Geschehens innerlich aufrecht zu bleiben, liegt in dem trotzigem Anschlusse an den lebendigen Gott.<sup>104</sup>

Notwithstanding censorship during the war period, Deissmann's bulletins provide a good record of how his prewar perspectives changed between 1914 and 1921, yet his

<sup>100</sup> In a Reichstag address on 14.11.1906 the chancellor, Prince Bernhard Heinrich Karl Martin von Bülow (1849-1929), had mooted the idea that Germany was being encircled by a constellation of surrounding European powers, after which this notion of national *Einkreisung* became widely believed and feared throughout the country.

<sup>101</sup> *Pr. WL*, 29.5.1915, 4.

<sup>102</sup> *Ev. Wbr.*, 16.11.1918, 6-7.

<sup>103</sup> A reference to Ps. 121:1.

<sup>104</sup> *Ev. Wbr.*, 16.11.1918, 7.

Christian optimism remained unwavering throughout, even in times of painful soul-searching. Neither did he lose sight of the original purpose of his bulletins: ‘Verständigung unter den Völkern und der Stärkung der christlichen Solidarität’. For he steadfastly adhered to this within his initial framework of how war and religion interact in societies and how this very interaction can be used to bring nations together through mutual humanitarian appreciation. It bears repeating here, though, that the theme – indeed, the initial *purpose* of his bulletins – was to search for an answer to the ethical dilemma that the war presented for Christians, and to Protestants in particular. The question for whom this answer was actually intended is particularly interesting, for since the bulletins frequently point to Deissmann as the principal beneficiary it infuses them with a quasi-autobiographical value. By writing these regular reports he was continually faced with the difficulty of articulating his personal ideas and perceptions, in the full knowledge that these would then be read and critiqued by a wide variety of Christians internationally.

### 7.5. Deissmann’s sources for his *Wochenbriefe*

Although Deissmann had acquired some editorial practice with the *Constructive Quarterly* (see ch. 7.2), when he began to write his own bulletins he (like everyone else) had no experience of wartime propaganda and the deliberate leaking of counter-information. His *naïveté* in this regard is reflected by his impulsive reaction to a wild rumour of an anti-German atrocity in Belgium that was supposed to have happened three months before he commenced his bulletins, but of which he later admitted,

ich habe damals, noch völlig unerfahren in diesen Dingen, die Sache zunächst geglaubt und selbst auch weitergegeben; als ich aber bald darauf zweifelhaft wurde und nähere Nachforschungen anstellen ließ, hörte ich, dass ... [es] eine Fiktion sei. Seitdem habe ich mich eingehender mit der Atrozitätenpropaganda beschäftigt und sehe auf Grund meiner inzwischen gewonnenen größeren Erfahrung in der ... Nachricht glatten Schwindel.<sup>105</sup>

Accuracy of information was thoroughly dependent on the integrity of his sources, and paramount to his stated objective of *Völkerverständigung* and international Christian solidarity. As a philologist he understood the importance of source-criticism well and, therefore, had quickly learnt that the war gave rise to ‘an immense number of false

<sup>105</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 22.8.1918, 6. The report asserted that the son of a German Pfarrer was, ‘in Kreuzform an die Zimmerwand genagelt worden’.

individual reports'.<sup>106</sup> Since his bulletins depended to a large degree on contributed material, his philosophy for determining 'publication-value' can be broadly summed up in his statement that 'accounts which are not personally signed and dated nor indicate the exact location, and such whose authority is not backed up by the name of an absolutely trustworthy personality, should only be regarded as sources of second or third rate'.<sup>107</sup>

Yet, despite his claim early in the series that 'in my communications I have been especially careful to back my statements with names and sources ...',<sup>108</sup> these are not always easy to verify as vague allusions tend to be fairly common. For example: 'a person well acquainted with the existing conditions [wrote] ...',<sup>109</sup> 'ich bin nicht ermächtigt die Namen des Adressaten und des Briefschreibers zu nennen ...',<sup>110</sup> or 'ein Freund in einem neutralen Land schreibt mir ...'.<sup>111</sup> However, the lack of precise names does not diminish the reliability of Deissmann's bulletins; on the contrary, it frequently allowed him to protect his informants from the prying eyes of both German as well as British censors. But despite the financial backing of the *Auswärtiges Amt*, Deissmann's information came largely from sources which were not connected with it.

Between December 1914 and December 1918 (i.e. covering the era of German military censorship) the bulletins include approximately 600 instances where sources can be more or less identified. Of these some 39% (c. 235) came from Germany, followed with 19% (c. 115) from the USA – although these ceased after January 1917 – 10% (c. 60) from England, 8% (c. 50) from Switzerland, 6.5% (c. 40) from France and 4% (c. 25) from Sweden. Other countries from which Deissmann received and cited material were (in descending order of frequency): Holland, Italy, Scotland, Belgium, Denmark, Austria, Cameroon, Poland, Spain, Canada, India, Ireland, Japan, Palestine, Panama and Turkey.

No significant changes occurred in this range of sources after the Armistice, except that American material begins to appear again amongst the c. 200 sources given between January 1919 and January 1920, although with only 8.5% (c. 17) Deissmann now

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<sup>106</sup> *Pr. WL*, 12.3.1915, 1.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> *Pr. WL*, 9.4.1915, 3.

<sup>109</sup> *Pr. WL*, 27.11.1915, 2.

<sup>110</sup> *Ev. Wbr.*, 30.7.1919, 2.

<sup>111</sup> *Ev. Wbr.*, 7.10.1917, 8.

referred to the USA less than half as often as before 1917, whilst sources from within Germany increased slightly to 45% (c. 90).<sup>112</sup> However, this reflects not so much anti-American sentiments on the editor's behalf as the effects of Britain's strongly increased postwar naval blockade and the concomitant change of readership.

But Deissmann's use of sources can be further broken up in round numbers as follows:<sup>113</sup>

Foreign publications <sup>114</sup>	.....	33%	(200)
German publications	.....	18%	(110)
Foreign correspondence <sup>115</sup>	.....	11%	(65)
German correspondence	.....	9%	(55)
Foreign formal statements <sup>116</sup>	.....	7%	(45)
German formal statements	.....	3%	(20)
Personal meetings with foreigners <sup>117</sup>	.....	1%	(5)
Personal meetings with other Germans	.....	2%	(10)
Foreign governmental sources <sup>118</sup>	.....	1%	(5)
German governmental sources	.....	1%	(5)

These statistics change only slightly after the war, although between January 1919 and January 1920 a perceptible increase in the use of foreign material begins to occur. While this shift primarily gravitates in support of Germany as a nation, there is a concomitant absence of governmental sources and a marked decrease in formal domestic statements. However, this is hardly surprising, given the ignominious fall of the Wilhelmine bureaucracy and subsequent political revolution.

	<u>1919-20</u>		<u>1914-18</u>		
Foreign publications	.....	27% (c. 55)	33%	↓	6%
German publications	.....	25% (c. 50)	18%	↑	7%
Foreign correspondence	.....	5% (c. 10)	11%	↓	6%
German correspondence	.....	8% (c. 15)	9%	↓	1%
Foreign formal statements	.....	17% (c. 35)	7%	↑	10%
German formal statements	.....	7.5% (c. 15)	3%	↑	3.5%

<sup>112</sup> Other countries GAD drew source material from during that period were (in descending order of frequency): Britain, Switzerland, Sweden, Holland Denmark, France, Norway, Belgium and Finland.

<sup>113</sup> Some of GAD's sources only show their country of origin, which is why the sum of the following table falls short by c. 14% of the 600 mentioned on previous page.

<sup>114</sup> 'Publications' includes material drawn from articles, booklets, brochures, essays, journals, magazines, newspapers, pamphlets and general reports.

<sup>115</sup> 'Correspondence' includes material drawn from private letters, memos and telegrams.

<sup>116</sup> 'Formal statements' includes material drawn from public appeals, declarations, manifestos, petitions, proclamations, records, resolutions and published statements.

<sup>117</sup> 'Personal meetings' includes material drawn from personal interviews and meetings with individuals or organisations.

<sup>118</sup> 'Governmental sources' includes material drawn from Britain's Blue Book, Germany's White Book, and government reports.

This statistical analysis not only establishes where Deissmann drew the substance of his information from, but also that the resources on which his bulletins were based remained reasonably stable throughout the entire period of the conflict and its immediate aftermath.

Much of the material was being sent to him from abroad, and that in ever increasing quantities. Thus, he occasionally made revealing comments, such as: ‘... ich habe darüber [Cameroon] viele Zeitungsausschnitte und anderes Material erhalten ...’;<sup>119</sup> or: ‘Aus meinem Leserkreise erhalte ich fast täglich wertvolle literarische Erscheinungen ...’;<sup>120</sup> and in another place: ‘... from an acquaintance in Arkansas ... [who] enclosed newspaper clippings ...’.<sup>121</sup> Sometimes he also provided lengthy acknowledgment lists, which demonstrate the large circle of international correspondents who supplied him with relevant information.<sup>122</sup> It is well to remember that his initial readership consisted primarily of influential intellectuals within America, although this spread steadily to other nations as well. After 1917, when the bulletins began to be mailed to an increasing number of recipients throughout Germany, Deissmann’s address list also begins to show more readers in other European countries, ranging from Czechoslovakia to France, from Switzerland to Scandinavia and from Britain to Turkey. Not uncommonly these also enjoyed access to privileged information and material otherwise unobtainable for Deissmann, yet which, on account of their common goal of Christian solidarity and personal trust, they would make available for him to use in the bulletins. Much of this was in a non-German language (mostly French or English), thus enabling him to obtain intelligence from a greatly increased pool of reliable informants.

Despite some contemporary detractors (see ch. 7.6), the engaging style of his bulletins tended to bring about a kind of bonding effect between writer and reader, particularly since he answered all correspondence personally, and thus formed an extensive network of international friends.

Eine neben den gedruckten „Wochen-Briefen“ einhergehende internationale tägliche Einzelkorrespondenz ist nach wie vor ein Hauptteil meiner Arbeit. Ich möchte sie, obwohl sie mich wegen ihres Umfangs zu Zeiten zu erdrücken droht, nicht missen. Wertvollstes Material und wertvollste

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<sup>119</sup> Bericht, 4.7.1916, 16.

<sup>120</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 7.9.1918, 7.

<sup>121</sup> *Pr.WL*, 18.9.1915, 1.

<sup>122</sup> e.g. *Ev.Wbr.*, 28.9.1919, 14-16; 31.12.1919, 21-3.



persönliche Beziehungen verdankte ich ihr auch in den trüben Zeiten der Sperre.<sup>123</sup>

One example of the kind of ‘most valuable material’ that he was able to obtain through his foreign contacts is the British Blue Book, for it had come to him from England via some unnamed Swiss readers of his bulletins.<sup>24</sup>

Soon after the outbreak of war the *Reichstag* issued a kind of ‘war-apologia’ in book-form. It included 27 high-level diplomatic telegrams and letters, and its text was written with the overt aim of convincing the German public that their nation was acting in self-defence against Russia. The publication became commonly known as the German White Book and was quickly taken up as a model by the British Parliament, who responded with a Blue Book that comprised 159 documents.<sup>125</sup> Although these publications offered a considerable but very selective amount of factual information, they were, in fact, self-serving governmental propaganda and, therefore, had to be interpreted with caution. In respect to Germany’s White Book, for instance, Erzberger bemoaned the fact that it only presented ‘ein mangelhaftes Bild der schwärzesten acht Tage der Weltgeschichte’,<sup>126</sup> which might perhaps explain why Deissmann cited it only once during the war, whereas he made reference to Britain’s Blue Book five times.

It must be remembered that his bulletins were not only restricted to, but also dependent on, a generally well-informed and well-principled primary readership whose reliability was often testable.<sup>127</sup> This became increasingly the case as Deissmann’s data collection began to accumulate, on account of his massive two-way correspondence, which allowed him to cross-reference and countercheck much of the material he received.

## 7.6. Appraisal of the *Wochenbriefe*

Already by 1916 this relentlessly increasing correspondence and its associated research was consuming most of Deissmann’s waking hours. All his academic projects had come to a halt; but with his bulletins he was able to create a unique historical record, not

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<sup>123</sup> *Ev. Wbr.*, 30.11.1919, 3.

<sup>124</sup> *Pr. WL*, 3.7.1915, 4.

<sup>125</sup> S.B. Fay, *The origins of the World War*, New York, 1938<sup>2</sup> (1928), 3-8. See also Snyder, 311-12.

<sup>126</sup> Erzberger, 4.

<sup>127</sup> Since the bulletins were also sent to many institutions (see above, n. 20), their secondary – i.e. non-subscription – circulation must have reached a much wider although somewhat less restricted readership, through the practice of borrowing and lending individual copies (see above, n. 34).

only through their very publication, but even more so because of the correspondence and documentary material they engendered.

Zu den umfassenden fortlaufenden Korrespondenzreihen mit mehr oder weniger offiziellen Stellen kam ... ein täglicher Brief- und Postkartenverkehr mit sehr vielen Einzellesern des In- und Auslandes ... Das Brief- und Dokumenten-Archiv des „Ev. Wochenbrief“ ist, das versteht sich nach diesen Andeutungen von selbst, ein wohl einzigartiger Spiegel der seelischen Geschichte der sieben Kriegsjahre ...<sup>128</sup> Mehr und mehr wurde so von Jahr zu Jahr der „Ev. Wochenbrief“ zu einem Stück persönlichsten Lebens, das mir unbeschreiblich wichtig und lieb geworden ist ... Seit etwa 1916 habe ich so gut wie meine ganze nicht der Lehrtätigkeit an der Universität gewidmete freie Zeit diesem Werk gewidmet ... Meine großen wissenschaftlichen Lebensaufgaben habe ich in aller dieser Zeit zurückgestellt.<sup>129</sup>

The question must be posed, therefore, whether these seven years of Deissmann's life might not have been more productively spent on academic pursuits. For while he himself regarded his bulletins, and their associated private archive as being of considerable significance, not everyone shared this view and opposition was to be expected.

His most extreme detractor was the Swiss Leonhard Ragaz, who maligned Deissmann's character and motives on the basis of some limited knowledge of his bulletins, without understanding their objectives, nor ever having met the author.

Die Kriegspropaganda in ihrer Aufdringlichkeit, ja Frechheit, ihrer Plumpheit und Raffiniertheit gehört zum Gemeinsten, was der Weltkrieg ans Licht gebracht hat ... Verächtlich aber wird sie uns, wo sie auf Schleichwegen ihr Ziel sucht und ekelhaft vollends, wo sie ideale Masken aufsetzt ... Davon ein Beispiel die Tätigkeit des Professors der Theologie Adolf Deißmann ... Dieser Mann ... lässt seit langer Zeit sogenannte „Evangelische Wochenbriefe“ ausgehen, die sich besonders an die Neutralen wenden und zahlreichen unter diesen zugestellt werden ... Sie treiben ganz einfach Propaganda, und diese nun eben in einer verdeckten Form. Das ist es, was wir als ungehörig empfinden ...<sup>130</sup>

A month later, after Deissmann had briefly mentioned with obvious restraint this editorial outburst in the *Notizen* section of his bulletins,<sup>131</sup> Ragaz reacted with even greater vitriol:

<sup>128</sup> To some degree, this can also be said of GAD's personal inner journey.

<sup>129</sup> *Ev. Wbr.*, Oct./Nov. 1921, 275.

<sup>130</sup> Cited in *Ev. Wbr.*, 26.4.1918, 2.

<sup>131</sup> i.e. 'Professor Ragaz hat, wie mir mehrere Korrespondenten aus der Schweiz mitteilen, in der Märznummer seiner Zeitschrift „Neue Wege“ einen außerordentlich heftigen Angriff auf mich und meine Wochenbriefe gerichtet. Ein Korrespondent schreibt, der Artikel sei eine Verunglimpfung; ein anderer sagt, Ragaz verdächtige die Ehrlichkeit meines Verständigungsbestrebens. Ich habe den

Prof. Deißmann ... fordert also Schweizer auf, mit ihm über ihren Landsmann [i.e. Ragaz] zu Gericht zu sitzen. Das ist ein Mangel an jedem Gefühl des Taktes und Anstandes, ja eine Frechheit, wie sie nur einem solchen Propagandisten einfallen kann. Wenn sie draußen in ihren Blättern abschlichten (in contumaciam!), wer ihnen in neutralen Ländern unbequem ist, habeant sibi, aber vom Ausland her in einem für die Schweiz bestimmten Blatte vor Schweizern eine solche Verhandlung vorzunehmen, empfinde ich als Gipfel der Unverschämtheit. Man stelle sich einmal vor, das Umgekehrte geschähe. Das gäbe einen Lärm! ... O du armer Tropf!<sup>132</sup>

Despite these bizarre claims, Ragaz certainly knew that the bulletins were not targeted at a Swiss readership, neither could Deissmann's conciliatory answer have possibly incited Swiss against Swiss.

In Germany it was Martin Rade who came to Deissmann's defence, by writing in his *Christliche Welt* that Ragaz's outburst was the most abusive personal polemic he had come across in years and that his 'Sprache ist so maßlos, daß unsereinem darüber die Sprache vergeht'.<sup>133</sup> However, the bulletins' strongest vindication came from Ragaz's compatriot in Basel, Professor Paul Wernle (1872-1939), who wrote an extensive but balanced defence of Deissmann in the Swiss Protestant *Kirchenblatt*, for he considered the task that the latter had set himself as

eine der allerschwersten Aufgaben, die sich heute ein Christ stellen kann! Und für einen deutschen Theologen vielleicht ganz besonders schwer, da man ... seiner Verständigungsabsicht mit größtem Mißtrauen begegnen wird. Man wird hier einen Deutschen nur dann zum Worte kommen lassen, wenn er zuerst die 'Verbrechen' seines Volkes bekennt und dadurch der gegnerischen Auffassung recht gibt.<sup>134</sup>

He commended Deissmann for his 'ungewöhnliches Maß von Selbstbeherrschung' in the face of Ragaz's insults and declared that he felt publicly obliged to explain to the former,

daß man auch in der evangelischen Schweiz über diese Behandlung [Ragaz] empört ist, und ihn [Deißmann] zu bitten, doch in keiner Weise seine Verständigungsarbeit dadurch bestimmen zu lassen ... Deißmann versuchte ... aus allen feindlichen Ländern die edeln, menschlichen und christlichen Züge zu sammeln, damit von hier aus das Bewußtsein der Solidarität selbst mitten im Krieg nicht ganz untergehe und sich und die Seinen stets daran zu

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Angriff seither nicht zu Gesicht bekommen, werde mich aber, auch wenn er noch bössartiger ist, als er den Schweizer Briefschreibern vorkommt, von Ragaz nicht auf den alten, vorevangelischen Weg in der Behandlung des Nächsten drängen lassen.' *Ev.Wbr.*, 29.3.1918, 9.

<sup>132</sup> Cited in *Ev.Wbr.*, 26.4.1918, 3.

<sup>133</sup> *ChrW.*, 25.7.1918, cited in *Ev.Wbr.*, 10.8.1918, 3.

<sup>134</sup> Cited in *Ev.Wbr.*, 10.8.1918, 3.

erinnern: dort drüben sind Brüder, sind Christen, sind Menschen, die trotz allem und allem mit uns zusammengehören.<sup>135</sup>

Despite Ragaz's propaganda charges, Deissmann's bulletins maintained their integrity: 'Verständigung unter den Völkern und ... Stärkung der christlichen Solidarität'. In this respect they were without equal, despite the many seemingly similar publications which existed during the war, such as the Swiss *Christliche Stimmen*, *Die Eiche* in Germany, *Goodwill* in Britain, *International Christendom* in Holland and *Meddelande* in Sweden. Yet, as the editor of the Swiss *Kirchenfreund*, Professor Wilhelm Hadorn (1869-1929), correctly asserted, none could compete with Deissmann's highly individualistic bulletin for *Völkerverständigung*:

Die Wochenbriefe sind in einem so ökumenisch, wahrhaft versöhnenden Geiste geschrieben, daß sie tatsächlich ein Kristallisationspunkt der Friedens- und Verständigungsbestrebungen wurde, welchem kein anderes derartiges Unternehmen an die Seite gestellt werden kann.<sup>136</sup>

However, one man who appeared to have continued to question Deissmann's motives behind the bulletins even after their publication had long ended was Hans Lietzmann (1875-1942), the church historian, classical philologist and successor of Adolf von Harnack. He had known Deissmann since at least 1908,<sup>137</sup> and after moving to Berlin in 1923 had an uneasy relationship with the latter, since he had formed a low view of Deissmann's intellectual capacity on the basis of his perceived mild personality.<sup>138</sup> Yet in 1937 when it fell on him to present the University's commemorative lecture for

<sup>135</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 10.8.1918, 5. See also Appendix 7, d.

<sup>136</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 30.11.1918, 6. For a fuller extract see Appendix 7, e.

<sup>137</sup> That autumn the publisher Paul Siebeck wrote to GAD, on behalf of Lietzmann, asking whether he would write part of the latter's *Handbuch zum Neuen Testament*, to speed up its publication (Siebeck, letter to GAD, 17.10.1908). GAD declined, and suggested the Wiesbaden Pfarrer Heinrich Schlosser (1874-1942). GAD then wrote in a strongly abbreviated Briefentwurf, addressed to Lietzmann: 'Ich habe mit H. Pfr. Liz. H. Sch.(losser) W. (Wiesbaden) korr.(espondiert). Er hatte anfangs Bedenken wegen Mangels an Büchern. Ich ermutigte ihn jedoch, die Sache so zu sehen: er arbeitet erst mit unvollk.(ommenen) biblioth.(ekarischen) Mitteln am Entwurf des Komm.(entars) zu Hebr. 1, kommt dann einige Wochen hierher, wo ihm mein Sem.(inar) zur unbeschr(ankten) Verfügung steht; Sie selbst werden zu dem so verbesserten MS gewiss auch einiges beisteuern, was ich natürlich auch da und dort tun will.' Briefentwurf, dated 7.11.1908. See also Loeschcke's letter, ch. 4, n. 84. The intimate and unguarded register of its writer suggests that Loeschcke knew Lietzmann to share his low view of GAD.

<sup>138</sup> Lietzmann eventually (1933) plotted GAD's removal from the Notgemeinschaft because of this: see Appendix 7, f. The tension between them appears to have become inflamed over GAD's Proseminars, for in 1926 Lietzmann wrote to him: 'Zu den Grundsätzen, die das akademische Leben regeln und von denen meiner Meinung nach auch in Kleinigkeiten niemals und nirgends abgewichen werden darf, schon um des Beispiels willen, das wir andern Kollegen zu geben verpflichtet sind, gehört der § 36 unserer Fakultätsstatuten, der meines Wissens an allen Universitäten Geltung hat. Nun sind Sie der Meinung, daß der langjährige Brauch Ihres Proseminar eine Ausnahme von dieser Grundregel rechtfertigt. Dieser Meinung kann ich mich nicht anschließen.' Lietzmann, letter to GAD, 26.4.1926, in Aland, 511.

Deissmann, he paid tribute to his *Verständigungsarbeit*, but then cited a British newspaper article to illustrate the wide polarity of opinions the latter's bulletins had engendered, and said:

Das Ausland hat ihn um seiner Wochenbriefe willen gescholten, und auch im Inland war mancher nicht mit ihm einverstanden. Nun – als seine Todeskunde in die Welt klang, schrieb eine angesehene englische Zeitung: »Im Kriege war er ein deutscher Propagandist, den England zu fürchten guten Grund hatte. Er war verantwortlich für die deutsch-freundliche Einstellung in den Vereinigten Staaten und verzögerte in mancher Hinsicht Amerikas Eintritt in den Krieg.«<sup>139</sup>

Propagandist on the one hand, international political influence on the other! Unfortunately Lietzmann did not provide the source of his English citation, and despite considerable efforts I have not been able to discover either its origin or its author. Nonetheless, the claim Lietzmann reported appears not only overstated but also betrays a considerable lack of insight into Deissmann's mindset and work. In the first place, 'England' certainly never had a reason to 'fear' him, as the Archbishop of Canterbury, or the Dean of St. Paul's readily would have testified.<sup>140</sup> As for America's national attitude towards Germany, the recipients of the bulletins in the early stages of its publication consisted largely of Germanophiles. Therefore, for Lietzmann to go to the trouble of citing in a memorial lecture for Deissmann such a claim about his bulletins was, in effect, an endorsement of the assertions made by some at the end of the war, that he was merely engaging in war propaganda. Lietzmann does not emerge well from this ambivalent address. As can easily happen, he appears to have transferred his personal dislike of Deissmann to disparagement of his achievement.

To be fair, however, it was sometimes easy to misunderstand the real objectives behind the bulletins, and single editions and paragraphs, taken out of their overall context, could conceivably be construed as German propaganda. Deissmann was well aware of this, and cautioned that his bulletins were not to be understood as a kind of war-chronicle. Instead, they represented individual fragments within his international work of *Verständigungsarbeit*:

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<sup>139</sup> H.Lietzmann, 'Adolf Deissmann zum Gedächtnis. Rede bei der Gedenkfeier der Theologischen Fakultät zu Berlin am 18. Juni 1937', *ZNW*, 35, 1937. 304. See also ch. 8.4.

<sup>140</sup> GAD wrote what could easily have been verified by his readers: 'So hatte ich wiederholt einen Briefwechsel mit dem Erzbischof von Canterbury. Der „Ev. Wochenbrief“ selbst ist in mehreren Fällen von bedeutenden Kirchenmännern Großbritanniens öffentlich und nicht unfreundlich erwähnt und verwertet worden, am bemerkenswertesten wohl durch den Dean von St. Paul's (London) Dr. Inge in seiner großen Rede vor dem Anglikanischen Kirchenkongreß zu Schottland im Oktober 1920.' *Ev.Wbr.*, Oct./Nov., 1921, 275.

I also concede that the whole technique of my letters is imperfect, because, taken separately, they are composed of single pictures and for this reason can never represent a complete whole. Each letter is only a fragment, and all combined do not constitute an unbroken comprehensive view.<sup>141</sup>

Deissmann's bulletins had never been intended to provide leverage for political decision-makers in any country, nor to stir up some grass-roots movement amongst the neutrals against the *entente*; for if either had been the case, his enterprise would surely have failed. Furthermore, his practice of expressly restricting his subscriber list to a select and predominantly Protestant readership would have been equally senseless. Rather, the bulletins were designed to act as an informative forum for *Völkerverständigung* through consistent strengthening of international Christian solidarity. While they were not apolitical, their fundamental theme revolved around socioreligious and not political perceptions. Indeed, after receiving the final edition, Nathan Söderblom – a member of the Swedish Academy and future Nobel laureate – commended them as a highly significant *religious* work.

Die große Freude über die letzte Nummer des Evangelischen Wochenbriefes wird getrübt durch die Nachricht, dass Sie diese hoch bedeutsame geistliche und evangelische Tat nach so vielen Jahren von Mühe, Tapferkeit und selbstüberwindender Geduld jetzt aufgeben müssen. Schade dass diese Kundgebung des besten evangelischen Geistes in Deutschland nicht einige Jahre weiter dauern kann ... Diese Blätter werden in der Geschichte der Kirche eine ehrenvolle Stellung für immer behalten.<sup>142</sup>

Rising production costs had threatened the bulletin's future as early as January 1920, when Deissmann wrote to Söderblom 'ich hoffe, daß es mir gelingen wird, die Ev. Wbr. auch 1920 weiterzuführen. Wir stehen in der deutschen Presse vor katastrophalen Schwierigkeiten mit Papier, Druckerlöhne usw'.<sup>143</sup> Seven weeks later (8 March) he collapsed, suffering from a severe intestinal disease and internal bleeding, and 'todkrank zusammengebrochen' he remained bedridden for two months. The time afforded for reflection helped him come to a decision to bring an end to his bulletins and return 'zum gelehrten Schaffen ... wenn irgend Gott der Herr mir die volle Kraft zurückgeben würde'.<sup>144</sup> However, it was the Stuttgart *Kirchentag* in September 1921

<sup>141</sup> *Pr.WL*, 3.7.1915, 6. Although written relatively early in the war, this outlook had not changed markedly by the time the bulletins ended in 1921.

<sup>142</sup> Söderblom, letter to GAD, 25.1.1922.

<sup>143</sup> GAD's letter, 26.1.1920.

<sup>144</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, Oct./Nov. 1921, 275; see Appendix 7, g. The *Ev.Wbr.* lapsed between end of Feb. and mid-June, see Appendix 7, b.

that finally confirmed to him that it was time to end his bulletins, for there he found an opportunity to pass the baton of his *Verständigungsarbeit* to others.

Ich [bin] durch die Tatsache, daß dem Deutschen Evangelischen Kirchenbund in Stuttgart als eine seiner Arbeiten die Pflege der evangelischen Gemeinbürgerschaft mit den außerdeutschen Kirchen zugewiesen worden ist, innerlich recht erleichtert worden. Nachdem diese ökumenische Aufgabe vom deutschen Protestantismus als solchem nunmehr anerkannt worden ist, werden sich andere Arbeiter finden, die, vielleicht in anderer Weise, aber nicht in einem anderen Geiste, diesem großen Werk sich hingeben.<sup>145</sup>

A few months after concluding his bulletin Deissmann was invited to take on the position of *Landesbischof* over Nassau to replace Ludwig Nebel.<sup>146</sup> As a young *Pfarrererkandidat*, more than two decades earlier, the former had once written to this Consistory that he intended to return to the church ministry after academic studies (see ch. 1.2). Now, however, he decided not to waste the experience he had gained through the bulletins and, instead, accepted a *Lehrauftrag* from his Faculty, to teach a new course, entitled: 'Einführung in das Pressewesen des Protestantismus'.<sup>147</sup>

Die Arbeit am „Evangelischen Wochenbrief“ hatte mir eine Fülle ausländischer Pressebeziehungen und eine nicht unbeträchtliche Kenntnis der ausländischen kirchlichen Presse eingebracht. Diese Erfahrung wollte ich nicht brach liegen lassen und habe mir daher ... einem Ruf nach der Heimat, als Landesbischof von Nassau, nicht Folge leisten[d], einen Lehrauftrag für das Pressewesen des Protestantismus geben lassen und seither wiederholt Vorlesungen und Übungen über dieses Gebiet gehalten. Mir erscheint die Ausbildung tüchtiger Pressefachleute für die jetzt ganz auf sich selbst gestellte Kirche besonders wichtig zu sein. Pastorale Salbungen und schmauchende Langsamkeit allein tun es da nicht, und wir können von der Technik namentlich der angelsächsischen kirchlichen Presse noch sehr viel lernen.<sup>148</sup>

## 7.7. Conclusion

With his bulletins Deissmann had not only created an invaluable heritage of reliable primary and secondary sources for church or religious historians, but also preserved a wealth of otherwise no longer extant (or accessible) material that can throw considerable light on crucial aspects of the German Protestant understanding of the Great War. Yet historically valuable record as it may be, if that were the totality of its

<sup>145</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, Oct./Nov. 1921, 276.

<sup>146</sup> He was president of the Darmstadt Oberkonsistorium from 1907-22.

<sup>147</sup> For GAD's lecture program on this topic, see Appendix 9, e.

<sup>148</sup> *SD*, 31. Bock wrongly claimed (45): 'Auch übernahm er [GAD] den Lehrauftrag für das Pressewesen des Protestantismus nicht, den man ihm in der gleichen Zeit anbot'.

worth then one might wonder whether Deissmann really did direct his energies to best effect over seven fraught years. It may be suggested that there is another, far more significant point to draw out from this task he took on: its effect on the man himself.

What made Deissmann's bulletins distinctive? Partly it was their highly individualistic approach to *Völkerverständigung*, and partly that the addressees were carefully targeted at people of influence, ability and articulation. The latter may qualify the bulletins as an effective piece of propaganda – if, indeed, 'propaganda' were the right word. But it is not, for Deissmann was willing to criticise things done by both sides in the conflict; and their continuation for some years after the war speaks against this being their intention.

When the war threatened a European-wide breakdown in Christian solidarity, Deissmann's shift from social politics to the production of regular bulletins was a consistent extension of his innate humanitarianism. Is it, therefore, appropriate to see through his publication over seven years and his own experience of the war that the one-time *Pfarrer*, who had striven to become a philological theologian, was now on the way back to seeing himself as a kind of *Pfarrer* once again? Not, that is, a *Pfarrer* in a local congregation, nor even in a Land as a bishop (see ch. 7.6) – but in a wider, international ministry of peace among man? His abandoning of philological work did not happen because of Preuschen's lexicon (see ch. 2.5), but because he came to realise through the war years that there was a different and – now – more pressing task he needed to do. The archaeology of Ephesus fitted in with this, because it involved *realia* which had points of contact with philology; but such *realia* offered a greater immediacy of contact and accessibility for those with a special interest in NT studies.

Through the bulletins he could systematically explore the phenomenon, 'Der Krieg und die Religion', and with it strengthened goodwill and solidarity amongst Christians everywhere. Thus, it developed into a unique and on the whole widely respected forum for *Völkerverständigung*, both during and immediately after the war. This gained him not only an international network of highly influential friends, but also a worldwide reputation as an ambassador for peace, and consequently put him in an ideal position for his active ecumenical endeavours, of which more will be said in the next chapter.



## Ch. 8: Ecumenical humanitarianism

*The scientific investigator can never be satisfied with the mere repetition of the opinions of authorities. All respect is due to the authorities; without them we could have done nothing. But our ultimate purpose is not to ascertain the opinion of another about the truth, but rather to find the truth for ourselves as we see it.<sup>1</sup>*

### 8.1. Faith, War and the Quakers

Since Deissmann is mostly thought of as a theologian, I must point out that this chapter is not intended to be a treatise on ‘Deissmann the theologian’, nor is it a detailed account or evaluation of all his ecumenical and ecclesiastical activities.<sup>2</sup> Instead, it focuses on certain aspects of consequence, which emanated from his personal belief-system and proceeded to shape his views on life – and implicitly, his ecumenical motives – in matters as diverse as pacifism, war theology, the idea of a German God, anti-Semitism and international relations. It is the sum total of these which distinguished Deissmann from contemporary German ecumenists.

\* \* \*

Deissmann’s war-driven preoccupation with the ethical dilemma of war and religion (see ch. 7.2) undoubtedly affected his Christian faith and contributed considerably to the changes in some of his pre-war beliefs. Perhaps the most far-reaching of these can be

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<sup>1</sup> GAD, *Haskell Lectures*, 6.

<sup>2</sup> I draw particular attention to the papers by C. Marksches, ‘Adolf Deißmann – ein Heidelberger Pionier der Ökumene’, *ZNThG*, 12, 2005, 47-88, and ‘Adolf Deißmann. Ein Pionier der Ökumene’, in C. Möller et al., eds., *Wegbereiter der Ökumene im 20. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen, 2005, 32-53. See also Nottmeier, ‘Ein unbekannter Brief’, and ‘Hermann Cohen und Adolf Deissmann’. Further research within this sphere of inquiry is – to my knowledge, from personal and written contacts – also being done by Pfarrerin Birgit Jung (Berlin) and Pfarrer Ernst-Otto Meinhardt (Rheda-Wiedenbrück). See also ch. 9, n. 85.

seen in the transformation of his thinking in respect to the controversial neo-Lutheran *Zweireichelehre*.<sup>3</sup>

Although it embodied within itself a latent potential for the ‘most disastrous consequences’,<sup>4</sup> at the time when WWI broke out Deissmann’s Christian faith certainly reflected this ideology. On 12 November 1914, when he gave the speech ‘Der Krieg und die Religion’ (see ch. 7.2), he made copious use of its slogans, in the evident belief that this dualist concept – although not yet articulated fully by contemporary theologians – constituted the widest acceptable Lutheran orthodoxy.<sup>5</sup>

... die Kriegsartikel und das Vaterunser stammen aus zwei unüberbrückbar voneinander geschiedenen Welten ... Wir machten da gar keinen Unterschied mehr zwischen der Masse und den Führerpersönlichkeiten, denn wir sahen keinen Unterschied mehr ... ich bin überzeugt, daß die bei uns Verantwortlichen, ich nenne nur den Kaiser und den Kanzler, weil sie fromm sind, das tiefe Grauen des Frommen vor dem Krieg empfunden und alles getan haben, um ihn zu vermeiden. bis zum äußersten ... Die Religion des Neuen Testaments ... ist eine Religion der Polaritäten, ein Komplex der allermannigfaltigsten Gewißheiten und Impulse, deren Reichtum noch niemand zusammenzuquälen verstanden hat in einer einzigen Formel. Sie ist sanftmütig und freimütig; sie ist kindlich und männlich; sie duldet und sie kämpft; sie segnet und sie zürnt ... sie selbst [hat] heroischen Charakter. Sie ist ein Dennochsglaube, sie verlangt ein Einsetzen der ganzen Persönlichkeit und die Bereitschaft, das eigene Leben hinzugeben, sie ist ein

<sup>3</sup> Also spelt ‘Zwei-Reiche-Lehre’, but I shall use its compound spelling throughout. Although this doctrine had underpinned Lutheranism for almost 400 years, the German epithet itself was first coined by Harald Diem in 1938, when he proved that this idea stemmed from Luther’s systematic teaching that Christ’s incarnation resulted in a dualism of ‘realms’ and ‘armies’ on earth: the ‘spiritual’ (believers, i.e. ‘Reich Gottes’, governed by the gospel) vs. the ‘worldly’ (unbelievers, i.e. ‘Reich des Bösen’, ruled by secular law). Religion (church) and politics (state) are polarised, and rulers (providentially ordained by God to apply the law against ‘sin’, as per Rom. 13:1-2, 4-6; 1 Pet. 2:13-17) are no longer bound by Christian ethics in their decisions (*Eigengesetzlichkeit*). See Harald Diem, ‘Luthers Lehre von den zwei Reichen’ and Hermann Diem, ‘Luthers Predigt in den zwei Reichen’, both repr. in G. Sauter, ed., *Zur Zwei-Reiche-Lehre Luthers*, München, 1973, 1-173 and 175-214. In 1940 P. Althaus formulated the following perspicacious abstract of the *Zweireichelehre*: ‘Reformator der Kirche wurde Luther durch seine aus der Heiligen Schrift, vor allem aus Paulus begründete strenge und saubere Unterscheidung von Gesetz und Evangelium. Mit ihr hängt eng zusammen die Unterscheidung der beiden Reiche, des Reiches Gottes und des Reiches der Welt. Sie ist die Wurzel aller Sätze Luthers über den Staat und über das Ethos der Politik.’ Althaus, quoted in K. Nowak, ‘Zweireichelehre: Anmerkungen zum Entstehungsprozeß einer umstrittenen Begriffsprägung und kontroversen Lehre’, *ZTK*, 78, 1981, 125. For the subsequent controversy about Diem’s thesis, see Nowak, 105-27. For a challenge to Diem’s thesis, see J. Estes, ‘The role of godly magistrates in the Church: Melancthon as Luther’s interpreter and collaborator’, *ChHist*, 67, 3, 1998, 463-84. See also D.M. Whitford, ‘Cura religionis or two kingdoms: the late Luther on religion and the state in the lectures on Genesis’, *ChHist*, 73, 1, 2004, 41-6.

<sup>4</sup> F. Alt, cited in Moses, ‘The British and German churches’, 24, 34.

<sup>5</sup> For GAD’s subsequent changes in his sociopolitical perspectives see ch. 7.4.

Kriegsdienst, sie ist Märtyrerreligion. geweiht durch das Blut ihrer Bekenner ... sie [ist] siegesgewiß erhaben über die Welt und ihre Bosheit.<sup>6</sup>

One upshot of the *Zweireichelehre* was the radical extrapolation of a governmental *Eigengesetzlichkeit*,<sup>7</sup> which underpinned Bismarck's *Realpolitik* and justified Wilhelmine *Weltpolitik*. But although Deissmann was being influenced by this Lutheran dualism prior to the war, it did not dominate him. Thus, in a small essay, entitled 'Geistige Weltpolitik', he offered his opinion that *Geistige Weltpolitik* – which in Wilhelmine Prussia was based on the *Zweireichelehre* – was an ethical failure when used as a political subterfuge.

Wir haben auch politische Weltpolitik des Geistes zu machen versucht. Ich rechne hierzu das Unternehmen des deutsch-amerikanischen Professoren-Austausches ... aber im ganzen ist dieses Experiment geistiger Weltpolitik wohl nicht gelungen ... [sie] wird um so wirksamer sein, je weniger politisch und je mehr geistig sie ist ... Die beste geistige Weltpolitik ist hier die, daß man ohne Rücksicht auf den berechenbaren Effekt dem fremden Volke sein Bestes zu geben bereit ist: wir sollen erziehen wollen, nicht um zu erzielen, Konzessionen, Aufträge für uns zu erzielen, sondern um Menschen zu erziehen.<sup>8</sup>

Deissmann's humanitarian motivation stands juxtaposed to that of his influential contemporary and liberal theologian Ferdinand Kattenbusch, who in 1906 had published the widely read booklet, *Das sittliche Recht des Krieges*, wherein he systematically developed the view that any nation deemed inferior by German standards should be treated like 'verwahrloste Kinder' and subjected to 'Zwangserziehung', for the purpose of national assimilation.<sup>9</sup>

While Kattenbusch may seem extreme, his thoughts were, in fact, a logical consequence of the *Zweireichelehre*. Deissmann, on the other hand, although influenced by the latter notion, found inner strength in the simplicity of his own mystical trust in God's love for all mankind, more than in the Lutheran orthodoxy of national superiority – a trust he attempted to verbalise by explaining:

<sup>6</sup> *Der Krieg und die Religion*, 3, 13, 19, 21-2. For a similarly contrived speech, in which GAD referred to prisoners of war as 'lebendige Trophäen', see Appendix 8, a.

<sup>7</sup> See above n. 3; also G. Oaks, 'Max Weber on value rationality and value spheres: critical remarks', *JCSoc.*, 2003, 3, 27-45.

<sup>8</sup> 'Geistige Weltpolitik', in E. Jäckh/ P. Rohrbach/ P. Stein, *Deutsche Politik: Wochenschrift für Welt- und Kultur- Politik*, Werbeheft, Weimar, 1916, 9. Rohrbach had asked GAD's opinion on this topic at the Winkelmannsfest of the Archäologische Gesellschaft on 11.12.1915, and since then, he wrote, '... geht mir immerfort das Lösungswort durch den Kopf ... „Geistige Weltpolitik“', 7. GAD had turned down a request to take part in this intellectual exchange program. see ch. 8.5.

<sup>9</sup> Greschat, 45.

Wer gelernt hat, hinter treuherzig schlichten, volkstümlich-antiken Ausdrucksformen urwüchsige, in sich selbst ruhende Gewißheit des ewigen Lebens zu finden, wird nicht an den Formen mäkeln, sondern durch die Berührung mit der Kraft selbst Kraft zu gewinnen suchen.<sup>10</sup>

A year later he was beginning to distance himself openly from the *Zweireichelehre*, preaching in a sermon: ‘Und nun begreifen wir noch besser als zuerst, warum Jesus den dem Reiche Gottes sehnsuchtsvoll sich Entgegenreckenden vorwärts blicken heißt’.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, thus far he had not yet given an explicit sermon or lecture on the NT topic of the Kingdom of God in relation to the dualist Lutheran exegesis.

However, no sooner had the war ended and the Kaiser abdicated than Deissmann put his signature to a new *Aufruf*; but although this one was addressed ‘An die deutsche Jugend’, it was not written for teenagers, but aimed primarily at University students and young returned soldiers.<sup>12</sup> When juxtaposed with *Der Krieg und die Religion*, it emphatically illustrates how far Deissmann’s Christian and political beliefs had shifted during the intervening years, for in signing this proclamation he openly confessed:

Wir können sagen, daß wir für den neuen Geist tätig gewesen sind, während noch die alten Kräfte am Werke waren. Wir haben gearbeitet und gewirkt, soweit es möglich war. War [*sic*] haben erkannt, daß die Führung der deutschen Politik dem Abgrund zutrieb. Jeder von uns hat an seiner Stelle versucht, die zerstörerischen Machtfaktoren einzudämmen und aufzuhalten, dem Geist der Mäßigung und Beschränkung, der Vernunft und Wahrhaftigkeit Gehör zu verschaffen.<sup>13</sup>

When Deissmann signed this declaration he evidently had his own bulletins in mind, and although it is not sure who authored its final wording, the document alluded to his *Verständigungsarbeit*. Importantly, however, it also condemned Germany’s foreign policy, nationalistic isolationism, the militarisation of civilian life, and Prussian bureaucracy. He had progressively come to deplore all of this, when he began to realise

<sup>10</sup> GAD’s sermon ‘Auferstehung’, preached 22.4.1916 and published in *De Profundis*, 5. For GAD’s account of his spiritual conversion from a theological belief-system based on historical criticism to his idiosyncratic practical Christian mysticism, see Appendix 8, b.

<sup>11</sup> GAD preached this sermon on 6.5.1917. *Die Hand am Pflug. Predigt im akadem. Gottesdienst in der Kaiser-Friedrich-Gedächtniskirche zu Berlin am Sonntag Cantate, 6. Mai 1917 (Semester-Anfang)*, Sonderdruck, Berlin, 7-8. The same sermon later also appeared in *De Profundis* 10-21.

<sup>12</sup> Date and provenance are missing on this two-page document, but the text indicates that it was written after the monarchical dissolution (Nov. 1918) and before the general elections (Jan. 1919). Nine other signatures appear on the document: Heinrich Herkner (economist); Hans Mackowsky (curator of the National Gallery); Friedrich Meinecke (historian and editor of *Historische Zeitschrift*); Walter Nernst (physicist and 1920 Nobel Prize recipient for chemistry); Samuel Saenger (political theorist, and editor of *Politische Chronik der Neuen Rundschau*); Otto Schroeder (director of the Kaiserin-Augusta-Gymnasium); Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze (director of Berlin’s *Jugendamt*); Ernst Troeltsch (theologian), and Werner Weisbach (art historian).

<sup>13</sup> ‘An die deutsche Jugend’.

that his country was being led into a human catastrophe on the back of a Lutheran war-theology based on two illusory kingdoms. The declaration obliquely implicated both Kaiser and Chancellor in war guilt, and thus constituted an indictment against Germany's *Obrigkeit* that would not have been lost on its young readers, nor been conceivable within the dogma of the *Zweireichelehre*.<sup>14</sup>

Ereignisse von elementarer Wucht haben alte Gewalten und Wertungen mit einem Schläge vernichtet. Sie sind nicht wiederherstellbar. Eine Machtpolitik, die in ihrer Ueberspannung und Verblendung über alle Grenzen und Ziele hinweg sah, ein Nationalismus, der die Rechte anderer mißachtete, eine einseitig militaristische Auffassung, die in alle Zweige des öffentlichen Lebens übergriff, eine bürokratische Beamtenhierarchie, die vielfach ohne Verbindung war mit den lebendigen Kräften des Volkes, – das alles hat sich selbst das Urteil gesprochen. Es ist gestürzt, weil sich die Aufgabe, in deren Dienst sich das ganze System stellte, als unlösbar erwies.<sup>15</sup>

This condemnation of the 'Aufgabe' and 'System' refers to Prussia's grandiose imperialistic designs, and indicates that Deissmann – as a signatory to the *Aufruf* – no longer held to the Lutheran idea that 'good' rulers are dependable agents of God. It did not mean, however, that he would later agree with the Versailles Treaty; on the contrary,<sup>16</sup> article 231 imputed sole responsibility for the war to Germany and her allies,<sup>17</sup> a verdict that Deissmann insistently rejected until the mid-1920s,<sup>18</sup> on the general grounds that 'die allgemeine Schuld an der Disposition Europas zum Kriege ... sich auf viele Schultern in allen kriegsführenden Ländern verteilt'.<sup>19</sup> Germany's

<sup>14</sup> The Kaiser was perceived as summus episcopus of the Lutheran Church and, as Viceroy of Christ, was unimpeachable.

<sup>15</sup> 'An die deutsche Jugend'. For a wider extract from this *Aufruf* see Appendix 8, c.

<sup>16</sup> For GAD's reaction, two days after the treaty was signed, see Appendix 8, d.

<sup>17</sup> The article stated: 'The Allied and Associated Governments affirm and Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies'. *The treaty of peace between the allied and associated powers and Germany. The protocol annexed thereto, the agreement respecting the military occupation of the territories of the Rhine and the treaty between France and Great Britain respecting assistance to France in the event of unprovoked aggression by Germany. Signed at Versailles, June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1919*, London, 1919. See also D.R. Borg, 'German Protestants and the Ecumenical Movements: the war-guilt imbroglio, 1919-1926', *JCS*, 10, 7, 1968, 51-71.

<sup>18</sup> i.e. until after the British government opened its war archives to the public; see Appendix 8, e. On 18.3.1925 GAD wrote a letter to Wilhelm Freiherr von Pechmann (1859-1948), declaring: 'Eine .Mitschuld' im Sinne des dolosen Schuldbegriffs von Versailles haben wir in Stuttgart [Weltbund conference, 22-24.9.1924] mit keiner Silbe anerkannt; ich hätte das als Vorsitzender nicht zugelassen, da auch ich den Versailler Schuldbegriff für eine glatte Lüge halte.' Cited in Besier, *Krieg-Frieden-Abrüstung*, 204.

<sup>19</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 20.12.1918, 6. For a deeper insight into GAD's assessment of German war-guilt – including Wilson's 14-point program – his bulletins present an excellent primary source, particularly those written in the post-censorship era. See *Ev.Wbr.*, 16.11.1918, 4; 16.11.1918, 7; 20.12.1918, 5;

culpability was beyond dispute; with its militaristic *Machtpolitik* and neo-Lutheran *Zweireichelehre* it had contributed considerably towards Europe's disintegration. But what Deissmann opposed was the fact that the *entente* had managed to make his country into an international scapegoat at Versailles.

Already a month before Kaiser Wilhelm's abdication Deissmann had given two Olaus Petri lectures at Uppsala, where he declared that he had progressively learned, '... daß die Betonung des *Zukunftscharakters* des Reiches Gottes berechtigt ist ...', from which he concluded: 'die alte Theorie würde mir heute nur eine hinter uns liegende Trümmerstätte zeigen; die neue Theorie stellt mich vor ein frisch zu pflügendes Ackerfeld'.<sup>20</sup> This appears to have been his first explicit public renunciation of the *Zweireichelehre*; but in 1923 he left no more room for doubt as to his changed position, when he gave a lecture at Birmingham in which he specifically spoke on the topic of God's kingdom. It was awkwardly entitled, 'The working out of communion with God in the message of the Kingdom', but in it he unequivocally identified the Lutheran theory as erroneous.

We had long become accustomed to the comfortable idea that the Kingdom of God had for a long time been present, that it was established by Jesus Himself, and that we had simply to join ourselves to it by faith. I regard it as a great service rendered by the newer study of the Bible, that it strongly emphasized the coming character of the Kingdom according to Jesus ... I do not think, either, that the expressions "dualism" or "antinomy" properly apply to the position of Jesus. These two words do not solve the problem – they merely state it, or conceal it.<sup>21</sup>

At the same time as Deissmann was shifting away from the *Zweireichelehre*, he began a growing personal involvement with the ecumenical movement, because his revised belief that God's kingdom was in prospect convinced him that Christians had

... a great programme [*sic*], of home and foreign mission, and of international work, both political and social. If Christianity of to-day adopted the expectation of the Kingdom which Jesus had [as against Luther's exegesis] then it would be ... pointing forward to the great goal of God for humanity.<sup>22</sup>

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27.3.1919, 5, 6, 7, 8; 15.5.1919, 8; 30.6.1919, 3; 11.1920, 111; 7.1921, 228. For references to Wilson, see *Pr.WL*, 15.1.1916, 1; 15.11.1916, 1, 2; 24.12.1916, 4; *Ev.Wbr.*, 4.4.1917, 4, 10; 20.6.1917, 10, 11; 24.12.1917, 7; 25.1.1919, 10; 13.3.1919, 5, 8; 10.4.1919, 4, 5, 15; 15.5.1919, 9; 29.5.1919, 3, 5; 30.6.1919, 2, 11, 12, 14, 15; 31.10.1919, 11; end of July, 1920, 59.

<sup>20</sup> 'Die deutsche Theologie und die Einheit der Kirche', *IMW*, 13, 4, Leipzig, 1919, 347 (Italics mine). The two lectures were given on 7-8.10.1918. See Appendix 8, f.

<sup>21</sup> *Selly Oak Lectures*, 116, 119. See also GAD, *Die Stockholmer Bewegung. Die Weltkirchenkonferenz zu Stockholm 1925 und Bern 1926 von innen betrachtet*, Berlin, 1927, 86-9. For GAD's account on how he abandoned the *Zweireichelehre* see Appendix 8, f.

<sup>22</sup> *Selly Oak Lectures*, 121-2.

In 1914 he had made a serious blunder by signing the two nationalistically apologetic *Aufrufe*; but despite his new understanding of the kingdom of God, one must wonder why in 1918 he again lent his name to an almost totally antithetical – yet potentially no less tendentious – appeal to Germany’s younger generation. The answer cannot only lie in his changed attitude to his country’s leadership and the war or, for that matter, in the abolition of censorship and subsequent freedom of expression. Rather, the psychological, religious and political transformation he had undergone personally, through the experience of a world at war and the soul-searching work of his bulletins (see ch. 7.4), had reawakened and reinforced in him the values of his erstwhile liberal-pietistic belief that the Christian faith ought to be a pragmatic way of life, not an intellectual quest for theological dogma<sup>23</sup> – and particularly not a quest for Germanic imperialism. He had been anti-dogmatic from his youth and, therefore, could never hold a high opinion of what he contemptuously termed ‘selbstgenugsame Sesseltheologie’,<sup>24</sup> but it was chiefly through the war years that he came to understand how prone Luther’s double-pronged doctrine was to mere speculation – and thus to self-justifying war-theology.

Therefore, he urged in the 1918 Olaus Petri lectures that since German theologians, including himself, had the freedom to rethink their role in bringing about Christian solidarity – and with it a possible facilitating of the cessation of war – such cooperation would become increasingly effectual the more critical

... wir gegen uns selbst sind und je mehr wir durch Selbstkritik die Gefahren der militarisierten Theologie überwinden, jener ... besonders uns Theologen in den kriegsführenden Ländern gefährdenden Kriegstheologie, die im Kriegerischen stark ist, im Theologischen schwach.<sup>25</sup>

Deissmann’s charge that German theology was ‘schwach’ was not an indiscriminate attack on his colleagues, but rather a public acknowledgement that his *Wissenschaft*, as a whole, had lost the Christian way of peace by yielding to the insidious sociopolitical pressures of nationalistic war-theology, to which he himself had succumbed during the first years of the conflict (see ch. 7.4), but now strove to eradicate (‘überwinden’).

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<sup>23</sup> *SD*, 1-2.

<sup>24</sup> GAD, *Die ökumenische Erweckung. Ein Jahrzehnt zeitgenössischer Kirchengeschichte. Rede bei der Feier der Erinnerung an den Stifter der Berliner Universität, König Friedrich Wilhelm III. in der Alten Aula am 3. Aug. 1929*, Berlin, 1929, 6.

<sup>25</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 19.10.1918, 6-7.

Great thinkers in the German tradition had long struggled with the question of war and peace, among them Luther, Kant and Hegel. On the one hand, Kant – combining the philosophical traditions of British empiricism and continental rationalism – argued for a perpetual peace in which war could be abolished forever by means of a *foedus pacificum* (e.g. League of Nations, or UN).<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, Hegel – following Luther’s thinking on war<sup>27</sup> – contended that any such (Kantian) agreements between sovereign states could never be more than a *pactum pacis*, since they would of necessity be ‘infected with contingency’, and therefore impermanent.<sup>28</sup> In contrast to these abstract yet commonly accepted philosophies.<sup>29</sup> Deissmann’s own investigation into this topic rested primarily on his work with the bulletins and was, therefore, more heuristic than theoretical, but he acknowledged that

es ... sich um eines der ganz großen Probleme der theologischen und der philosophischen Ethik [handelt], und zu den Gedankenmassen, die es in der Literatur erzeugt hat, haben die größten ihren Beitrag gegeben. Ich wage mich nicht, zu diesen mich zu gesellen; und selbst wenn ich es versuchen dürfte, Bericht erstattend über Meinung und Gegenmeinung der großen Denker die Frage ... aufzurollen ... würde ich es ... nicht tun.<sup>30</sup>

After two-and-a-half years of struggling with this question he had still not advanced much further, and wrote: ‘das furchtbare Rätsel, das der Weltkrieg dem christlichen Glauben auferlegt hat, ist noch nicht gelöst, und ich weiß nicht, ob ... [die] jetzt Lebenden jemals eine völlige Lösung schauen werden’.<sup>31</sup> Surprisingly, it was neither a belief in Germanic superiority nor a hope for an ethical resolution to the war, but his three-year-old twins, Paul and Gerhard, who helped him ‘durch ihre wundervolle Unbesorgtheit und Lebensfreude über die quälenden Dinge dieses furchtbaren Ringens hinweg’.<sup>32</sup> Kant’s idea of perpetual peace and the Lutheran-Hegelian inevitability of war were not consistent with Deissmann’s empirical perception of human nature,

<sup>26</sup> I. Kant, ‘Towards Perpetual Peace’, *Practical Philosophy: The Cambridge edition of Immanuel Kant*, M.J. Gregor, ed. and transl., Cambridge, 1996, 8:356.

<sup>27</sup> See W. Walther’s small anthology of Luther citations in *Deutschlands Schwert durch Luther geweiht*, Leipzig, 1914.

<sup>28</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*. T.M. Knox, transl., Oxford, 1967, § 333. See also Moses, ‘The British and German churches’, 31.

<sup>29</sup> For a thesis on how these disparate philosophies still influence current international politics (e.g. USA v. Iraq), see M. de Lourdes Borges, ‘War and perpetual peace: Hegel, Kant and contemporary wars’, *ethic@, Revista Internacional de Filosofia da Moral*, 5, 1, 2006, 81-90.

<sup>30</sup> *Der Krieg und die Religion*, 3-4.

<sup>31</sup> ‘Die Hand am Pflug’, 11.

<sup>32</sup> GAD, letter to Crusius, 7.3.1915.



although, despite his innate optimism, he tended more towards the latter.<sup>33</sup> Thus, while the League of Nations was being established after WWI, he remained sceptical and referred to it as the essentially 'kalte politische Völkerbundidee',<sup>34</sup> although some months later he softened somewhat and cautiously wrote:

... das einzig Gute, das [Versailles] brachte, ist der Völkerbund, der aber unvollkommen ist, solange nicht Deutschland und die anderen Zentralstaaten gleichberechtigte Mitglieder sind.<sup>35</sup>

While Deissmann urged that Germany's militarised theology was inherently dangerous, at the outset of the war he was still under its pervasive influence and, therefore, had quickly volunteered to join the *Landsturm* – equivalent to the British Home Guard – as a non-combatant chaplain.<sup>36</sup> Already while studying at Tübingen 29 years earlier, he had fulfilled his voluntary basic training in the local Württemberg infantry regiment.<sup>37</sup> This time, however, he wanted to enlist, not because he favoured the idea of war, but because he accepted Berlin's propaganda that Germany was being encircled by those nations who '... das Netz der Kriegsverschwörung gegen Deutschland seit lange im verborgenen arglistig gesponnen und jetzt über uns geworfen haben, um uns zu ersticken'.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, he also trusted his government's projections that the conflict would be quick and decisive and that Germany, as God's favoured nation, was destined to be victorious as matter of course.<sup>39</sup>

Apart from Deissmann's *Landsturm* chaplaincy his private (i.e. non-University related) time was almost entirely absorbed by his work on the bulletins (see ch. 7.6); yet he still did what he could for the welfare of prisoners of war, by occasionally making use of his high international profile on their behalf.<sup>40</sup> However, it is his short visits to the

<sup>33</sup> This, despite the fact that one of GAD's teachers in Marburg was the neo-Kantian philosopher Hermann Cohen (see ch. 1.2).

<sup>34</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 10.4.1919, 4.

<sup>35</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 31.10.1919, 13.

<sup>36</sup> On 16.8.1914 GAD wrote in his AK: 'Meine Freiwillige Meldung zum Landsturm, W.dorf'.

<sup>37</sup> 'Mein 2. u. 3. Semester benutzte ich zur Erfüllung meiner Militärpflicht; am 1. Oktober 1885 meldete ich mich zum Eintritt in die 10. Comp. 7. Württ. Infanterie, Regiments Nr. 125, zu Tübingen, wurde am 1. April 1886 zum Gefreiten übersetzt, erhielt im Juli die erste Schießprämie und wurde am 30. September 1886 unter Qualifizierung zum Reserveoffizier als Unteroffizier zur Reserve beurlaubt ... am 16. Juli 1886 stürzte ich im Dienste einer Turnübung und zog mir eine Verstauchung des linken Kniegelenkes zu, welche trotz eines 58 tägigen Lazarethaufenthaltes nur notdürftig geheilt ist und bis heute eine große Schwächung zurückgelassen hat.' *Lebenslauf*, 27.3.1889. This knee injury troubled GAD throughout his life.

<sup>38</sup> 'Aufruf deutscher Kirchenmänner und Professoren: An die evangelischen Christen im Ausland', cited in Besier, *Quellen- und Arbeitsbuch*, 44.

<sup>39</sup> See ch. 6, n. 127.

<sup>40</sup> See Appendix 8, g (I-II).

frontlines in 1916 and 1917 which are of special significance, since they offer a revealing parallel for his personal development in his *Verständigungsarbeit* with that of his archaeological role as reviver of the Ephesus excavations (see ch. 5.3). For just as his firsthand impressions of that city were to stir him to its rescue two decades later, so his experience at the Front contributed to his gradual shift in thinking and strengthened his position as a leading proponent for solidarity among the internationally fragmented Christian churches.

During December 1916 the Central Committee for Home Missions, in conjunction with the army's provost, arranged two consecutive theological training courses on the Eastern Front, one in Warsaw (5-8 December), the other in Vilnius (12-15 December). They comprised a series of structured two-hour lectures given by seven participating theologians, with each session followed by an open questions-and-discussion segment of approximately equal duration.<sup>41</sup> The program was set up in response to many requests from army chaplains, who were constantly confronted with extraordinary theological and ethical dilemmas. Reinhold Seeberg organised it with the help of Gerhard Füllkrug (1870-1948), director of the Central Committee for Home Missions. Approximately 90 field chaplains had come from the southern section of the frontline to participate in the Warsaw course, and some high civil and military functionaries from the city itself also attended, including the military governor of occupied Poland, Hans Hartwig von Beseler (1850-1921).

Other theological field conferences had been held near the frontlines before, but these two courses were distinct because of the speakers' high academic profile, their personal connection to many of the participants and, above all, their specially adapted didactic objective. Four of the seven instructors were professors from the Berlin Theological Faculty, where many of the attending chaplains had once studied. It was a rare opportunity for Deissmann to come face-to-face with the practical dilemma of war and religion, and he evaluated the Warsaw course by declaring:

Without hesitation I can truthfully say that the lectures which came to a close here in Warsaw last night fulfilled all expectations, and the reaction upon the theological professors themselves in the form of instruction and stimulation more than corresponded with the benefit the hearers themselves declared to have derived.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *Pr. WL*, 9.12.1916, 3.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

This indicates that the teaching was not simply unidirectional, for although there are no records of what ethical and theological dilemmas these chaplains had raised, Deissmann conceded that he was struck by their ‘realistic point of view, their sober judgment, their vigorous concentration upon the few strong and central truths of our faith’. The interaction with men who faced the grim reality of frontline existence on a daily basis had evidently challenged at least some of his unspoken assumptions, for he conceded: ‘Personally I learned much from their practical ideas, and in my later “Letters” I hope to make use of much that I heard’.<sup>43</sup>

The four-day course at Vilnius was a repeat of the one at Warsaw, with a similar number of *Feldgeistlichen* attending from the Front’s northern sector.<sup>44</sup> Here, during discussion times, Deissmann found several opportunities to raise what he referred to as ‘the problem of Christian nationalism and internationalism’<sup>45</sup> – a ‘problem’, because it ran counter to the spirit of the nascent ecumenical movement, which he had begun to advocate explicitly in his bulletins over the course of the previous seven months.<sup>46</sup>

The success of these two courses prompted the Central Committee for Home Missions to organise a similar one for the field chaplains on the Western Front, based on the Warsaw/Vilnius program, but held for only two days at Brussels (7-8 March 1917). More than 200 field chaplains attended, and came from as far as the borders of Switzerland and from the North Sea. Although this course was compressed into two ‘fast überreich besetzte Tage brüderlichen Austauschs’,<sup>47</sup> Deissmann and Seeberg had arrived in Belgium by train on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> March and stayed there for nine days. In Vilnius they had come to within a few dozen kilometres of the Eastern Front, but ‘in Brüssel atmeten wir doch weit mehr als in Warschau und Wilna den glühenden Odem des Krieges selbst’.<sup>48</sup>

It was a decisive experience for Deissmann, for here it began to dawn on him that the task for the frontline chaplains was becoming a ‘... von Monat zu Monat schwieriger werdenden Dienst ...’.<sup>49</sup> And eight weeks later, when he preached a sermon in the

<sup>43</sup> *Pr.WL*, 9.12.1916, 5.

<sup>44</sup> The day after Deissmann arrived at Vilnius the *Reichstag* proclaimed a renewed peace resolution, endorsed by the Kaiser. *Pr.WL*, 15.12.1916, 3-4. For GAD’s reaction to this proposal see Appendix 8, h.

<sup>45</sup> *Pr.WL*, 15.12.1916, 3.

<sup>46</sup> e.g. *Pr.WL*, 1.4.1916, 1-5; 15.4.1916, 1-5.

<sup>47</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 9.3.1917, 2-4.

<sup>48</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 15.3.1917, 4.

<sup>49</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 9.3.1917, 3.

academic worship service<sup>50</sup> at the Kaiser-Friedrich-Gedächtniskirche in Berlin and drew attention to this conference, he testified: ‘Ein Feldgeistlicher bezeugte es uns bei einer Tagung in Brüssel, das seelische Bedürfnis der Soldaten könnte nur noch mit dem Tiefsten, das wir haben, gestillt werden ...’. Nationalistic OT metaphors, he said, no longer sufficed to steel the resolve of disillusioned warriors, neither could the Psalms provide answers anymore for the relentless attrition of their numbers. Instead, he learnt that these men needed what he termed ‘das Bauernbrot des Evangeliums’.<sup>51</sup> In other words, the theological war-dogma of 1914 had become meaningless in the soldiers’ world of endless carnage and crippling uncertainties.

Guided by a marine chaplain, Deissmann was able to visit Antwerp, and Bruges some 90 km to the west; but the most powerful impression came from a two-day tour ‘nahe an den äußersten Flügel unserer Westfront’, concerning which he wrote:

ganz besonders aber ein zweitägiger Aufenthalt an der Seefront zwischen der holländischen Grenze und Nieuport, der mir ... vom Kommando des Marinekorps in Flandern gestattet worden war, fügte Erlebnisse hinzu, die zu den tiefsten und erschütterndsten der ganzen Kriegszeit gehörten ... [Samstag] war ruhig, die Feuertätigkeit schwach, unser persönliches Risiko sehr gering, aber wir hörten, ohne auf Dolmetscher angewiesen zu sein, den Krieg selbst reden, und wir lasen, ohne lange Entzifferungsnotwendigkeiten, seine welthistorisch dämonischen Autogramme. Nicht nur in den Dünen und Marschen hatte er sie eingegraben, seine deutlichste Handschrift trugen die Wohn- und Gebetsstätten der Menschen; einen Greuel der Verwüstung ... Die deutschen Soldatenfriedhöfe in den Dünen von Middelkerke und auf der Feldmark von Leffinghe hielten uns zu alledem ... ihre stille Predigt.<sup>52</sup>

It appears that he took this experiential yet ‘stille Predigt’ to heart; and upon his return to Berlin it was again reinforced, for the number of his students and ex-students killed in the war had now climbed from 18 in Feb. 1915 to over 100.<sup>53</sup> In addition, Liselotte, Paul and Gerhard were all suffering from a severe bout of measles, yet despite the unseasonably cold weather they were unable to obtain coal for heating.

<sup>50</sup> After ‘jahrzehntelanger Unterbrechung’ this special religious service was revived by Friedrich Mahling on 31.10.1916, to provide mutual support for academics whose student-losses due to war deaths were sometimes in the hundreds (see n. 53); *Ev.Wbr.*, 9.3.1917, 1-2. GAD preached occasionally at these services.

<sup>51</sup> ‘Die Hand am Pflug’, 9.

<sup>52</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 15.3.1917, 4-5.

<sup>53</sup> ‘Ich schätze allein die Zahl der für ihr Vaterland gestorbenen früheren Mitglieder meines Neutestamentlichen Seminars und Proseminars (seit 1908) auf mindestens 100, und in dieser Reihe ist eine Auslese der Begabtesten und Hoffnungsvollsten enthalten.’ *Ev.Wbr.*, 9.3.1917, 1. Two years earlier this figure stood at 18, see *PrWL*, 12.2.1915, 4. But by the end of the war this had risen to 164; see ch. 4, n. 74.

Although Deissmann had already eighteen months earlier dared to write in his bulletins that Prussian militarism was ‘an awful ... German octopus’,<sup>54</sup> he had then carefully ‘atoned’ for this contentious remark by commending the Kaiser on at least twelve separate occasions. However, after the experience on the Western Front he completely ceased to refer to his sovereign, and when the latter abdicated one-and-a-half years later he reported it with frank relief (see ch. 7.4).

The concept of Christian nations at war with each other had from the beginning of the conflict posed a serious ethical problem for Deissmann, for he argued: ‘die Religion ist der flammende Protest gegen den Krieg, und der Krieg ist der schmachliche Bankrott der Religion’.<sup>55</sup> Such sentiments were more consistent with the pacifist idealism of British and American Quakers than with Germany’s widely accepted Lutheran orthodoxy that had progressively ‘normalised’ warfare. It also stood in stark contrast to the leading Lutheran paper *Allgemeine Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung* that boasted:

Nachgerade muss doch jeder Zeitungsleser wissen, dass gerade unsere Rüstung es ist, die Europa 42 Jahre lang den Frieden erhalten hat. Und wiederum Dr. Martin Luther ist es, der uns darüber belehrt, daß auch ‚Kriegsleute im seligen Stand sein’ könnten, denn sie seien so notwendig wie der Arzt.<sup>56</sup>

Indeed, Deissmann had been able to justify the war only on the notion of self-defence, by reasoning that this was consistent with the NT injunction that true Christian love should be evidenced in a readiness to sacrifice one’s life for another.<sup>57</sup> But while that rationale may have worked well at the outset of the conflict, once the latter escalated and the reality of its indiscriminate destruction became apparent, his argument began to weaken, and gave rise to doubts and the insoluble question: ‘Warum?’<sup>58</sup>

This problem of the morality of war underpinned Deissmann’s bulletins from the start (see ch. 7.2), but it was through his correspondence during 1915 with Edward C. Wood – a member of the board of directors of the Christian Association of the University of Pennsylvania, and a subscriber to the *Protestant Weekly Letters* – that he began to

<sup>54</sup> See ch. 7.4; also compare with GAD’s earlier assessment that ‘Berlin ist ein Vampyr’, GAD’s letter, 27.12.1911.

<sup>55</sup> *Der Krieg und die Religion*, 3. See ch. 7.2.

<sup>56</sup> Greschat, 38.

<sup>57</sup> He based this on John 15:13 and 1 John 3:16.; see *Pr.WL*, 31.12.1915, 3.

<sup>58</sup> ‘Die quälende Frage nach dem Sinne des Unheils, die Frage, die unter den grauenhaften Erlebnissen der vier letzten Jahre in Hunderttausenden von Einzelmenschen schon erwacht war ...’. *Ev.Wbr.*, 16.11.1918, 6. This was written five days after the Armistice. For dates on *Ev.Wbr.*, see ch. 7, n. 25.

understand and appreciate the thinking of Quakers in America. For Wood had not only repeatedly tried through letters ‘... to present the arguments in favor of the truly Biblical standpoint of “non-resistance”’, but also introduced Deissmann to ‘the world of ideas and ideals of the American Friends through aptly chosen newspaper clippings, pamphlets and sermons’.<sup>59</sup>

Deissmann had the highest respect for Wood’s (i.e. the Quakers’) beliefs, and agreed that the argument for non-violence was ‘unbedingt biblisch’, although he cautioned against sedulous ‘Buchstaben-Exegese’. He was definitely not a pacifist, but with his public declaration that ‘die Religion der flammende Protest gegen den Krieg [ist]’ he had expressed a personal aversion for armed combat and voiced an overt criticism of Germany’s prevailing nationalistic war-theology. Even during the early years of the conflict he felt in many ways more drawn to the utopian peace ideals of the Quakers than the strident militarism of German Protestantism. Nevertheless, the balance tipped slightly in favour of the latter, because of his conviction on national self-defence, but he wrote of the Quakers that their correspondence with him

has given me much pleasure for a two-fold reason: First, because of its manly frankness in declaring war against war, no matter who may be engaged in the same. Germany is wrong in carrying on war, but England also is guilty of the same crime, that is the sum and substance of all these letters.<sup>60</sup>

Quakerism was not new to Deissmann. Rendel Harris, who had given the former’s *Bible Studies* a glowing report in 1901,<sup>61</sup> invited him to give a series of lectures at Cambridge in 1906.<sup>62</sup> The book that stemmed from these lectures, *The philology of the Greek bible* (see ch. 3.5), is dedicated ‘to my friend Dr. J. Rendel Harris, κοινὰ τὰ τῶν φίλων’. On 12 June 1909 the latter visited Deissmann in Berlin, for the two men shared not only the same philological interests and very similar thinking on the importance of *Völkerverständigung*,<sup>63</sup> but they also had a mutually close friend in James Moulton.

Deissmann’s Christian faith – as opposed to his theology – differed little from the Quakers’ beliefs of world peace and conflict resolution. Both were driven by a humanitarian desire to promote peaceful coexistence on national or individual levels,

<sup>59</sup> *Pr. WL*, 31.12.1915, 1. For GAD’s response to the Quakers, see Appendix 8, i.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, 4.

<sup>61</sup> See ch. 1, n. 168.

<sup>62</sup> According to the AK, it appears that Harris probably invited GAD in person sometime during the latter’s visit of Britain (19.9-8.10.1906), made on the occasion of the conferring of his Hon. D.D. from Aberdeen.

<sup>63</sup> Woodbrooke’s educational program focused strongly on peace studies and international relations.

and based on a platform of NT ethics. In fact, he esteemed their unwavering peace efforts in both America and Britain as a mark of the true Quaker spirit, ‘... den ich als Exeget des Neuen Testaments mit dem echten Ethos des Evangeliums identifizieren muß ...’.<sup>64</sup> It was an extraordinary endorsement that not many German theologians of that era would have been willing to put in print.

In response to the Quakers’ moral support for his *Verständigungsarbeit*, Deissmann wrote in his December 1915 bulletin – dedicated entirely to them – that he was touched by their trust, and that ‘I am very grateful for the same, and assure them that I shall never forget it’.<sup>65</sup> True to his word, he strengthened his ties with them, and from that time onward used his bulletins to make favourable reference to this group on at least seven more occasions, as well as including several of their public declarations unabridged.<sup>66</sup>

Not long after terminating his bulletins Deissmann received an invitation from the Selly Oak Colleges’ Central Council, to present a six-week homiletic lecture program during spring 1923, on the topic of Jesus and the Apostle Paul.<sup>67</sup> The ten lectures were unusually well attended; a Woodbrooke student journal reported that there was a ‘great rush to Dr. Deissmann’s lecture’, as these attracted ‘great lights: bishops and minor canons stroll around awaiting an interview’. Significantly, another entry recorded that Deissmann took part in ‘his first Friends’ Meeting’ on Sunday 18 March, and his diary reveals that he stood up in the silent gathering to express his gratitude to the ‘Friends’ for their continued encouragement and goodwill.<sup>68</sup>

Deissmann had, in fact, become so impressed with the educational model of the Quakers’ learning centre that he later arranged for his daughter Liselotte to study there during the summer semester 1927, and in 1929 he did the same for his son Gerhard. This ‘family tradition’ continued even to Deissmann’s granddaughter, Angelika Deissmann, who studied at Woodbrooke for three terms during the 1960s.

<sup>64</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 31.12.1919, 10.

<sup>65</sup> *Pr.WL*, 31.12.1915, 1. For a transcript see Appendix 8, i.

<sup>66</sup> For Quaker references in GAD’s bulletins see *Pr.WL*, 25.9.1915, 3-4; 31.12.1915 (entire issue); *Ev.Wbr.*, 11.6.1917, 8-10; 29.7.1917, 5; 25.1.1919, 7; 31.12.1919, 10-11; June 1920, 36; Nov. 1920, 121.

<sup>67</sup> GAD, letter to Reinhold Richter, 4.12.1922. For a transcript of this letter see Appendix 8, j; for an overview of GAD’s Selly Oak lectures see Appendix 8, k.

<sup>68</sup> From an unpublished, semi-humorous Woodbrooke student journal, written by M. Wharton. Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, Birmingham; also AK, 18.3.1923.

Deissmann's growing rapport with the Quakers, and public approval of their pacifist ideology as the true ethos of the gospel, may also have had some influence on the peace ethics of one of his best-known students, Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-45). The latter enrolled in his classes for the winter semester 1924-5, some eighteen months after Deissmann had been at Woodbrooke, and for a further semester the winter after. In summer 1926 he attended Deissmann's innovative *Proseminar*, entitled, 'Übungen zur Kunde des christlichen Auslandes im Spiegel seiner Presse'.<sup>69</sup> In an *Empfehlungsschreiben* Deissmann later observed that Bonhoeffer was '... one of his best men of recent years'.<sup>70</sup>

All in all, it is no coincidence that Deissmann's move away from the *Zweireichelehre* – where God's kingdom was 'something finished and ready for us'<sup>71</sup> – corresponded with his increasing affinity with the Quakers and their philosophy of peace and reconciliation. In many respects he had long been ecumenically minded; however, now his horizon had been expanded considerably, and he could see a 'great programme [*sic*], of home and foreign mission, of international work, both political and social';<sup>72</sup> it is this changed, forward-looking perspective that gave his *Verständigungsarbeit* the primary impetus.

## 8.2. War theology and the German God

Although at the outbreak of WWI Deissmann had been swept along by the all-pervasive war-theology, towards the end of the conflict he warned in the abovementioned Olaus Petri lectures against 'militarisierte Theologie ... [die] wie ein gefallener Engel durch alle christlichen Völker während des Krieges [ging] und besonders uns Theologen in den kriegsführenden Ländern gefährdenden Kriegstheologie ...'.<sup>73</sup> His *Verständigungsarbeit* through the bulletins had produced a sobering effect on his theological perception of the war (see ch. 7.4), and by early 1917 he had begun to

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<sup>69</sup> AK. See also *DBW*, 9, 640.

<sup>70</sup> Bell, letter to Talbot, 16.10.1934. For the most recent work on Bonhoeffer see Moses, *Reluctant revolutionary - Dietrich Bonhoeffer's collision with Prussian-German History 1918-1945*, New York, 2008. The book's publication is scheduled to coincide with the 20<sup>th</sup> July assassination attempt on Hitler's life.

<sup>71</sup> *Selly Oak Lectures*, 121.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 19.10.1918, 6-7.



repudiate war-theology publicly. Thus, when he addressed an academic worship service in Berlin on 6 May, he admonished:

Es ist kein kriegerisches Jesuswort, um das wir uns sammeln ... und wenn am Anfang des Krieges nicht selten Bibelworte durch Eindeutung verweltlicht und militarisiert worden sind, so kehren wir, je länger der Krieg dauert, um so mehr zur biblischen Innerlichkeit zurück, wenden uns auch von der klirrenden Kraft des Alten Testaments wieder mehr zu der stillen Zähigkeit des Neuen Testaments.<sup>74</sup>

During the build-up and initial phases of WWI this militaristic OT *Weltanschauung* seemed to reach its zenith more in the nationalistic press than in theological ratiocination, a phenomenon Deissmann alluded to a month earlier, when he wrote with undisguised aversion:

Eine ungeheuere religiöse Literatur hat der Krieg hervorgebracht. Welche Masse namentlich an Kleinliteratur allein in Deutschland gedruckt worden ist, ist kaum zu übersehen ... ja man kann ruhig sogar eine Kategorie „religiöse Schundliteratur“ aussondern. Mir hat sich dieses harte Wort aufgedrängt, als ich vor einiger Zeit einmal ein Gutachten über eine im Manuskript mir vorgelegte Sammlung von Kriegs-Gedichten und Betrachtungen abzugeben hatte: ein hohles Pathos patriotischer Phrasen verband sich mit pharisäischer Selbstgefälligkeit und geistlos-geistlicher Trivialität.<sup>75</sup>

As a direct result of Prussia's victory over France in 1871, German national Protestantism<sup>76</sup> – that is to say, a Lutheran-Hegelian-Rankean philosophical syncretism – had begun to pervade the state almost completely with a self-aggrandising delusion that God had providentially chosen their nation as a kind of international pedagogue, to bring *Kultur* to the world (i.e. *Sendungsbewusstsein*).<sup>77</sup> Were they not direct descendents of a superior progenitorial stock, capable of producing such inspired minds as Bach, Beethoven and Wagner; Kant, Hegel and Ranke; Goethe, Schiller and Arndt? Had God not guided their nation along a *Sonderweg*,<sup>78</sup> and manifested his particular grace on them by leading their armies to glorious military victories against Denmark (1864),

<sup>74</sup> 'Die Hand am Pflug', 3, 9. Uncharacteristically, GAD also published the entire sermon as a supplement to *Ev. Wbr.*, 28.5.1917, 10-16.

<sup>75</sup> *Ev. Wbr.*, 4.4.1917, 2.

<sup>76</sup> See D.R. Borg, 'German National Protestantism as a Civil Religion', in M. Mor, ed., *International Perspectives on Church and State*, Omaha, 1933, 255-67.

<sup>77</sup> Greschat, 35; also Moses, 'Justifying war', 13, and Moses, 'The British and German churches', 23-44.

<sup>78</sup> The *Sonderweg* thesis has been challenged by Blackbourn and Eley, but not persuasively; see Moses, 'Justifying war', 5-7.

Austria (1866) and France (1871)?<sup>79</sup> Rooted within the convoluted reasoning of the *Zweireichelehre* all this seemed very obvious, especially when war became imminent. For the commonly accepted idea of national self-defence elevated Germany's struggle from mere survival to a divinely pre-ordained holy war against the 'Reich des Bösen' (see above, n. 3). Consequently, Germany could not possibly lose.

In spring 1917 the *Schweizerisches Protestantenblatt* published a series of three debates between the two pastors Hans Bauer and Oskar Frei on the topic of war-theology. Subsequently, Deissmann devoted an entire issue of his bulletins to the ethics of war-theology, and summarised their debate with evident approval:

Fürs erste müsse man mit dem Ausdruck „Kriegstheologie“ sehr vorsichtig sein. Eigentlich verwerfliche Kriegstheologie sei der alttestamentliche Henotheismus, der Gottes Sache mit der des eigenen Volkes völlig gleichstelle und Feuer vom Himmel erlehe, den Nationalfeind zu strafen. Verwerflich sei auch die Schürung der Haß- und Kriegsinstinkte mit frommen Tiraden. Ein typisches Beispiel sei der Schweizer Pfarrer Bernhard Hirzel mit seinem Züriputschwort: „I Gottes Name, Schüßed!“ Wir sind alle einig, daß diese Art Frömmigkeit verderblich ist und bekämpfen sie mit ganzer Kraft.<sup>80</sup>

Importantly, the Swiss had also observed that '... die bedenkliche Art der Kriegstheologie in Deutschland übrigens allgemein im Schwinden [ist]'.<sup>81</sup> This observation was justified, for by 1917 Germany's national morale had undoubtedly shifted from the *Augustbegeisterung* of 1914 to a kind of national fatalism, which began to emphasise: 'daß der Sinn des Lebens der Tod ist, das nimmermehr zu vergessen, mahnen uns die Gefallenen: ›Wer sein Leben liebhat, der muß es verlieren.‹'.<sup>82</sup> This, however, posed the problematic question regarding personal versus social ethics, a theological dilemma that Deissmann referred to as 'das Problem der Probleme'.<sup>83</sup>

Indeed, he saw this bifurcated dilemma as one of the '... furchtbaren Lasten des Weltkrieges', since he could neither find a satisfactory answer to it in pacifism (i.e. Quakers),

<sup>79</sup> i.e. the wars of national unification. Although many Germans saw 1813 as the 'sacred year' (victory over Napoleon), opinions were divided on how much the French popular uprising actually contributed to that conquest. See H. Lehmann, "'God our Ally': The chosen people theme in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century German Nationalism", in W.R. Hutchison/ H. Lehmann, eds., *Many are chosen: divine election and Western nationalism*, Minneapolis, 1994, 91.

<sup>80</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 28.5.1917, 2.

<sup>81</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 28.5.1917, 2.

<sup>82</sup> P. Lippert, cited in Hammer, 311.

<sup>83</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 28.5.1917, 3.

nor in national Protestantism. Contemporary studies on the topic were generally heavily influenced by war-rhetoric and

bewußt oder unbewußt, im Dienste der geistigen Kriegführung: je nach den Sympathien und Antipathien hat man mit der Heraushebung der Einzelercheinungen der Kriegstheologie den seelischen Hochstand in Freundesland, den seelischen Tiefstand in Feindesland zu erweisen gesucht. Dabei hat man oft Methoden gehandhabt, die zwar von alters her „theologische“ sind, die aber deswegen doch auf die übelsten Abwege führen. Ich denke besonders an zwei Methoden: die Dogmatisierung impulsiver Gelegenheitskundgebungen und die Generalisierung von Einzelercheinungen; auf die letzteren hat auch Hans Baur den Finger gelegt. Von der leider auch weit verbreiteten Methode der Fälschung sehe ich dabei noch völlig ab.<sup>84</sup>

Moreover, Deissmann cautioned against oversimplifying the question by dividing the concept of ‘ethics’ into various categories, as this could only be done, ‘wenn man sein eigenes Gewissen zuvor vierteilt’.<sup>85</sup> Despite his search for a satisfactory answer – by means of his bulletins – he could not fully reconcile personal with social ethics, and was forced to concede: ‘zu einer wirklichen Lösung der Probleme ist unsere Generation überhaupt wohl noch nicht reif genug. Insbesondere die Spezialfrage der „internationalen Ethik“ ist vielen überhaupt noch nicht aufgegangen’.<sup>86</sup> One notable exception was the young editor of *Die Eiche*, Siegmund-Schultze, who had recently published an essay on this topic in a *Festgabe* for Wilhelm Herrmann,<sup>87</sup> and was actively engaged in developing ecumenical initiatives with British colleagues. Nevertheless, after thirty months of producing his bulletins Deissmann concluded

es gibt für den christlichen Teilnehmer am Weltkrieg kaum eine größere innere Stärkung, als wenn er das stille Walten christlicher Gerechtigkeit, christlicher Barmherzigkeit, christlicher Gelassenheit, christlicher Versöhntheit innerhalb der sich zerfleischenden Menschheit, hüben und drüben, bei Freund und Feind, beobachtet, und die Weltgeschichte wird ihr Urteil [*sic* = Urteil] über die Mentalität der kämpfenden Völker dereinst nicht nach dem armseligen Gesichtspunkte fällen, welches Volk am wenigsten geflucht und getobt hat, sondern welches Volk am meisten geglaubt und geliebt hat.<sup>88</sup>

The assumptions of the neo-Lutheran *Zweireichelehre* resulted in a thoroughly chauvinistic understanding of moral principles, in which the war was construed as a

<sup>84</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 28.5.1917, 4.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>87</sup> Also in *ZTK*, 27, 1917, 250-62. For Herrmann, see ch. 1.2.

<sup>88</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 28.5.1917, 6.

purifying agent and Christian piety equated ‘naturally’ with German patriotism (nationalism), where the highest ideal was to die a ‘hero’s death’ for one’s *Vaterland*.

Nur wenn der Krieg als Pflicht der Liebe verstanden werden kann, darf von seiner Berechtigung auch für den Christen die Rede sein ... Im Gegensatz zu dem gefährlichen einseitigen Individualismus, der die Gemüter zu beherrschen angefangen hatte, ist wieder das Bewusstsein um die große Wahrheit erwacht, daß wir auch Teile eines Ganzen sind, eines von Gott dem Schöpfer und Leiter der Geschichte zu einer realen Einheit verbundenen Volkes, daß darum auch der Einzelne für das Ganze da ist und Opfer zu bringen, ja sich selbst zu opfern bereit sein muß ... Die Plage des Krieges wird zum Segen Gottes.<sup>89</sup>

Inasmuch as God was the God of the Germans who believed they were his chosen nation through whom he would ‘educate’ her enemies with superior Germanic *Kultur*,<sup>90</sup> international ethics was a matter for God, while the war itself became ‘unser heiliger Krieg’,<sup>91</sup> in which the nation would be able to fulfil God’s will for mankind.

Gott ist der Gott der Deutschen. Unsere Lage ist derjenigen Israels gleich ... Wir sind die Auserwählten Gottes unter den Völkern. Daß unsere Gebete zum Sieg erhört werden, ist nach der religiös-sittlichen Weltordnung eigentlich ganz selbstverständlich.<sup>92</sup>

Such jingoism, in the guise of *Sozialreligion*, had become extraordinarily widespread amongst Germany’s theologians and clergymen alike and – despite the great theological and philosophical advances in the history of church dogma and critical theology (Schleiermacher, Ritschl, Harnack, Troeltsch, etc.) – found a renewed justification in the tribal war-god writings of the OT, as Deissmann pointed out in his speech, *Der Krieg und die Religion*:

Insbesondere unsere gegenwärtige soziale Religion zeigt oft, daß sie nationale, daß sie deutsche Züge trägt, und von dem deutschen Gott predigen nicht bloß etliche unter unseren Poeten und Propheten, sondern auch ein Historiker wie Max Lenz hat mit feurigen Zungen in tiefer Dankbarkeit von der Offenbarung des deutschen Gottes in unserem heiligen Kriege Zeugnis abgelegt. Der deutsche, der nationale Gott! Schon in jungen Semestern haben wir Theologen in den Hörsälen gelernt, daß der nationale Gott einer niederen Stufe der Religionsgeschichte angehört und zahllose Lizentiatendisputationen haben ihn mit spitzen Thesen voll ironischer Überlegenheit erledigt. Und nun ist er mit einem Male wieder da, nun haben die Worte des Alten Testaments ... bei uns wieder einen Glanz und eine schwingende Energie erhalten ... und mit dem brausenden

<sup>89</sup> W. Walther, ‘Deutschlands Schwert durch Luther geweiht’. cited in Hammer, 293-4.

<sup>90</sup> An article in the *Evangelische Freiheit* (1916) advised: ‘Wir wollen zu diesem pädagogischen Zweck das Evangelium unseres Herrn ruhig ein wenig nationalisieren und verweltlichen. Was es an Tiefe dabei vielleicht einbüßt, gewinnt es in die Breite.’ Cited in Hammer, 310.

<sup>91</sup> ‘Ver sacrum’, in GAD, *Deutscher Schwertsegen*, 21-2.

<sup>92</sup> A.M.R. Uckeley, in Greschat, 49.

Psalmen- und Lutherwort auf den Lippen „Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott!“ ziehen unsere deutschen feldgrauen Divisionen ein in das eroberte Antwerpen.<sup>93</sup>

Although this highly popular Luther hymn was being sung by Christians worldwide as a celebration of ‘good’ conquering ‘evil’, the possessive pronoun ‘unser’ (in both title and first stanza) conjured up in most Germans<sup>94</sup> the image of a national God – albeit one patterned not on the Teutonic Wotan, but on the Israelite warrior-deity Yahweh.

In the full knowledge that this religious atavism had pervaded the nation – at least during the first months of WWI<sup>95</sup> – Deissmann asked the socioethical question: ‘was sollen wir davon halten? Hat der Krieg hier die Religion gestört, oder hat er sie gestählt?’ – he seems to waver somewhat before answering with characteristic optimism, ‘Ich sage, er hat sie gestählt’.<sup>96</sup> In the light of his ecumenical outlook and strong international ties, both personal and academic, it begs the question how Deissmann could have reached such a conclusion.

An answer lies in both the purpose and the audience of his speech ‘Der Krieg und die Religion’, which he gave at a public venue in Spandau (Berlin) on Thursday evening 12 November 1914. The event was jointly organised by the *Zentralstelle für Volkswohlfahrt* and the *Verein für volkstümliche Kurse*, and well attended by non-combatants and women whose husbands or sons were in active service, for which reason Deissmann’s talk was meant to be edifying as well as educational. This was an audience that sang Sunday after Sunday in their churches, ‘Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott’, and remained unshakably convinced that he would lead their country to glorious victory. To these people Deissmann spoke of the newly revived notion of a ‘German God’, by attempting to provide an interpretation that would counteract those who ‘von dem deutschen Gott predigen’. For there was no ‘German God’, he explained, because Germany had no

<sup>93</sup> *Der Krieg und die Religion*, 16.

<sup>94</sup> This applied to both Protestants and Roman Catholics; e.g. on 1 and 2 Aug. 1914 massive crowds in Berlin sang the Protestant hymn, ‘Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott’, as well as the Roman Catholic one, ‘Großer Gott wir loben Dich’. See, M. Eksteins, *Rites of spring: the Great War and the birth of the modern age*, London, 1989, 61.

<sup>95</sup> e.g. on 5.8.1914 the Evangelischer Presseverband published a letter from Wilhelm Stapel, in which he wrote: ‘der 5. August ... zeigt’s der Welt, daß das deutsche Volk nun nimmermehr von Gott verlassen sein kann, denn heut hat Deutschland seinen Gott wiedergefunden ... das ist Gottes Werk, Gottes Hand, der sein liebes deutsches Volk heut beiseite nimmt und mit ihm redet ... Fürchte dich nicht, ich bin bei dir! Dieser alte Gott redet jetzt mit unserem Volk, und unser Volk versteht ihn ... Gott, der alte Alliierte ... Ein einig deutsches Volk und Gott mit ihm!’. W. Stapel, cited in Besier, *Quellen- und Arbeitsbuch*, 36-7.

<sup>96</sup> *Der Krieg und die Religion*, 16.

more claim on the idea ('Begriff') of God than any other nation, since he was the God and Father of all mankind.

Wie der einzelne „seinen“ Gott nicht dem anderen streitig macht, sondern Gott preist, wenn möglichst oft ein einzelner ihn als „seinen“ Gott findet, so streiten wir auch als Volk mit den anderen Völkern nicht um den Besitz Gottes. Wir gönnen ihnen diesen Besitz. Das Bekenntnis zu „unserem“ Gott und Vater ist nicht ordinär exklusiv, ist darum kein religiöser Atavismus ...<sup>97</sup>

The Bible was not to be understood in a literal sense, for 'diese altevangelischen Zeilen sind niemals buchstäbelnd fixierte Gesetzworte, sondern Geiststräger, und jedem Zeitalter hat der Geist das seine zu sagen'. Nor was the true Christian religion a matter of interpreting the past, but rather of finding spiritual strength for man's ever-changing present.<sup>98</sup>

While he treated this sensitive topic with considerable tact in his public address,<sup>99</sup> one year later – at a commemorative worship service attended by Wilhelm II and his wife, the *Reichskanzler* von Bethmann Hollweg, the Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz and most of Berlin's *Bürgerschaft* – the *Oberhofprediger* Ernst von Dryander (1843-1922) preached a sermon that Deissmann considered a historical event. For here, in front of Germany's leading aristocracy and many academic teachers, Dryander revoked the idea of a German or national God, after which Deissmann wrote:

It was deeply stirring to see how the veteran speaker, without all presumption, refused to accept the idea of an exclusive national religion and how he testified of the God revealed to us through His son Jesus Christ, of that God, who is the God and Father of all nations. And it seemed to me a unique moment within the scope of the present religious situation, when Dr. Dryander in the presence of the Kaiser, certainly in full harmony with his thoughts, spoke of that day when God shall draw not only our nation but all its enemies into His kingdom of everlasting peace, when all shall greet each other as brothers in their Father's house<sup>100</sup>

As an internationalist Deissmann had never accepted the notion of a German God, and although he had been influenced by German war-theology during the early stages of the war, his open aversion to it is summed up in the sermon opening he gave in May 1917,

<sup>97</sup> *Der Krieg und die Religion*, 17. See Appendix 8, 1.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 17, 24.

<sup>99</sup> His printed speech was nevertheless misconstrued in France as nationalistic pseudotheology and *odieux sacrilèges*, largely based, however, on a mistranslation that rendered GAD's usage of 'Religion der Kraft' (see, *Der Krieg und die Religion*, 25) as 'la religion de la force', instead of '... la puissance'. See *Pr.WL*, 22.1.1916, 1-3. For similar misunderstandings in English translations of GAD's works, see below, ch. 8.3.

<sup>100</sup> *Pr.WL*, 6.11.1915, 4.

when he exhorted his hearers: ‘... es ist kein kriegerisches Jesuswort, um das wir uns sammeln ...’.<sup>101</sup>

### 8.3. Anti-Semitism? ‘Socialismus der dummen Kerle und der Chauvinisten’

28 years after Deissmann’s death Werner Betz published an article in which he misrepresented the former’s standpoint in regard to the ‘German God’ idea – evidently without consulting any of the relevant primary sources – and fabricated a link between Deissmann and Hitler.

Als ein letztes Beispiel ... sei hier noch das Kompositum „Weltjudentum“ behandelt. Soviel bisher bekannt ist, erscheint es zuerst bei dem Theologen Adolf Deißmann 1908. Es ist der gleiche Deißmann, der 1914 vom „deutschen Gott“ gesprochen hat ... der nächste, der das Wort im Deutschen gebraucht, ist Hitler. Am 13. 4. 1923 spricht er von der „klar erkennbaren Bestrebungen des Welt-Judentums“ und nennt „Weltjude und Weltbörse die Urschuldigen am Weltkriege“.<sup>102</sup>

Granted, Deissmann did make use of the word ‘Weltjudentum’ in 1908 – in his book *Licht von Osten*,<sup>103</sup> but it occurs in the following context:

Nicht als wäre die Welt unvorbereitet gewesen für den Einen [Christ]: die griechischen Denker, Platon vor allen, hatten ihm den Weg gebahnt, und das christliche Manifest spricht dankbar von der Gottesschau Etlicher unter den Poeten. Dazu war die Propaganda des griechischen Weltjudentums und seiner Weltbibel getreten.<sup>104</sup>

His use of the words ‘Weltjudentum’ and ‘Weltbibel’ were certainly not historical; instead, they were substitute terms for ‘Jews collectively’ and their bible, i.e. the Septuagint. Betz has simply dreamed up some kind of tenuous connection between this phrase and Hitler, amounting to ‘snapshot history’ based on a mixture of fragmentary information and conjecture,<sup>105</sup> and completely misleading.

The earliest extant indication of Deissmann’s attitude towards Jews is found in a letter he wrote in 1896 to his old teacher Hermann Cohen (see ch. 1.2), in which he made the perspicacious point:

<sup>101</sup> ‘Die Hand am Pflug’, 3.

<sup>102</sup> W. Betz, ‘Wortschatz, Weltbild, Wirklichkeit’, in C. Bauer/ L. Boehm/ M. Müller, eds., *Speculum Historiale: Geschichte im Spiegel von Geschichtsschreibung und Geschichtsdeutung*, München, 1965, 41.

<sup>103</sup> *LvO*, 284; *LvO*<sup>4</sup>, 331; *LAE*, 387.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> Similarly, Barbara Beuys: see below, ch. 8.3.

Ich glaube übrigens doch, dass der Antisemitismus mehr aus Racenaffekten [*sic*] und wirtschaftlichen Instinkten zu erklären ist, als aus religiösen Stimmungen. Er ist auch mir der Socialismus der dummen Kerle und der Chauvinisten.<sup>106</sup>

Anti-Semitism had been on the rise in Germany since the 1880s (see ch. 6.2), and proliferated within the popular culture of racist nationalism spawned from the short-lived social Darwinism championed by Herbert Spencer (1820-1903). It dovetailed easily with the *Zweireichelehre*, constructed, as it was, on the presumption of German racial superiority; and since the Jews were generally perceived as an alien race<sup>107</sup> – rather than a religious sub-culture – anti-Semitic sentiments were readily fomented by such men as Treitschke, Stoecker and Bernhardt.<sup>108</sup>

Twenty years after writing to Cohen that anti-Semitism amounted to asinine racism, a cursory reading of Deissmann's *Protestant Weekly Letter* may at first suggest that he, too, had succumbed to the ideology that Jews constituted a distinctive race. Although he protested against the 'inhuman cruelties' perpetrated by a 'despotic' Russian government on 'the Finns, the Baltic population, the Lettes [i.e. Latvians], the Lithuanians, the Poles, the Jews, the Ukraines, the Moslems, the Georgians ...', he referred to them as 'nine different suppressed *nationalities* of the Russian Empire'.<sup>109</sup> Nevertheless, the word 'nationalities' is an understandable translation misjudgement made by Deissmann's translator Jacob Quiring (see ch. 7.2). For in the German version Deissmann wrote of 'neun unterdrückten *Völkern* des russischen Reiches'.<sup>110</sup> Quiring's rendition of 'Völker' as 'nationalities', while technically correct, does miss the precise intent of Deissmann's usage, meaning 'peoples' and not 'nationalities'. This is also comprehensible from the context itself, since he included in the list not only Jews but Muslims as well. Although Deissmann regularly proofread the translated texts before they were printed, his mastery of the English language was not faultless, wherefore it must have escaped him that the two nouns have different semantic content. Only a few months earlier he had written in his bulletins: 'my ability to speak and write English is

<sup>106</sup> GAD to Cohen, 6.2.1896, in Nottmeier, 'Hermann Cohen und Adolf Deissmann', 319.

<sup>107</sup> From a neo-Lutheran perspective the Jews were also blamed for Christ's death and, therefore, thought to be cursed by God.

<sup>108</sup> Friedrich von Bernhardt (1849-1930), a strident military writer, advocating both social and economic Darwinism. For Stoecker see ch. 6.2, for Treitschke see ch. 6, n. 25. See also *Pr.WL*, 26.2.1916, 1.

<sup>109</sup> *Pr.WL*, 10.5.1916, 3-4 (Italics mine).

<sup>110</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 10.5.1916, 3-4 (Italics mine).



not yet as great as my desire to master the English as well as Mr. Quiring does the German'.<sup>111</sup>

However, an even more consequential misinterpretation on the emotionally charged topic of anti-Semitism occurred during Deissmann's visit to London from 20 to 26 May 1933. He was there to present three lectures at King's College on the Ephesus excavations, followed by a private celebration for the seven-week-old (German born) Ernst Peter Georg Adolf Deissmann, whom his oldest son Ernst and wife Gisela had recently adopted.<sup>112</sup> That afternoon (25 May) Deissmann met Archbishop Cosmo Gordon Lang (1864-1945) at Lambeth Palace to discuss religious trends in Germany. Because Hitler had recently become *Reichskanzler*,<sup>113</sup> Lang questioned his guest about Germany's treatment of the Jews. Unfortunately, the German ambassador, Leopold Gustav Alexander von Hoesch (1881-1936), had had an audience with Lang nine days earlier and reportedly told him:

The hatred of the Jews is due to the fact that many of that *race* have profited by the misfortunes of Germany and have grown rich while Germans starved, flaunting their ill-gotten gains and giving foreigners a false impression of German prosperity – others of a lower sort have corrupted the German youth at nightclubs & the like.<sup>114</sup>

Although Deissmann tried to impress an optimistic picture on Lang from both a theological and historical point of view,<sup>115</sup> the latter reported that Deissmann merely confirmed what Hoesch had said, and concluded privately: 'I could see that he had a

<sup>111</sup> *Pr.WL*, 30.10.1915, 4.

<sup>112</sup> Ernst worked in London as director of the Anglo-German Bureau from 1930-4, where their first and only child died at birth (30.9.1931).

<sup>113</sup> On 30.1.1933. Moreover, on 23.3.1933 Hitler had already succeeded in introducing the four-year *Ermächtigungsgesetz*, thus obtaining virtually unlimited dictatorial power; and by 7.4.1933 introduced the first stage of an increasingly restrictive *Arierparagraph*. Hitler's (and the Nazis') dependence on popular anti-Semitism had long been known in Britain, which is why Lang wanted to sound out GAD on the subject.

<sup>114</sup> As reported by Lang's chaplain, Alan Don; in A. Chandler, 'A question of fundamental principles: the Church of England and the Jews of Germany 1933-1937', in J.A.S. Grenville, ed., *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 38, London, 1993, 229 (Italics mine).

<sup>115</sup> GAD's AK entry on 25.5.1933 is minutely written (due to lack of space) and difficult to decipher, but reads: 'Besuch des Friedhofs: Ernst Adolf Deißmann. Moni [pet name of baby] R.i.p.; Adoption Feier London: Ernst Peter Georg Adolf; 1 Uhr Lunch; Omnibus 9. 33. 73; bei Pfr. Werhahn [?. illegible]; 3 Lambeth Palace: Archbishop of C.bury.; Starker Druck [?. illegible] ergibt Demonstration [?. illegible]; Erwähnt Besuchung von Botschafter Hoesch, Sabt. [sic] Ich äussere mich über kirchliche Bewegung. Ich gab Skizze optimistisch. Erzählte alles betr. 2 Gruppen der Deuts. Christen: Fezer Möller: Neues Programm; Judenfrage beginnt mit 1918; Viele Juden entlassen, weshalb damals kein Protest; Zuflucht in Amerika, South Afrika, [?. illegible]; Bolschewisten [?. illegible]; Presse, Theater. etc.; Keine Freiheit der Presse [?. illegible]; Post nicht möglich; Kirche hinter der Synode Boykott gestoppt [?. illegible] 24 Stunden.'

good deal of sympathy with this dislike of the Jews'.<sup>116</sup> The conclusion to his memorandum indicates that he thought of Deissmann as a deluded anti-Semite, for he wrote that the latter 'was rather pathetic in his plea that I should try to help people here to understand things from the point of view of the German people themselves'.<sup>117</sup>

Yet Lang misjudged Deissmann's extraordinary drive and commitment in respect to *Völkerverständigung*. His perspective was at least partially due to cultural and linguistic misunderstandings – an aspect which Andrew Chandler's one-sided report seems to have overlooked. Yet in 1994 Barbara Beuys based a newspaper article on Chandler's essay, in which she uncritically accepted his assessment of Deissmann as historically reliable, and embellished the former's fragmentary citations by asserting: 'Die Abneigung des Theologen [Deissmann] gegenüber den Juden ist unüberhörbar, und flehentlich bittet er darum, doch den Standpunkt seines Volkes zu verstehen'.<sup>118</sup>

Contrary to such misleading 'snapshot history', Deissmann's lifelong sympathy for the rights of Jews had remained unchanged. Five months after the introduction of the infamous *Arierparagraph* (7 April 1933) he signed a five-point public declaration (*Erklärung*), entitled 'Neues Testament und Rassenfrage'.<sup>119</sup> In essence it argued for the 'grundsätzliche Gleichheit aller Menschen vor Gott', and that according to the NT the Christian church was composed of '„Juden und Heiden“, die sich sichtbar in einer Gemeinde zusammen finden'. Deissmann's colleague in the ecumenical movement, Hermann Sasse (1895-1976), had recently been appointed professor of theology at Erlangen University in Bavaria, where a similar protest declaration was being planned; and Deissmann promptly offered him, 'sollte dies zustande kommen, so senden Sie mir doch einige Exemplare zu'.<sup>120</sup>

During WWI Deissmann was both a subscriber and regular reader of the orthodox Jewish paper, *Jüdische Presse*,<sup>121</sup> and in 1924 the Akademie für die Wissenschaft des

<sup>116</sup> Lang, cited in Chandler, 229. GAD and Lang met for the first time in Sept. 1919, at 'Oud Wassenaer' (The Hague), see Appendix 9, h (II). For 'Oud Wassenaer' see ch. 8.4.

<sup>117</sup> Lang, cited in Chandler, 229.

<sup>118</sup> B. Beuys, 'Ein Primas auf seiten der Juden', *Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt*, 3, 21.1.1994, 18.

<sup>119</sup> It was initiated by the Marburg theologians Rudolf Bultmann, Adolf Jülicher, Heinrich Otto Ludwig, Albin Schlier (1900-78) and Hans von Soden (1881-1945). For a transcript of this document see Appendix 8, m.

<sup>120</sup> GAD, letter to Sasse, 29.9.1933. In Aug. 1949 Sasse accepted an invitation to the Chair of theology at the Immanuel Theological Seminary of the united Lutheran Church in North Adelaide, South Australia, where he lived until his death on 9.8.1976.

<sup>121</sup> *Pr.WL*, 8.1.1916, 4.

Judentums invited him to become a member of their *Kuratorium* for the new Cohen Foundation.<sup>122</sup> He continued unswervingly to take a prudent but decisive stand against anti-Semitism, yet in such a manner as not to compromise his international *Verständigungsarbeit*.<sup>123</sup> Seven months before his death he took part in the ecumenical 'Faith and Order' conference at Chamby sur Montreux,<sup>124</sup> after which he noted in his diary that there had been a 'Große Debatte über Sympathie für Juden'.<sup>125</sup> The debate was stirred up by a proposal from Bishop Bell, in respect to the sharply increased suffering of Christians as a result of the Nazis' Aryan ideology, that

the Council should give power to the Administrative Committee ... to take any action they could ... particularly in the matter of non-Aryan children at school in Germany, in connection with the whole non-Aryan (and specifically non-Aryan Christian) situation.

The ensuing discussion laid specific stress on the fact that anti-Semitism 'was penetrating like a contagious disease, into all parts of the world', after which Bell moved the following resolution, with Deissmann voting in favour:

The Universal Christian Council has had its attention called to the fact that the mind of the Churches is greatly exercised by the distress of those who suffer in different parts of the world in consequence of faith, nationality or race. In profound sympathy with these sufferers the Council refers to the Administrative Committee the earnest consideration of what steps can be taken to alleviate and remedy the present distress.<sup>126</sup>

Deissmann's own sympathy with the Jews remained favourably balanced throughout his life. His latitudinarian principles were ultimately founded in the Pauline dictum that 'in Christ Jesus there is neither Greek, nor Jew, nor Scythian, nor Barbarian, nor freeman, nor slave, but all are one in Christ'.<sup>127</sup> He believed that, according to Ephesians 2:13-16, all enmity between Jews and Gentiles had been abolished and they were reconciled with God through Christ's vicarious atonement. Since, therefore, Christ had spiritually succeeded in unifying humanity within the idea of common brotherhood, his will, according

<sup>122</sup> Wassermann, letter to GAD, 31.5.1924, in Nottmeier, 'Hermann Cohen und Adolf Deissmann', 324.

<sup>123</sup> In an obituary for GAD Siegmund-Schultze wrote: 'Wir haben verstanden, daß er seine große internationale Autorität, die für die ökumenische Sache so viel wert ist, nicht durch den Kampf gegen die derzeitigen Kirchenbehörden aufs Spiel setzen wollte'. *ChrW*, 20.3.1937, 336.

<sup>124</sup> GAD was president of the Theological Committee

<sup>125</sup> AK, 25.8.1936.

<sup>126</sup> Minutes of the Council Meeting Chamby sur Montreux, August 21-5, 1936, 67-9.

<sup>127</sup> A loose citation of Col. 3:11, *The cross of Christ and the reconciliation of the nations*, GAD's sermon given on 25.3.1923 at the Whitefield's Men's Meeting, Tottenham Court Road, London, reproduced in tract form, Cardiff, 2.

to Deissmann, was ‘that they might find the possibility of harmonious cooperation – “You are one in Christ”’.<sup>128</sup>

#### 8.4. Utopian ecumenism and the elusive *Una Sancta*

In June 1937 when Hans Lietzmann presented the Theological Faculty’s commemorative address for Deissmann, he depicted him as a ‘deutscher Propagandist’ (see ch. 7.6) whose reaction to the war manifested itself in his ecumenical rationale,

also müssen die Kirchen mehr Einfluß in der Welt gewinnen ... Das war sein Glaube, mit dem er in die ökumenische Bewegung hereinschritt ... [er] hat schnell und intensiv Einfluß auf die ökumenische Bewegung gewonnen. Er hat in den Weltkirchenkonferenzen von Stockholm und Lausanne eine führende Stellung eingenommen. Mitglied des ökumenischen Rates für praktisches Christentum war er seit 1929, auf der Lausanner Weltkonferenz war er 1927 Vizepräsident.<sup>129</sup>

I have already shown (ch. 7.6) that Lietzmann was misinterpreting his colleague’s *Verständigungsarbeit*; but could Deissmann’s underlying motives for his involvement in ecumenism have been as political as his colleague insinuated – that is to say, driven by the hope that the Christian Church would gain greater influence over politics internationally?

Deissmann’s religious sympathies stretched out not only to other Christian traditions than Lutheranism – the diverse groups of Protestants<sup>130</sup> (including Quakers, see ch. 8.1), Roman Catholics,<sup>131</sup> Eastern Orthodox<sup>132</sup> – but also to Jews (as we have just seen) and, indeed, to Muslims.<sup>133</sup> It is important, therefore, to understand his spiritual

<sup>128</sup> *The cross of Christ*, 2.

<sup>129</sup> Lietzmann, 305-6.

<sup>130</sup> ‘Meine Stellung zu den deutschen Freikirchen ist während des Krieges eine wesentliche andere geworden ... wir sehen in diesen kleinen Kirchenkörpern nicht mehr die der Großkirche feindliche „Sekte“, sondern betrachten sie mit ihrer Bezogenheit auf die internationale Kirchengeschichte als lebensberechtigte Gebilde, mit denen man ohne Bedenken in einen brüderlichen Wettstreit der Liebe treten kann.’ *Ev.Wbr.*, 31.10.1918, 8.

<sup>131</sup> e.g. see *Pr.WL*, 26.2.1916, 1; also below, n. 192; also ch. 7, n. 59.

<sup>132</sup> ‘I am very fond of the Oriental churches, provided they are modest and unassuming, lifting up the soul in their old yet conscientiously practised form of worship, and when on the ruins of Eleusis or on one of the many isles of the Grecian Archipelago, I willingly lit my candle upon entering such an archaic chapel.’ *Pr.WL*, 9.12.1916, 5. Also: ‘Der Westen kann ... viel von dem Osten lernen’, *Die Stockholmer Bewegung*, 2. See also GAD, *Una Sancta, zum Geleit in das ökumenische Jahr 1937*, Gütersloh, 1936, 23-6.

<sup>133</sup> ‘... a very unique religious ceremony took place in the Wünsdorf Islamic camp, viz: [*sic*] the dedication of a recently erected mosque. I am sorry to say that I was not permitted to attend this [POW] service ... But however much I felt disappointed, I am nevertheless glad to say that it was a

inclusiveness not only as self-limited within the confines of traditional Western Christianity. He certainly believed in the ultimate unity of mankind before God,<sup>134</sup> and reasoned that ‘even the most insignificant comrade ... [is] ... stamped ... with a value for eternity’ through Christ’s vicarious death.<sup>135</sup> But he also understood that humans express their spirituality in a multiplicity of ways, since ‘die Art, wie die Menschen vom ewigen Leben reden .... so verschieden [ist], wie die Menschen selbst sind’.<sup>136</sup>

Auf dem breiten Wege der gottesgelehrten Christologie gibt es römische, lutherische, reformierte, anglikanische, methodistische Bürgersteige. Der schmale Pfad der Gottesgemeinschaft in der Nachfolge Christi hat wenig Raum für Sondergleise; einer tritt in des anderen Spur, und der Vorderste sieht nur die Fußtapfen des Meisters.<sup>137</sup>

Consequently, religion was not primarily a matter of dogma – Christian or otherwise – for on his two study tours into the Orient (see ch. 4.1-2) he had seen how primitive ‘kultische Religion’ provided the uncultured with a mystical sense of spiritual perceptiveness and fulfilment.<sup>138</sup> From this he reasoned that the spiritual force, which was behind ‘... dem stockenden Buchstabieren der Unzünftigen’ was more powerful than that which motivated the ‘Arabesken unserer studierten Beredsamkeit’.<sup>139</sup>

Wer einmal erkannt hat, daß kein Alphabet der Menschen die Hieroglyphen der Ewigkeit restlos wiederzugeben vermag, wird sich auf sein eigenes Alphabet nicht schulmeisterlich versteifen wollen. Selbst die Propheten sprechen, ob sie gleich den lebendigen Gott künden, nicht die Sprache Gottes, sonder die Mundarten der Menschen und der Menschen ihres Zeitalters. Auch die lapidaren Bekenntnisse jener großen philosophischen Betrachter des ewigen Lebens, von Plato bis Kant, Fichte und Schleiermacher, tragen in Morgen- und Abendland das wechselnde Gewand der Generationen. Wehe aber dem Zünftigen von heute, wenn er seine eigenen Sätze vom Leben nur deshalb für die besten hält, weil er gelernt hat, sie mit dem Alpha, Beta, Gamma oder gar mit dem Aleph, Beth und Gimel zu schreiben.<sup>140</sup>

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chivalrous regard for the adherents of a different creed ... A religious ceremony, like the one referred to, meant very much to our Mohammedan prisoners.’ *Pr.WL*, 24.7.1915, 2-3.

<sup>134</sup> *Pr.WL*, 6.11.1915, 2; *Ev.Wbr.*, 12.10.1918, 6. GAD’s concept of ‘Menschengeschlecht’ is modified by the idea of Christ’s atonement for mankind. For he believed that, according to the Apostle Paul’s credo, ‘not only a few individuals [are reconciled to God], nay, the world itself, all humanity has come from the condition of enmity with God to the condition of peace with God and it is God Himself who in Christ has achieved this work of atonement.’ *The cross of Christ*, 2.

<sup>135</sup> *Selly Oak Lectures*, 252-3.

<sup>136</sup> *De Profundis*, 4.

<sup>137</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 21.10.1917, 2-3.

<sup>138</sup> *SD*, 25. For GAD’s distinction between ‘Mysticismus’ and ‘Mystik’, and his additional division of the concept ‘mysticism’ into either ‘acting’ or ‘re-acting’, see *Selly Oak Lectures*, 245-78.

<sup>139</sup> *De Profundis*, 5.

<sup>140</sup> *De Profundis*, 5.

Deissmann was fundamentally anti-dogmatic, and energetically objected to any suggestion that theology was a religious speciality. Instead, he saw it as an academic discipline (*Wissenschaft*), and a 'Hineinstellung eines von Hause aus als heilige Überlieferung den profanen Maßstäben unzugänglichen Stoffgebietes in das volle Licht der historisch-kritischen Methode'.<sup>141</sup> When the philosopher and author, Fritz Mauthner (1849-1923), published an article in which he argued that theological faculties should not enjoy equal rights with the 'irdische',<sup>142</sup> Deissmann retorted with considerable heat: 'als wäre unsere Fakultät eine himmlische'. Mauthner also insisted that those who claimed theology to be an academic discipline like any other, perpetrated a 'bewußte und grobe Lüge'. To this Deissmann countered: 'Mauthner hat offenbar die Vorstellung, daß wir in unseren Arbeitszimmern und Hörsälen ... unsinnige Priesterphantasien reproduzieren und in bigotter Tradition weitergeben'.<sup>143</sup>

Deissmann's clear separation between personal religious beliefs and academic theology underpinned his ecumenical inclusivism. For instead of seeking an impossible dogma consensus he considered religious diversity a mutually enlightening force and, therefore, something to be celebrated rather than syncretised. This might explain why he cultivated personal friendships with such contrasting individuals as the liberal Adolf von Harnack and the Bulgarian protopresbyter Stephan Zankow; or the conservative Lutheran Reinhold Seeberg<sup>144</sup> and the Jesuit priest Max Friedrich Albert Pribilla (1874-1954);<sup>145</sup> or the bishop of Chichester George Bell and the Quaker Rendel Harris. Indeed, one merely has to read the list of well-wishers who congratulated Deissmann on his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday to see that his friendships spanned not only the globe, but also a panoply of religious and non-religious persuasions.

Deissmann's ecumenical drive was neither a product of, nor a reaction to WWI, although it had certainly been sharpened by it; but, as he once explained in his bulletins,

<sup>141</sup> *Ev. Wbr.*, 15.2.1919, 3.

<sup>142</sup> GAD cites Mauthner from the *Berliner Tageblatt*, 558, 25.12.1918, in 'Die Zukunft der theologischen Fakultäten', *Revolution und Kirche*, Berlin, 1919, 353-4.

<sup>143</sup> *Ev. Wbr.*, 15.2.1919, 3. See also GAD, 'Die Zukunft der theologischen Fakultäten', 352-5.

<sup>144</sup> After Seeberg's death, the Kultusministerium wrote to GAD that: 'Auf Grund einer letzten Willensäußerung des verstorbenen Geheimrats D. Reinhold Seeberg', he was specifically requested to teach Seeberg's 'beabsichtigte Uebung im Institut für Sozialethik über "Das Gemeindeleben des Urchristentums"'. The AK shows that GAD was still teaching the two-hour Seminar on 13.11.1935 in the Institut für Soziale Ethik, four months after he had been asked to cease teaching. Kultusministerium, letter to GAD, 7.11.1935. For GAD's retirement, see ch. 9.2.

<sup>145</sup> On GAD's association with Pribilla, see K.H. Neufeld, S.J., 'Grundlagen des ökumenischen Dialogs: A. Deissmanns Briefe an M. Pribilla S.J. 1927-1928'. *ThPh.* 52, 2, 1977, 215-41. See also Appendix 8, n.

‘meine Lebensführungen haben mich seit vielen Jahren, eigentlich schon von Kind auf, ökumenisch-christlich fühlen und denken gelehrt’.<sup>146</sup> However, already a year earlier he had attributed this – at least in part -- to his mother Emilie, whose pietistic *Nächstenliebe* seems to have influenced his drive for *Völkerverständigung* more than other factors.

I owe it to my deceased mother, that from my childhood days I was unable to treat with contempt or hatred any group of people (nations, religious bodies or social classes). I grew up in the midst of a strong Catholic environment on the Rhine, and there witnessed the struggle of State and Church accompanied with all the hateful manifestations of fanaticism on both sides; but even in the heat of passion of this bitter conflict between the two parties, I could not learn to harbor feelings of hatred or disdain for the Roman-Catholic people; just as little as I was able during the stormy days of Anti-Semitism<sup>147</sup> to take a hostile attitude toward the Jew. If in my personal intercourse ill-feelings were aroused, my mother interpreted to me the word from the Old Book: “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath”, in a more impressive way than I am able to do it to-day as Professor of New Testament Exegesis, and just here it was that the influence of my mother proved itself a constant source of strength for me.<sup>148</sup>

Several years later, while writing his condensed autobiography, he harked back to his Heidelberg years (1897-1908) and highlighted the lively foreign connections he had been able to make during that time. But it was only a beginning of greater things, for ‘in Berlin aber hat sich dieser Verkehr mit dem akademischen und kirchlichen Ausland sehr verstärkt’. Yet here, too, he traced his ecumenical predisposition to his childhood:

Die ökumenische Einstellung meines Elternhauses, in dem ich schon als Kind vieles vom christlichen Ausland hörte und sah, hat hierin wohl noch stark nachgewirkt. Ich betrachte es als einen großen inneren Gewinn, daß ich ... vor 1914 Gelegenheit gehabt habe, öfter im Ausland zu weilen und eine beträchtliche Anzahl führender Forscher und Kirchenmänner persönlich kennenzulernen, eigenartige Einrichtungen zu sehen und die Typen der protestantischen und überhaupt der christlichen Kirchenbildung aus der Anschauung zu studieren.<sup>149</sup>

He was obviously in no doubt that his ecumenical thinking – as opposed to his ecumenical pursuit (see below, ch. 8.4) – was rooted in his childhood via the nurture of his parents.

Deissmann’s latitudinarian rationale can be traced to an inherent pietism, rather than to any political ideology. It was neither a residual outgrowth from Wilhelmine

<sup>146</sup> *Ev. Wbr.*, 2.12.1917, 2.

<sup>147</sup> An allusion to Alfred Stoecker; see ch. 6.2.

<sup>148</sup> *Pr. WL*, 26.2.1916, 1.

<sup>149</sup> *SD*, 28.

*Weltpolitik*, or *geistige Weltpolitik*, nor from Prussian *Machtpolitik*, or neo-Rankean *Realpolitik*,<sup>150</sup> but an idiosyncratic religious utopianism.<sup>151</sup> This is what manifested itself through his ecumenical drive, although it must be emphasised that his was not a utopianism based on Lutheran religious imperialism.

In 1923 when Deissmann was invited to address the Whitefield's Men's Meeting (London) on the subject of international reconciliation, he spoke metaphorically about building bridges of understanding between nations. Because these were still alienated through the 'mighty power of ignorance', he reasoned that because they knew too little about each other, they commonly 'stand under the fatal spell of silly generalisations and a pharisaical self-conceit'. The unprecedented scale of WWI had produced a 'powerful [global] movement for unity', although, he said, this had already started before the war. It was, therefore, 'the duty [of Christian churches] to improve the spiritual atmosphere, to create a basis for mutual confidence, to develop by small acts of personal endeavour a network of honest relations from people to people'.<sup>152</sup> However, for Deissmann this had nothing to do with ecclesiastical imperialism, but was a logical response to the Apostle Paul's teachings on 'God, World [and] Reconciliation'. It was Paul's 'placing of these things into relation with each other [that] was indeed a tremendous issue in the spiritual history of mankind'. For it is this, Deissmann claimed, that formed the basis upon which the Apostle had produced the 'unheard-of' dictum: 'in Christ Jesus there is neither Greek, nor Jew, nor Scythian, nor Barbarian, nor freeman, nor slave, but all are one in Christ'. He went on to elucidate:

The Apostle did not say this to deny or cancel national peculiarities. He himself was a Jew and proud to be one. He desired that the individual nations should not act as disintegrating powers, but that they might find the possibility of harmonious co-operation -- "You are one in Christ".<sup>153</sup>

Deissmann believed that international peace was attainable, not because he placed much store by the dialogues of foreign politics, or the efficacy of proselytising, but because he

<sup>150</sup> As cited by e.g. Besier, *Krieg-Frieden-Abriistung*, 110. Besier misinterprets GAD's sermon, 'Versailles' (in *De Profundis*, 55-8), as 'martialische Sprache', but GAD's preceding paragraph (neglected by Besier) puts this sermon within the context of GAD's actual thinking at that time. On Besier, see ch. 6, n. 148.

<sup>151</sup> This word is to be understood within the definition by Andrew Heywood: 'Utopianism is ... characterised by the abolition of want, the absence of conflict and the avoidance of oppression and violence. Utopianism is a style of political theorising that develops a critique of the existing order by constructing a model of an ideal or perfect alternative.' A. Heywood, *Political Ideologies: an introduction*, London, 1998<sup>2</sup> (1992), 193.

<sup>152</sup> *The cross of Christ*, 5-6.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.



was convinced that it was God's ultimate will in answer to Christ's prayer, as recorded in John 17, and reasoned: 'when [Jesus] viewed the great multitude from all nations – [he prayed] "that they all may be one"'.<sup>154</sup> When Deissmann was presented to the president of the Wooster College in 1929 to receive an honorary Doctor of Literature degree (see ch. 8.5), John B. Kelso announced: 'Sein Ideal ist eine Welt ohne Krieg, eine Welt des "Ewigen Friedens," eine Welt der Gerechtigkeit, worin alle Völker versöhnt sein werden durch Jesu Christ, unseren Frieden, unsern Herrn und Heiland'.<sup>155</sup>

Nevertheless, Deissmann had explicitly stressed that

the ideal of an evangelical reconciliation for the nations presents a programme for the centuries ... [For] ours is not a fantastical programme of sudden revolutions from one day to another, but we are conscious of a task to be accomplished, step by step, throughout the world's ages. The soberer we remain in the conviction that all we can do to-day must necessarily be pioneering work, the better we shall keep in view our last, far-off goal.<sup>156</sup>

This view set Deissmann apart from the majority of German religious leaders,<sup>157</sup> who tended to see the postwar ecumenical movement either as a para-political conduit for debating the war-guilt question,<sup>158</sup> or a concession to a pacifism that ignored Germany's ongoing subjugation to the status of an *Ententenkolonie*.<sup>159</sup> Some theologians, such as Emanuel Hirsch (1888-1972) and Paul Althaus (1888-1966), went so far as to insinuate that those 'verantwortliche Männer, in der deutschen evangelischen Christenheit' who engaged themselves in ecumenism were guilty of virtual treason, because,

zwischen uns Deutschen und den im Weltkrieg siegreichen Nationen [gibt es] keine andere Verständigung als ihnen zu bezeugen, daß während ihres fortgesetzten Krieges wider uns eine Verständigung nicht möglich ist ... wer diese Lage, wer den Bruch der Gemeinschaft, den sie bedeutet, mit Worten oder durch sein Verhalten, verhüllt, der wird schuldig an allen denen

<sup>154</sup> *The cross of Christ*, 2.

<sup>155</sup> Kelso, induction address on the occasion of GAD's honorary doctorate, 24.4.1929. Since Kelso did not know GAD personally, this characterisation might have been suggested by GAD himself, or – perhaps more likely – by Charles Macfarland; see ch. 8.5. See also below n. 234.

<sup>156</sup> *The cross of Christ*, 5. For a fuller excerpt see Appendix 8, o.

<sup>157</sup> Some notable exceptions were men like Karl Axenfeld, Ernst von Dryander, Carl Heinrich Ihmels (1888-1967), Hermann Kapler, Julius Richter, Hermann Sasse, Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze, Friedrich Albert Spiecker (1854-1936).

<sup>158</sup> 'Aber wir wissen ja, daß viele Deutsche, auch viele deutsche Delegierte, die Konferenz nur unter diesem Gesichtspunkt angesehen haben. Sie kamen nach Stockholm, um einen Sieg für die deutsche Sache zu erfechten.' F. Siegmund-Schultze, 'Die ökumenische Konferenz von Stockholm, vom 19.–29. August 1925. Eine kritische Würdigung ihrer Bewegung', *Die Eiche*, 13, 4, 1925, 353.

<sup>159</sup> 'Am richtigsten bezeichnet man Deutschland jetzt als Ententenkolonie mit stark beschränkter Selbstverwaltung. Und mit ungeheurerlicher Tributpflicht.' E. Hirsch, *Deutschlands Schicksal. Staat, Volk und Menschheit im Lichte einer ethischen Geschichtsansicht*, Göttingen, 1922, 142. See also M. Ohst, 'Der 1. Weltkrieg in der Perspektive Emanuel Hirschs', in T. Kaufmann/ H. Oelke, eds., *Evangelische Kirchenhistoriker im 'Dritten Reich'*, Gütersloh, 2002, 64-121.

innerhalb der andern Völker, die das Rechte wollen ... Wer da glaubt, der Verständigung heute anders dienen zu können, als so, der verleugnet das deutsche Schicksal und verwirrt die Gewissen im Inlande und Auslande, weil er hier der Wahrheit nicht die Ehre gibt.<sup>160</sup>

Although the earliest 'modern' ecumenical endeavours could be traced back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>161</sup> it is essentially a 20<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon that began to emerge with the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh (14-23 June 1910). Deissmann did not attend this, yet less than two years later he was the main speaker at the annual meeting of the British Peace Committee at the Queen's Hall in London,<sup>162</sup> where he delivered a distinctly ecumenical message of Christian solidarity. That evening he had dinner at the Lambeth Palace with the equally ecumenical minded Archbishop Randall Davidson.<sup>163</sup> These things are hardly surprising, given the high profile Deissmann enjoyed in Britain and the fact that he represented the Berlin University's Theological Faculty at the Brandenburg *Provinzialsynode*.<sup>164</sup>

Although this *Friedensbotschaft* was one of Deissmann's first international ecumenical talks, it is not possible to pinpoint an exact date or episode when he consciously became part of the ecumenical movement, since he considered its fundamental tenets as a logical consequence of his inherent ecumenical 'fühlen und denken', imbibed from early childhood (see above, ch. 8.4). Instead, it was a slow transition from that intellectual assent – sympathy, even – to his active participation in an emerging international movement that he saw as 'an ideal' work – yet one with no hope of completion within his own lifetime. During his talk at the Whitefield's Men's Meeting he made it clear that he had not joined the ecumenical cause as a result of the war, by explaining: 'I was in this movement from its beginning, long before the war, and then I spoke in the same spirit as I do to-day. The only difference now is that I am speaking

<sup>160</sup> P. Althaus/ E. Hirsch, 'Evangelische Kirche und Völkerverständigung. Eine Erklärung', *TBl.*, 9, 1930. 177-8.

<sup>161</sup> 'Die Ursprünge der christlichen Einigungsbewegung liegen allerdings viel weiter zurück [als der Krieg] ... Mit dem Osten suchten evangelische Abendländer schon im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert Verbindung.' W. Elert, 'Rede bei dem Antritt des Rektorates der Friedrich-Alexanders-Universität Erlangen, gehalten am 4. November 1927', Sonderdruck, 1928, 3. Various interdenominational Christian organisations were formed during the 19th century, e.g. Evangelical Alliance (1846), YMCA (1844), YWCA (1858), World Student Christian Fellowship (1895).

<sup>162</sup> This took place on Monday afternoon, 25.3.1912.

<sup>163</sup> Although not inclined to attend ecumenical conferences. Davidson was a strong promoter of the ecumenical idea.

<sup>164</sup> See *Pr.WL.*, 13.12.1914, 1; also in an undated *Standesliste* (Berlin BArch.). This synod represented well over 2000 Protestant churches, with a nominal membership in excess of 5 million, *Ev.Wbr.*, 15.5.1919, 12. In 1914 GAD also became a member of the *Generalsynode*; see 'Kunst und Wissenschaft', *Magdeburgische Zeitung*, 30.7.1930.

with even greater conviction'.<sup>165</sup> It was no idle postwar boast, for on 2 August 1907 – almost three years before the Edinburgh conference – he had concluded the last of his London lectures on the philology of the Greek Bible (see ch. 3.5) with the following highly significant ecumenical ideal:

And if this study [NT philology] has brought together a band of workers from all Protestant countries on one common field – workers whom enthusiasm for Christ and His Cause and the desire for knowledge have united in one great brotherhood – then the philology of the New Testament, with this international alliance in work, is helping in little to fulfil the great hope of the New Testament “that we may all be one in Christ”.<sup>166</sup>

Its significance lies not only in that it reveals Deissmann's underlying ecumenical rationale long before either Edinburgh or WWI, but also because it shows the *Leitmotiv* that inspired his life-long latitudinarianism. He gave his address at the Whitefield Men's Meeting almost sixteen years after his philology lectures; yet it sprang, despite the intervening global upheaval, from the same Johannine prayer 'that they all may be one'.<sup>167</sup> Finally, at the very end of his life – three decades after his London lectures – he concluded his last book, *Una Sancta*, by citing this same passage one more time, and exhorting Christians everywhere,

die Zäune der Verfeindung und Verbitterung niederzureißen, einander zu vergeben und miteinander einen neuen Anfang zu machen, der Welt zeigen, wer Christus ist, woher er gekommen ist, was er gibt und was er fordert: 'auf daß sie alle Eins seien ...'<sup>168</sup>

Accordingly, there can be no doubt that Deissmann was right when he claimed to be engaged in 'pioneering work', and a work whose 'far-off goal' was the 'reconciliation for the nations'.<sup>169</sup> It was more than a religio-political reconciliation, for to him it represented the elusive ideal of a 'Una Sancta' – one harmonious, earthly body of Christ, manifested in a globally-integrated Christian Church. In itself this was not a novel concept, for it had long been taught as an abstract biblical model, but this new ecumenical movement seemed to provide a pathway for turning this ideal into a reality.

Ich gebe ja zu, daß der Einheitsgedanke literarisch innerhalb der dogmatischen Produktion aufs beste vertreten worden ist; in den Büchern

<sup>165</sup> *The cross of Christ*, 6.

<sup>166</sup> *Philology*, 146-7. Final clause based on John 17: 21.

<sup>167</sup> *The cross of Christ*, 2. On 3.8.1929 GAD also wrote: 'Die Idee der Einheit war der Christenheit eingestiftet von dem Meister selbst und seinen Aposteln, und in bestimmten Perioden der christlichen Kirchengeschichte drangen die Bitten des Parakle-en-Gebetes von Johannes 17 mit gleicher Inbrunst empor wie am ersten Tag.' *Die ökumenische Erweckung*, 18.

<sup>168</sup> *Una Sancta*, 57.

<sup>169</sup> *The cross of Christ*, 5. See also Appendix 8, o.

wie in den Kollegheften stand stets ein feiner Paragraph über die Una Sancta. Aber in praxi versagte man; der schöne Paragraph war der Käfig, an dessen Eisenstäben der Einheitsgedanke, sehnsuchtsvoll in die Weite strebend, sich die Fittiche zerbrach.<sup>170</sup>

But after WWI Deissmann's ecumenical zeal began to be driven by something more immediately pressing than the long-term 'task to be accomplished, step by step, throughout the world's ages' (see above, ch. 8.4). The war had convinced him that a disjointed Christianity would inevitably tear itself to pieces for the sake of politics and, therefore, could not possibly survive into the future, unless the churches could be brought together in a spirit of international cooperation and solidarity. Consequently, his ecumenical imperative derived its force from the need to find a form of ecclesiastical and spiritual survival.

Wenn ich irgend etwas gelernt habe ... in den Wettern dieser vier Jahre, so ist es dies, daß das Christentum steht und fällt mit der Einheit der Kirche. Der urchristliche Einheitsgedanke ist mir gerade durch den Krieg in seiner ganzen göttlichen Größe und Wucht deutlicher geworden denn jemals zuvor. Eine Kirche, die ihn aufgeben wollte, würde sich selbst aufgeben. Kirchen kann es überhaupt ja nicht geben ohne Kirche. Die Kirche ist nicht die Summierung von Kirchen, sondern die Kirchen sind Emanationen der Kirche.<sup>171</sup>

Such sentiments were, of course, not confined to Deissmann alone, for he knew that the ecumenical movement was gaining momentum in many parts of the world, and in 1923 wrote:

... [ich] sah in der Förderung der als Reaktion gegen die Selbstzerfleischung der großen christlichen Völker stärker und stärker in allen Ländern aufkommenden ökumenischen Einigungsbewegung eine gerade mir durch meine Lebensführung gestellte Aufgabe.<sup>172</sup>

The Christian solidarity movement was, indeed, being driven by worldwide anti-war sentiments against the unprecedented carnage amongst nations of like faith. One need only think of the interdenominational advances made possible through men like the Canadian-born British Quaker Joseph Allen Baker (1852-1918), the Canadian Bishop Charles Brent (see ch. 5.2), the American president of the Federal Council of Churches Charles Macfarland (see ch. 6.5), and the Swedish Archbishop Nathan Söderblom (see ch. 2.4). Deissmann himself had preached ecumenism in London as early as 1907, and since 1913 was on the editorial board of the American journal 'Constructive Quarterly'

<sup>170</sup> 'Die Einheit der Kirche', 350.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 339.

<sup>172</sup> *SD*, 30.

(see ch. 7.2); but his greatest contribution to Christian solidarity during the war years was undoubtedly his bulletins, of which he wrote in 1916 – not without considerable prescience:

The time will come when in England also the real earnest Christians will realize that I had no other purpose than to serve the ecumenical interests of Christian solidarity so high above all fanaticism or partisanship, when during the war I endeavored to strengthen the bonds of brotherly love, to again pick up the broken cords and even to spin new threads of fellowship.<sup>173</sup>

He was also a member of the ‘World Alliance of Churches for Promoting International Friendship’, founded at a specially convened conference at Konstanz.<sup>174</sup> In 1919 this Alliance was able to organise a crucial postwar conference in the ‘Oud Wassenaer’ castle near The Hague, where 57 delegates from 14 nations met together for the first time since the war,<sup>175</sup> and ‘wohnten und [hatten] alle Mahlzeiten gemeinsam’.<sup>176</sup> The ambience of this unique conference was later articulated by Nathan Söderblom in his Nobel Lecture, when he reminded the listeners that ‘with aching hearts, losses in their families, and destitution in their nations, and with understandable distrust evoked by opposition and falsehood, they still joined together in saying “Our Father” and “Forgive us our trespasses”’.<sup>177</sup> Deissmann’s own assessment was similar, writing that the conference ‘... damals begreiflicherweise noch sehr unter dem Einfluß der Kriegszeit [stand] und schien mir durch Mißverständnisse noch stark belastet zu sein’.<sup>178</sup> However, despite some language and cultural difficulties, he made it a point to speak privately to as many delegates as possible, and to initiate personal friendships which spanned political and religious boundaries.

Ich gestehe gern, daß mir diese [Aussprachen] zum Teil bis tief in die Nacht hinein während privaten Begegnungen fast am meisten gegeben haben ... mit ... tiefer innerer Bewegung [habe] ich in Oud Wassenaer vielen

<sup>173</sup> *Pr.WL*, 21.6.1916, 2.

<sup>174</sup> Further to the Konstanz conference, see Jenkins, 122-30.

<sup>175</sup> i.e. from 26.9-3.10.1919. Delegates came from: Britain (10), USA (10), Germany (5), Switzerland (5), Finland (4), Holland (4), Hungary (4), Italy (3), Sweden (3), Belgium (2), Denmark (2), France (2), Norway (2), Latvia (1). *Ev.Wbr.*, 31.10.1919, 16.

<sup>176</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 31.10.1919, 2. See also Jenkins, 163-71.

<sup>177</sup> N. Söderblom, ‘The role of the Church in promoting peace’, *Nobel Lectures, including presentation speeches and laureates’ biographies, Peace, 1926-1950*, 2. F.W. Haberman, ed., New York, 1972, 100.

<sup>178</sup> *Die Stockholmer Bewegung*, 36. For a contemporary comparison between GAD and Söderblom, see Appendix 8, p.

Vorkämpfern der *Una Sancta* die Hand reichen [dürfen], alten Freunden und neu Befreundeten.<sup>179</sup>

One of those old friends was Charles Macfarland, who later wrote of Deissmann: ‘I know of no man in Europe who was more prophetic than Deissmann’, referring to a private discussion they had in Berlin during the night of 31 December 1915.<sup>180</sup> One year later Macfarland sent several telegraphed messages (*Funksprüche*) to Deissmann, in an attempt at brokering peace – they never arrived, due to a bungle by some German officials.<sup>181</sup> The consequent perceived lack of response led to a breakdown in communications between them, and it was not until they had an opportunity to discuss this matter privately at ‘Oud Wassenaer’ that they were able to clear their personal misunderstandings.<sup>182</sup> Here Deissmann also befriended Peter Ainslie (1867-1934), editor of *The Christian Union Quarterly* (Baltimore), who shortly thereafter invited him to join the editorial board of his ecumenical paper – an offer Deissmann accepted.<sup>183</sup>

‘Oud Wassenaer’ formed the basis on which six years later at Stockholm the first Christian world conference for ‘Life and Work’ – led by Nathan Söderblom – was convened. Its fundamental purpose was to seek some international consensus on the practical role of the Church within society or, as Deissmann wrote:

Oud Wassenaer ... ist der Beginn einer großen, die christliche Welt umspannenden Aktivität gewesen. Diese kleine ... Konferenz ... ist eine Keimzelle geworden für die große Weltkirchenkonferenz für Praktisches Christentum, die nach weiteren Vorkonferenzen und von einer ungeheuren Kleinarbeit sorgfältig vorbereitet, im August [19-30] 1925 in Stockholm stattgefunden hat.<sup>184</sup>

In his opening address for the Stockholm conference,<sup>185</sup> the Swedish King, Gustaf Adolf VI (1882-1973), expressed its purpose thus: ‘Sie will angesichts der brennenden

<sup>179</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, 31.10.1919, 2-3.

<sup>180</sup> C.S. Macfarland, *Across the years: Charles Stedman Macfarland*, New York, 1936, 145. That day GAD wrote in his AK: ‘Abends 12 Uhr mit MacFarland zum Dom (Dryander)’.

<sup>181</sup> GAD wrote, ‘Der wichtige Funkspruch ... für die Herbeiführung ehrenvoller Friedensverhandlungen ... ist mir durch das Ungeschick einer hiesigen amtlichen Stelle nicht mitgeteilt worden’. The messages concerned serious peace plans, which involved the highest levels of governments on both sides of the Atlantic. GAD’s role in Germany – similar to that of Macfarland in America – was to be mediatorial. For details of this US-initiated plan and transcripts of related messages. see Macfarland, 114-24; also *Ev.Wbr.*, Oct./Nov. 1921, 272-3.

<sup>182</sup> They also agreed that GAD would prepare an appraisal for the American Federal Council of Churches, on the topic: ‘Die gegenwärtige Lage Deutschlands und die christlichen Kirchen Amerikas’. GAD produced this report in July 1920.

<sup>183</sup> *Ev.Wbr.*, June, 1920, 37. See ch. 7, n. 49.

<sup>184</sup> *Una Sancta*, 39.

<sup>185</sup> For a contemporary overview of this conference, see *Die Stockholmer Weltkirchenkonferenz; Die Stockholmer Bewegung*: ‘Die Ökumenische Konferenz von Stockholm’, 349-77; and Siegmund-

Fragen unserer Zeit ... versuchen, es klar herauszustellen, was das Christentum tun kann und soll'.<sup>186</sup> According to Deissmann this conference with more than 500 delegates from 37 countries – yet conspicuously without official Roman Catholic representation<sup>187</sup> – can only be understood 'wenn man den aus Allem, auch aus dem meinethwegen Bizarren und Schwärmerischen. erschütternd hervorbrechenden Willen zu einem *neuen gemeinsamen Anfang der Christenheit* erfaßt hat'.<sup>188</sup> Considering his high regard for the Roman Catholic Christians, this is a surprising assessment, and two weeks after the conference, the German edition of the Vatican's official paper *L'Osservatore Romano* reported:

In Stockholm fehlte Christus. Der Konferenz des Christentums fehlte ihr Stifter. Man kann wieder nur die alte Formulierung wiederholen, daß die abtrünnigen Kirchen, um nur ein Minimum an Verständigung in praktischen Dingen zu erzielen, zuerst Christus abschaffen mußten. Das ist die Rache der Geschichte. Man kann sich nicht von Rom trennen, ohne sich von Christus zu trennen.<sup>189</sup>

In his hopeful push towards the elusive 'Una Sancta'<sup>190</sup> Deissmann evidently considered that the Vatican's regrettable antagonism could not prevent a 'new beginning' for Christianity itself. Moreover, he protested that Stockholm was not merely an 'Einigung des Weltprotestantismus', as some had criticised,<sup>191</sup> for besides the Protestant Western churches were also represented the Eastern Orthodox. The third

Schultze's critical 'Nachwort zu Stockholm', *Die Eiche*, 14, 1, 1926, 40-50, concerning which, see also below, n. 193. Also 'Ein Jahrzehnt ökumenisch-theologischer Zusammenarbeit'.

<sup>186</sup> *Die Stockholmer Weltkirchenkonferenz*, 113.

<sup>187</sup> Despite considerable negotiations between the conference organisers and Rome, Pope Pius XI had turned down their invitation, and on 6.1.1928 declared in his encyclical of the Twelfth Day (*Mortalium animos*) that ecumenical assemblies were to be condemned and Roman Catholics prohibited from participating. For a response resolution by the Continuing Committee for 'Life and Work', see GAD's Antrag, 1.8.1928.

<sup>188</sup> *Die Stockholmer Bewegung*, 97 (Italics mine). In a newspaper article, entitled 'Stockholm und die Bischofsfrage', GAD elucidated this as '... einer aus den tiefsten Quellen des Neuen Testaments gespeisten, weltweiten neuen Bewegung auf die Una Sancta hin'. *ThR*, 529, 45, 27.11.1925. A useful contemporary tool for evaluating the Stockholm Conference is F. Gaertner's selection of national and international press reactions, 'Deutsche und ausländische Stimmen über Stockholm', *Die Eiche*, 14, 1, 1926, 51-8.

<sup>189</sup> *L'Osservatore Romano*, 212, 13.9.1925. Since this newspaper article is in GAD's *Nachlass* one can safely assume that he read it, and therefore knew of the Vatican's official reaction.

<sup>190</sup> GAD was actively engaged in the major preparatory conferences leading up to Stockholm, and after 'Oud Wassenaer' also played a positive role in the conferences on the Beatenberg (25.8-28.8.1920), and at Mürren (29.8-2.9.1920), Copenhagen (7.8-11.8.1922), and Helsingborg (12.8-15.8.1922). For his post-Stockholm ecumenical involvement see below, n. 207.

<sup>191</sup> *Die Stockholmer Bewegung*, 81.

major branch of Christianity, the Roman Catholic Church, would gladly have been welcomed, but its absence could not be allowed to obstruct ecumenical progress.<sup>192</sup>

Stockholm was certainly a landmark for Deissmann's personal faith, for it seemed a vivid confirmation that Christian solidarity was a possibility. Thus he enthused: 'wer Augen hatte für die Tatsachen der geistigen Welt, sah ... die Einheit des Leibes Christi war zur Tatsache geworden ...'.<sup>193</sup> And a little later:

Als ich von der Plattform aus in jenem Augenblick der Abstimmung im Saal beobachtete, wie alle diese Hunderte von Händen sich ... emporreckten und unter ihnen die deutschen Hände ohne jede Ausnahme, da fühlte ich einen Kampf in mir selbst beendet, der zu den ernstesten meines Lebens gehört hatte: die an schwerem Leid reiche Stockholmer Auseinandersetzung mit einem in voller bona fides zunächst auf falschen Wegen vorgehenden Teile meiner deutschen Landsleute. Es gab in diesem Kampfe nur Besiegte: überwunden hatte uns alle zuletzt das Evangelium.<sup>194</sup>

This conference was the acme of Deissmann's ecumenical efforts. Nevertheless, Markschie's claim that it was the 'Höhepunkt seines Lebens überhaupt'<sup>195</sup> fails to allow for the various other non-ecumenical 'Höhepunkte' – as perceived by Deissmann himself – such as his philological study tour in 1906, the resumption of the Ephesus excavations, the Haskell Lectures at Oberlin, or his election to the *Rektorat* of the Berlin University.<sup>196</sup>

The ecumenical sister movement to 'Life and Work' was that of the American prewar instigated 'Faith and Order', which Deissmann viewed at first with some scepticism, although not without sympathy.<sup>197</sup> It was led by Charles Brent and had taken 17 years of preparatory work before the first fully constituted World Conference could be held at

<sup>192</sup> In 1920 GAD suggested a 'Stärkung der christlichen Solidarität zunächst der nicht-römischen Kirchen, aber auch der Christenheit überhaupt'. In 'Die gegenwärtige Lage Deutschlands', 10. For GAD's explanation on why the Roman Catholics abstained see Appendix 8, q.

<sup>193</sup> *Die Stockholmer Bewegung*, 65. But see Siegmund-Schultze, *Die Eiche*, 13, 4, 1925, 357-8. His article was widely seen as over-critical, and for a response to it see E. Stange, 'Widersprüche gegen die Kritik des Herausgebers an der Stockholmer Delegation', *Die Eiche*, 14, 2, 1926, 185-203.

<sup>194</sup> *Die Stockholmer Bewegung*, 140. GAD was elected to produce the conference's official German report; see *Die Stockholmer Weltkirchenkonferenz* 747. For some of the difficulties he encountered in producing the conference's message to the Christian world, see Appendix 8, r (I-II).

<sup>195</sup> Markschie, 'Adolf Deißmann – ein Heidelberger Pionier', 73.

<sup>196</sup> e.g. GAD had described the 1906 study tour as 'einen Markstein meines wissenschaftlichen und persönlichen Lebens', and the reopening of the Ephesus excavations as 'eine der größten Freuden meines Lebens' (see ch. 5.2). The Haskell lectureship was 'an exquisite experience in my academic life', *Haskell Lectures*, vii; and upon his election as Rektor (see ch. 9.1) he wrote in a letter to his sister Marie Borschein: 'im Leben eines Universitätsprofessors bedeutet das Rektorat eine gewisse Krönung der Berufsarbeit.' Letter, dated 31.7.1930.

<sup>197</sup> For GAD's account on why he eventually gained confidence in this movement, see Appendix 8, s.



Lausanne in 1927.<sup>198</sup> Its objectives were far more idealistic than those at Stockholm,<sup>199</sup> as the theologian Werner Elert (1885-1954) summarised in his 1927 *Rektorat* address at the University of Erlangen:

Nicht nur Kooperation soll das Ziel sein, nicht nur Verbündung der bestehenden Gruppen, sondern wirkliche Einheit! Einheit worin? konnte man fragen. Die Antwort lag schon im Namen der Konferenz: Einheit in Glauben und Verfassung der Kirche.<sup>200</sup>

It was largely due to Deissmann's high regard for Brent that he became heavily involved with the 'Faith and Order' movement,<sup>201</sup> and at Lausanne – where 439 delegates represented more than 150 million Christians – was one of four vice-presidents and the one who drafted the conference's 'Botschaft der Kirche an die Welt'.<sup>202</sup> Nevertheless, he freely admitted that the unrealistically utopian conference objectives were vulnerable to criticism.

Wer sich bei uns dieser Konferenz zuerst näherte, hatte leicht den Eindruck des Utopischen, und mancher der Vorbereiter der Stockholmer Konferenz hatte wohl auch die Befürchtung, beide Konferenzen nebeneinander könnten einander stoßen oder durch Zersplitterung der Kräfte einander abschwächen.<sup>203</sup>

These were legitimate concerns, and Deissmann himself had to concede that Lausanne's 'Faith and Order' movement faced 'eine ungleich schwierigere Aufgabe als Stockholm und darum [hat sie] auch ein ungleich ferneres Endziel'.<sup>204</sup> Presumably this 'Endziel'

<sup>198</sup> It ran for over a fortnight: 3-21.8.1927.

<sup>199</sup> Although it was at the former where Brent famously preached: '... [ich] betone noch einmal meine Überzeugung, daß die christliche Kirche, wenn sie wirklich die rechte Gesinnung hat, im Namen Jesu imstande ist, innerhalb einer Generation den Krieg auszuschalten und den Frieden einzuschalten. Ich mag damit ein Narr sein. Aber dann bin ich Gottes Narr.' *Die Stockholmer Weltkirchenkonferenz*, 455.

<sup>200</sup> Elert, 6. Elert also mentioned (11) that the conference was partly funded by Mr. Rockefeller personally.

<sup>201</sup> *Die Stockholmer Bewegung*, 64.

<sup>202</sup> Arthur Cayley Headlam (1862-1947), bishop of Gloucester, in 'Botschaft der Englischen Kirchen zum Tode Adolf Deissmann's', E. Deissmann, transl., 5.4.1937. The message is reprinted in *Una Sancta*, 59-60 and includes the revealing statement: 'Das Evangelium ist die Kraftquelle der sozialen Erneuerung und gibt den einzigen Weg an, auf welchem die Menschheit Befreiung von dem sie jetzt verwüstenden Klassenhaß und Rassenhaß, wie auch Veredelung des Volkslebens sowie Freundschaft und Frieden unter den Völkern finden kann.'

<sup>203</sup> *Die ökumenische Erweckung*, 29. Four years later GAD wrote: 'Man hat damals nicht selten die Frage aufgeworfen, ob es einen Sinn habe, diese beiden Theologen-Kommissionen nebeneinander weiterzuführen, insbesondere ob der aus der Stockholmer Weltkirchen-Konferenz heraus entstandene Ökumenische Rat für Praktisches Christentum ein Bedürfnis für eine wissenschaftliche Theologen-Kommission habe. Ich darf mir hierzu wohl ein Wort gestatten, da ich als Vorsitzender der Theologen-Kommission des Ökumenischen Rates von Anfang an die stärksten Möglichkeiten hatte, die ökumenische Lage kennen zu lernen, und die dringende Nötigung empfinden mußte, über das Recht und die Aufgaben der von mir geleiteten Kommission nachzudenken.' In 'Ein Jahrzehnt ökumenisch-theologischer Zusammenarbeit', 13.

<sup>204</sup> *Die ökumenische Erweckung*, 28.

still referred to the 'Una Sancta', but it had evidently become even more elusive at Lausanne. For in contrast to Stockholm's 'Life and Work' conference, little tangible progress was made, as no majority votes were taken and – despite Deissmann's half-hour English address, entitled 'The church's message to the world: The Gospel' – no 'Botschaft an die Christenheit' was drafted to complement that from Stockholm.<sup>205</sup> Deissmann left the conference nine days early owing to his commitment to participate in the Ephesus excavations (see ch. 5.4) and was, therefore, not present during the final stages of the conference, but later expressed frustration at the anticlimactic manner in which it had concluded.

Wäre es denn wirklich übereilt gewesen, wenn die Konferenz neunzehn Jahrhunderte nach der Urprophetie des Evangeliums und nach so langwieriger und mühsamer eigener Arbeit sich zu einem gemeinsamen Ausdruck ihrer Überzeugung in Sachen des Evangeliums förmlich bekannt hätte? ... Glaubt man denn wirklich, daß in absehbarer Zeit wieder eine solche Gelegenheit kommt, wie sie uns in Lausanne geschenkt war? Glaubt man denn wirklich, daß die jetzigen Träger der ökumenischen Bewegung noch einmal Gelegenheit haben, nach Überwindung aller ungeheuren organisatorischen und finanziellen Schwierigkeiten zu einer solchen Weltkonferenz zusammenzukommen ... Es wäre besser gewesen, die Konferenzteilnehmer hätten Lausanne mit etwas schwererem Gepäck verlassen.<sup>206</sup>

Stockholm had resulted in numerous smaller but recurring work-symposiums, continuing committees and administrative meetings, convened in various parts of the world; and after Lausanne this ecumenical activity increased considerably. Yet, despite his disappointment with the latter's outcome, Deissmann continued to play a leading role in both movements,<sup>207</sup> although in respect to how many such meetings he was participating in he simply wrote: 'die Zahl dieser Arbeitskonferenzen ist ... eine sehr beträchtliche'.<sup>208</sup>

Deissmann's belief that worldwide ecumenical reconciliation was a 'programme for the centuries' (see above, ch. 8.4) necessitated that he find a successor to continue his work.

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<sup>205</sup> *Die Stockholmer Weltkirchenkonferenz*, 684-8.

<sup>206</sup> *Una Sancta*, 64-5.

<sup>207</sup> e.g. After Stockholm GAD played a significant part in organising Anglo-German conferences (Canterbury, Eisenach, Chichester) which resulted in the goodwill essay-anthology *Mysterium Christi*.

<sup>208</sup> 'Ein Jahrzehnt ökumenisch-theologischer Zusammenarbeit', 14. Although the AK provides many useful details, it presents an incomplete overall picture of GAD's movements in respect to the ecumenical symposiums.

So it was no coincidence that he began to cast about for such an individual – on his own initiative – less than a year after Lausanne, when he wrote to Martin Dibelius.<sup>209</sup>

... ich habe bei meiner ganzen Ausland-Arbeit, die durch Stockholm und Lausanne ja eine sehr grosse Ausdehnung gewonnen hat, immer den Gedanken erwogen, dass diese Arbeit von anderen fortgeführt werden müsse. Ich möchte im Interesse der Sachen nicht den Zustand erleben, dass diese ganze Tätigkeit zu stark mit meiner Person verwachsen bleibt ... [ich] halte Sie für den besten Nachfolger und möchte Sie zunächst bitten, einmal zu erwägen, ob Sie die Freudigkeit haben, diesen grossen Dienst an der Christenheit zu übernehmen ... die ganze Frage ... muss sehr vorsichtig behandelt werden, damit nicht nationale Rivalitäten wach werden.<sup>210</sup>

Although Dibelius was not averse to Deissmann's proposition, he urged him to continue, mainly on the grounds that his distinctive international prominence was virtually unsurpassed among Germans who were actively engaged in the ecumenical movement, and that he himself felt somewhat reluctant and inadequate to step in his former teacher's shoes. However, another reason why Deissmann had hoped to ease his ecumenical workload so soon after Lausanne related to his ongoing commitment to the archaeological work at Ephesus. For fifteen months after Stockholm, and in the midst of preparation for Lausanne, he wrote to Bishop Bell that he considered the excavation of this ancient city as a 'new period of my life in a new inspiration'.<sup>211</sup>

Despite the massive international efforts and high expectations from the Stockholm and Lausanne conferences, relatively little tangible progress was being made on either front; as a result, Deissmann's mystical ideal of the 'Una Sancta' began a slow process of objective adjustments. Initially he was driven by an active desire to bring about global peace through the creation of an internationally united Christian Church, modelled on Jesus' prayer 'that they all may be one' (see above, ch. 8.4).

Das Ethos unserer Zusammenarbeit war ein ökumenisches. Das will heißen: wir standen unter dem Gefühl einer heiligen Verpflichtung gegen die Una Sancta. Unsere Arbeit war nicht kühle Wissenschaft um der Wissenschaft willen. Sie war durchglüht von der Leidenschaft für Christus und sein Reich ... sie wollte mit lebendigen Steinen den Dom der Una Sancta bauen helfen.<sup>212</sup>

<sup>209</sup> See ch. 5, n. 189.

<sup>210</sup> GAD, letter to Dibelius, 3.7.1928. For the relevant correspondence between the two men, see Appendix 8, t (I-III). In a letter dated 3.12.1928, GAD also asked Dibelius to be his 'Stellvertreter' on the theological committee of the Notgemeinschaft.

<sup>211</sup> GAD's letter, 14.11.1926.

<sup>212</sup> 'Ein Jahrzehnt ökumenisch-theologischer Zusammenarbeit', 17.

However, after Lausanne he began to redefine his thinking on ecumenism. For once Germany had withdrawn from the League of Nations in 1933 and Hitler was isolating his country politically, Deissmann's endeavours to 'build' the elusive 'Una Sancta' ceased; instead, he now reasoned:

Der Sinn der ökumenischen Arbeit ist nicht der, das wir die Una Sancta „machen“ sollen, machen sollen mit Büchern und Broschüren, mit Reden, Konferenzen, Stimmzetteln, Jupiterlampen und Tonfilmapparaturen. Nein: die Una Sancta bedarf nicht der Mache. Die Una Sancta ist da: sie ist überall da, wo der Eine ist, Christus! Also brauchen wir sie nicht herzustellen. Darstellen sollen wir sie, und darstellen wollen wir sie.<sup>213</sup>

After his strenuous labours within the movement, Deissmann reverted to the simplicity of his erstwhile mystical trust in God's unifying love for mankind. With it his fundamental outlook on the 'Una Sancta' changed from a proactive to a more reactive ecumenism;<sup>214</sup> nevertheless, he continued his ecumenical work until his death, and less than two months prior to it was chairing the 'Faith and Order' executive committee in Paris (9-11 February 1937). Furthermore, his diary shows that he had made arrangements to attend both second World Conferences for 'Life and Work' at Oxford (12-26 July 1937) and 'Faith and Order' at Edinburgh (3-18 August 1937).

For his fundamental role in the ecumenical work Deissmann was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1929 and again in 1930.<sup>215</sup> His nominees were: Adolf von Harnack, Friedrich Meinecke (1862-1954), Herman Oncken (1869-1945), Heinrich Maier (1867-1933), Arthur Titius (1864-1936), Erich Seeberg (1888-1945), Max Planck (1858-1947, the Nobel Laureate for Physics in 1918) and Wilhelm Weber (1882-1948). In their submission these leading German academics presented Deissmann as a man who during WWI had taken the 'bedeutsame Aufgabe' upon himself to inform foreign nations about 'die deutschen Verhältnisse und Gesinnungen' in his bulletins, and

nach dem Krieg hat Professor Deissmann im Weltbund für internationale Freundschaftsarbeit der Kirchen eine hervorragende Rolle gespielt und insbesondere zum Gelingen der Konferenz von Kopenhagen im Sommer 1922 wesentlich beigetragen. Ebenso hat seine Persönlichkeit auf der Stockholmer Konferenz, an der er als führender Vertreter des deutschen Protestantismus intensive mitgearbeitet hat, dazu geholfen, dass die Tendenzen der deutschen Delegation sich mit den Wünschen der Gesamtkonferenz und der übrigen Delegationen zusammengefunden haben; es ist sodann sein Verdienst, dass die "Botschaft der Kirchen an die Welt",

<sup>213</sup> *Una Sancta*, 30.

<sup>214</sup> In 1923 GAD argued that the Apostle Paul's mysticism (on which he patterned his own) was 'a reacting mysticism ... united with an active ethic of unparalleled intensity'. *Selly Oak Lectures*, 247.

<sup>215</sup> In both instances together with Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze.

die in Lausanne 1927 beschlossen wurde, die Zustimmung aller dort vertretenen Kirchen erlangt hat. Professor Deissmann ist zweifellos derjenige deutsche Protestant, der bei den übrigen evangelischen Kirchen der Welt, sofern sie der Idee des Friedens und der kirchlichen Vereinigung dienen, die grösste Achtung genießt.<sup>216</sup>

He was not selected; his nominators were all Germans, which may well have affected the decision to some degree;<sup>217</sup> instead, the Peace Prize for 1929 was awarded to Frank Billings Kellogg (1856-1937) and in 1930 to Nathan Söderblom. However, the fact that Deissmann was nominated at all shows that his international *Verständigungsarbeit* had achieved considerable recognition within Germany.

### 8.5. Deissmann bridges the gap to America

While Deissmann was at the Stockholm conference he met Shailer Matthews (1863-1941) from the University of Chicago,<sup>218</sup> who invited him to teach for a term at the Divinity School. Deissmann gave a tentative promise to consider the proposal, but informed him that the Ephesus excavations took precedence.<sup>219</sup> By that time he was already so well known in the USA that he wrote to the *Auswärtiges Amt*: ‘Nun häuften sich in den letzten zehn Jahren die amerikanischen Einladungen an mich in einem solchem Masse, dass ich schliesslich nicht mehr ablehnen konnte’.<sup>220</sup> He was alluding here not to Matthews, but to an invitation from the dean of the Oberlin College (Ohio),<sup>221</sup> Thomas Wesley Graham (1882-1971), to present the Haskell Lectures in February 1927. Graham had joined the College in 1920 at the instigation of its first dean, Edward Increase Bosworth (1861-1927), who was a regular and sympathetic reader of Deissmann’s bulletins, and strongly encouraged him to continue his

<sup>216</sup> Nobel Peace Prize submission, 18.2.1929. On 11.12.1929 this application was renewed for the following year with the addition: ‘Die Unterzeichneten erneuern den von ihnen im vorigen Jahre gestellten Antrag, bei der Verleihung des Friedenspreises der Nobel-Stiftung diejenigen Glieder der christlichen Kirchen zu berücksichtigen, welche sich in der Friedensarbeit der Kirchen, die zugleich die Nationen verbindet, hervor getan haben. Die Unterzeichneten nennen hierfür noch einmal den Professor D. Dr. of Divinity Deissmann in Berlin ...’.

<sup>217</sup> No records exist of any deliberations by the five-member selection committee, appointed by the Norwegian parliament.

<sup>218</sup> Professor of historical and comparative theology and dean of the Divinity School.

<sup>219</sup> Matthews, letter to GAD, 11.11.1926.

<sup>220</sup> GAD, letter to Auswärtiges Amt, 24.5.1929; see also below, n. 223, and Appendix 8. v.

<sup>221</sup> GAD wrote that the Oberlin College ‘... in der Geschichte der amerikanischen Erziehung eine besonders bedeutende Stellung einnimmt (Co-educational!) und auch als Ausgangspunkt der Prohibitionsbewegung gilt’. GAD’s letter, 24.5.1929. The College is the oldest coeducational school in the USA and the first to admit African-American students.

*Verständigungsarbeit* through the postwar period of reconstruction.<sup>222</sup> The Haskell lectureship, established in 1899, would offer Deissmann a unique opportunity to promote the ecumenical cause, by strengthening delicate postwar relations between Germany and the USA and befriending many of that continent's leading churchmen who were unable to attend ecumenical conferences in Europe.

Deissmann's strong connection with North America had developed primarily through his philological work and the bulletins, but he made the point that

Schon während meiner Heidelberger Zeit knüpften sich für mich zahlreiche amerikanische Beziehungen an. Es studierten begabte junge Theologen aus den Vereinigten Staaten nach Abschluss ihrer dortigen akademischen Bildung in Heidelberg und traten mir persönlich näher. Dazu kamen häufige Besuche amerikanischer Kollegen und Kirchenmänner. Diese Beziehungen verstärkten sich, seitdem ich 1908 an die Universität Berlin berufen worden war. Ich hatte in allen diesen Berliner Jahren amerikanische Hörer, die meistens nachher in ihrer Heimat akademische Lehrstühle erhielten.<sup>223</sup>

Indeed, in 1915 his popularity in the USA was such that when Siegmund-Schultze sent certain 'interesting facts' to Herbert Adams Gibbons (1880-1934),<sup>224</sup> the latter candidly replied that

... owing to the exigencies of the way in which such matter must be presented to the newspaper, I had to attribute to Dr. Deissmann some of the interesting facts that I got from you. I did this, because his name is so well known in America and because he vouched personally to me afterwards for the statements made by you.<sup>225</sup>

Deissmann's American itinerary for 1927 had been planned in some detail,<sup>226</sup> but the malaria he contracted on the last day of that season's Ephesus campaign ruled out any strenuous travel for some time (see ch. 5.3). In a letter to Martin Rade, written three weeks before his planned departure to the USA, he explained:

<sup>222</sup> *Pr. WL*, 25.9.1915, 3.

<sup>223</sup> GAD's letter, 24.5.1929. In the same letter he also wrote: 'Ueberall begrüßten mich alte Schüler, die zum Teil jetzt selbst akademische Lehrstühle innehaben ...'.

<sup>224</sup> GAD first met Gibbons and his wife, Helen Davenport Gibbons, at Tarsus during his 1909 study tour (4.2), and the two developed a close friendship with the Deissmann family. H.A. Gibbons was a prolific author, whose works include, *The story of the recent European diplomatic crises and wars and of Europe's present catastrophe* (New York, 1915); *The foundation of the Ottoman Empire: A history of the Osmanlis up to the death of Bayezid I, 1300-1430* (Oxford, 1916); *Europe since 1918* (New York, 1923); and H.D. Gibbons authored, *The red rugs of Tarsus: a woman's record of the Armenian Massacre of 1909*, New York, 1917.

<sup>225</sup> Gibbons, letter to Siegmund-Schultze, 15.2.1915. He added: 'If I write later a really serious book on the subject of the war, as I am planning to do [a possible reference to *Europe since 1918*, see preceding note], I shall give to you their full credit in the question of the discrepancy between the British Parliamentary papers'.

<sup>226</sup> e.g. the crossed out AK entry for 24.1.1927 reads: 'D.[Dampfer] 'Columbus' kommt an in New York, Pier 84 Manhattan: Dr Mansfield oder Mr Miller holt mich ab'.

Ich war, nachdem ich auf der Rückreise einen heftigen Malaria-Anfall zu überstehen gehabt hatte, wieder zu Hause und werde auch die nächste Zeit hier sein, da ich noch recht erholungsbedürftig bin und darum die Amerikareise habe aufgeben müssen.<sup>227</sup>

Consequently, Oberlin postponed their invitation to March/April 1929; but although the Haskell Lectures<sup>228</sup> were the primary reason for Deissmann's journey to the USA, his itinerary, organised by Macfarland, became heavily overcrowded. As president of the Federal Council of Churches Macfarland was in liaison with most of the institutions which had shown a desire for Deissmann to visit, and the latter wrote: '... [Macfarland] hatte die Freundlichkeit, auf Grund dieser Einladungen einen grossen Reiseplan für mich auszuarbeiten und auch alle Korrespondenz mit den Universitäten und alle Vorbereitungen für die Einzelreisen durch sein Büro zu erledigen'.<sup>229</sup> Significantly, the origin of Deissmann's lecture tour lay not in Germany but in the USA, which was a distinct change from the prewar request ('Aufforderung') by the Prussian *Kultusministerium* that he take part in the German-American government 'Professoren-Austausch' program (1904-14), a call that he had managed to avoid.<sup>230</sup>

Despite the high profile he enjoyed in America, Deissmann had felt reluctant to undertake such a heavily booked lecture tour in 1929, because 'das ganze Unternehmen stand bei der Abreise wie ein hoher Berg vor mir'. This was not because of any personal misgivings in respect to America's past direction in WWI – for the underlying reasons for this tour were unquestionably founded in his *Verständigungsarbeit* – but rather because he knew that the overloaded itinerary would compel him to an unremitting program of speaking and social engagements, which demanded an 'ungewöhnliche Kraftanstrengung ... [und] ein besonderes Maß von Konzentration', because of the continual need to speak in English.<sup>231</sup>

Nevertheless, on Sunday 17 March Macfarland welcomed Deissmann in Manhattan and immediately introduced him to the Yale Club, which served as the latter's headquarters during his stay in the United States. That afternoon they attended a worship service at the Federal Council's religious radio-broadcasting centre – with an estimated audience of 20 million – at the conclusion of which Deissmann was formally introduced to the

<sup>227</sup> GAD, letter to Rade, 26.12.1926.

<sup>228</sup> For an overview of GAD's lectures in book format see Appendix 8, u.

<sup>229</sup> GAD's letter, 24.5.1929.

<sup>230</sup> 'Geistige Weltpolitik', 7; see also ch. 8.1.

<sup>231</sup> GAD's letter, 24.5.1929; see also Appendix 8, v.

listeners and invited to give the benediction. After this introduction to the USA his relentless schedule began the next day with an exclusive Interboard Group Luncheon at the Rockefeller Foundation. They had previously requested of him to give a prepared talk on the ‘General conditions and attitudes in Germany at present’, to which Deissmann wrote ‘ich hatte mich in Anbetracht der sehr auserlesenen Hörerschaft recht sorgfältig darauf vorbereitet’.<sup>232</sup>

During the next 37 days he presented lectures,<sup>233</sup> first in New York City at the Episcopalian General Theological Seminary, followed by the Union Theological Seminary – then the largest theological school in the country. He taught at three Ivy League universities, Harvard, Princeton and Yale, and at the last gave a five-day course, drawing on all spheres of his learning, with lectures entitled: ‘The excavations at Ephesus’, ‘The language of the New Testament’, ‘The historical value of the New Testament’, ‘The papyri and the theology of the New Testament’ and ‘The cross of Christ and the reconciliation of the Nations’. Moreover, he had speaking engagements at the Gettysburg Lutheran Theological Seminary, the Boston City Club and Boston University School of Theology, the Chicago University and Chicago Theological Seminary, the College of Wooster, where he received his honorary Litt. D. (see ch. 8.4),<sup>234</sup> Oberlin College,<sup>235</sup> and – on the last day – the Biblical Seminary at New York City. Besides these large institutions Deissmann also preached at many churches and gave impromptu talks at numerous informal occasions. At the end, the thrust of his messages<sup>236</sup> to America during these two months was well summarised in *The Federal Council Bulletin*:

<sup>232</sup> GAD’s letter, 24.5.1929. See also Appendix 8, v.

<sup>233</sup> See Appendix 8, v.

<sup>234</sup> On 26.4.1926, a Wooster student newspaper reported: ‘... The ceremony was made very impressive by the presence of the heads of departments in academic robes. Dr. Kelso told of Dr. Deissmann’s many achievements and previous honors in a speech made partly in German and partly in English.’ *The Wooster Voice*, 39. 21 (26.4.1929), 1, 4.

<sup>235</sup> See Appendices 8, b and 8. u.

<sup>236</sup> GAD’s various American lecture topics can be broken up into the following categories:

*Sociopolitical*: ‘General conditions and attitudes in Germany at present’.

*Theological*: ‘The origin of the NT’, ‘The historical value of the NT’ (used c. 6x), ‘The religious value of the NT’, ‘The language of the NT’ (used c. 4x), ‘The papyri and the religion of the NT’ (used c. 5x), ‘The interest of the cross of Christ’, ‘The NT in world history’.

*Ecumenical*: ‘The cross of Christ and the reconciliation of the nations’ (used c. 4x), ‘Ecumenical co-operation in the NT study’, ‘International and interdenominational co-operation in NT studies’.

*Ephesus*: ‘The excavation of Ephesus’ (used c. 6x), ‘Ephesus in the days of ancient Christianity’, ‘The catacombs of the seven Sleepers and other ancient Christian monuments’, ‘The church of St. John the divine and the tomb of St. John the divine’, ‘Ephesus since 1000 BC, a general survey of its history from 1000 BC till today’, ‘Some chapters of the history of the Ephesian paganism’.



American Churchmen have been listening during recent weeks with deep interest to a voice from Germany – the voice of Dr. Adolf Deissmann of Berlin. The distinguished scholar came to the United States primarily for the purpose of delivering the Haskell Lectures in the Graduate School of Theology at Oberlin, and the large numbers of ministers, students, and laymen who have heard him in other parts of the country owe a great debt of gratitude to Oberlin. Identified as he is with the Stockholm and Lausanne movements for church cooperation and Christian unity, Dr. Deissmann has been widely welcomed in the United States and has made a profound impression. He has placed particular emphasis upon the bridging of the differences between churches and nations.<sup>237</sup>

Macfarland, a personal friend of the president of the United States, Herbert Hoover (1874-1964),<sup>238</sup> had planned for Deissmann to travel by train from Wooster to Washington D.C., and to meet with the president on Tuesday 23 April, but later, when Deissmann reported to the *Auswärtiges Amt*, he wrote:

Da meine Zeit aber durch andere Verpflichtungen ungewöhnlich in Anspruch genommen war, bat ich Dr. Macfarland, von dem Besuche im Weissen Hause absehen zu wollen. Ich sah keine Möglichkeit ihn [i.e. Hoover] in das einmal festgelegte Programm einzugliedern.<sup>239</sup>

One of these ‘andere Verpflichtungen’ was a necessary ‘last-minute’ meeting with Thomas Applegate in regard to Rockefeller’s funding for Ephesus (see ch. 5.6), another one with the ecumenist Frederick Lynch, vice-president of the Carnegie Church Peace Union, whom Deissmann had met at the first International Christian Press Conference in Köln only a few months earlier (19-21 August 1928). Lynch (as well as Macfarland and Matthews) was on the board of trustees of the Church Peace Union, whose ultimate goal, as expressed by Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919), was not dissimilar to Deissmann’s ecumenical ideal, namely: ‘This crime [i.e. war] we wish to banish from the earth’.<sup>240</sup>

In 1914 Deissmann had written that his two Oriental tours (see ch. 4.1-2) had to be understood as ‘... study-travel, not exploration. In other words, the purpose of the journey is first of all receptive, not productive ...’.<sup>241</sup> Fifteen years later his perspective was surprisingly similar in respect to his American lecture tour, for although he had given some kind of address almost every day, he concluded:

... ich traf am 6. Mai früh wohlbehalten wieder in Berlin ein, mit dem einen Wunsch, nun einmal einige Monate völlig schweigen zu dürfen. Leider

<sup>237</sup> *Federal Council Bulletin. A Journal of Interchurch Cooperation*, 12, 5, 1929, New York, 17.

<sup>238</sup> Macfarland, 182, 204, 229, 266, 269-70.

<sup>239</sup> GAD’s letter, 24.5.1929. See also Appendix 8, v.

<sup>240</sup> *The American Journal of International Law*, 8, 2, 1914, 350.

<sup>241</sup> *ET*, 25, 11.8.1914, 487. See also ch. 4.1.

musste dieser Wunsch unerfüllt bleiben, da ich sofort wieder meine akademische Tätigkeit in Berlin aufnehmen musste. Ich ... habe doch viel gelernt, viel Gutes gesehen ... und vor allem den Eindruck gewonnen, wie wichtig die Zusammenarbeit um das gegenseitige Vertrauensverhältnis der akademischen und kirchlichen Persönlichkeiten beider Länder ist ...<sup>242</sup>

However, the Federal Council Bulletin shows that this enlightenment was a mutual experience, for 'Dr. Deissmann ... has made a profound impression ... [and] at a farewell luncheon on April 24 a group of leaders in church cooperation gathered to express their appreciation of what [his] visit had meant to America'.<sup>243</sup>

### 8.6. Conclusion

Like most of his German contemporaries, Deissmann's earlier years were to some degree influenced by the neo-Lutheran *Zweireichelehre*, which, for him, culminated in his war-theology during the initial stages of the conflict. Nevertheless, he was essentially a broadminded humanitarian who had always believed in the Pauline principle encapsulated at Gal. 3:28. Thus, when the war set Christians and their nations deeply against each other, it posed a deeply troubling ethical and spiritual dilemma for him. He had hoped that his work with the bulletins would provide some insight into the problem, 'Der Krieg und die Religion'. What he had not expected was an insight into the Quakers' philosophy of peace and conciliation. Yet it was this that supported him in the process of distancing himself from the *Zweireichelehre*, and expanded his spiritual horizons to a forward-looking perspective that gave impetus to his ecumenical *Verständigungsarbeit*.

One of Deissmann's guiding principles was that an honest researcher's 'ultimate purpose is not to ascertain the opinion of another about the truth, but rather to find the truth for ourselves as we see it'.<sup>244</sup> This (subjective) 'truth' became progressively clearer for him as the war dragged on, and his mystical trust in God's love and will for mankind began to stir in him a desire to help tirelessly in reuniting the alienated world through the idea of a 'Una Sancta'. And with this he joined a small band of ecclesiastical pioneers in the field of international Christian cooperation. Nevertheless, since Deissmann's motives were driven by a utopian long-term view rather than a

<sup>242</sup> GAD's letter, 24.5.1929. See also Appendix 8, v.

<sup>243</sup> *Federal Council Bulletin*, 17-18.

<sup>244</sup> *Haskell Lectures*, 6.

religio-political short-term one (see ch. 8.4) he was certainly not typical of the majority of German ecumenists – and perhaps should not be called an ecumenist in a strict sense at all.

For Deissmann's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday the Swiss theologian, Adolf Keller, summed up his humanitarian and intellectual achievements with the following tribute, published in the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*:

Das Lebenswerk, das Deissmann in seine Scheunen gebracht hat, bedeutet für ihn und damit auch für die deutsche Wissenschaft und Theologie ein ganz ungewöhnlich reiches Kapitel an Dank und Freundschaft, das er sich in der ganzen Welt erworben hat ... Die Bücher Deissmanns wanderten weit über die Grenzen Deutschlands hinaus und trugen den Ruhm deutscher Theologie an die Enden der Erde ... Der dies schreibt, hat mit eigenen Ohren gehört, mit welcher Dankbarkeit Deissmanns Name ausgesprochen wird, nicht nur im Bereich des deutschen Sprachgebietes, sondern in bischöflichen Palästen der orthodoxen Welt des Nahen Ostens, in Mönchszellen auf dem Sinai und in Palästina, in stillen vornehmen Gelehrtenstuben von Oxford und Edinburgh, in einsamen Pfarrhäusern im mittleren Westen Amerikas und am pazifischen Ozean.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Cited in Harder/ Deissmann, 23. For Keller, see ch. 5, n. 162.