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The Journal
of
Theological Studies

APRIL, 1914

BARON HERMANN VON SODEN.

A SHOCK of mingled pain and sympathy ran through the world of scholarship and learning at the news of the sudden death by an accident on the Underground Railway of Berlin of Baron Hermann von Soden. It is not for us to intrude upon private sorrow; but we would fain be allowed to offer our deeply respectful sympathy to the family that has thus in a moment suffered the loss of its head, at the height of his powers and of his fame, and in circumstances so distressing (Baron von Soden was born in the year 1852, and was thus in his sixty-second year). The eldest son, Baron Hans von Soden, has already won for himself an honoured name in theology by two elaborate and important monographs on the Letters of St Cyprian and on the African Text of the Latin New Testament. It should be remembered that his father was by no means only a textual critic. He was an excellent exegete, and contributed commentaries on the later Pauline Epistles, Hebrews, 1 and 2 St Peter, St James, and St Jude to the *Hand-Commentar*. He travelled, and wrote two small books on Palestine. Special mention is due to two other small works, *Urchristliche Literaturgeschichte* (translated into English in Williams and Norgate's Crown Theological Library), and *Die wichtigsten Fragen im Leben Jesu* (both published in 1904). This latter work especially was marked by much insight and beauty of expression. Together they shew the author as a Liberal-Conservative or Conservative-Liberal who made it his task to mediate between old and new, and he was one of those who have perhaps hit the happiest mean in this respect. In addition to these works of scholarship he has held for many years the charge of Jerusalem Church, one of the leading churches in Berlin, where his pastoral work has been highly valued,

especially in preparing for Confirmation the sons and daughters of the German aristocracy.

As to the great work on the Text of the Greek Testament (two large volumes, 1902-1913), by which his name will chiefly go down to posterity, I have some hesitation in speaking. I ought by this time to have a fuller and more closely tested knowledge of it than I have. In any case it represents a vast constructive undertaking, very parallel to the work of Tischendorf. It has evidently been a work of enormous labour, which must have put the severest strain upon the nerves and clearness of head, not to speak of accuracy of hand and eye. My own chief interest would be in the principles on which the text is reconstructed. It is understood that such reconstruction of the text must be based upon a previous reconstruction of the history of the text. Synthesis must be based upon preceding analysis. Von Soden has taken especial pains in mapping out the later stages of the history of the text (Nicene and Post-Nicene), but the chief question in my mind is whether he has been equally successful in mapping out the Ante-Nicene stage. It will be obvious that a great deal turns on this.

I cannot close this brief and inadequate tribute to a scholar of great eminence without a word, which must be also one of sympathy, for the author of a criticism which appears later in this number. Mr. Hoskier is well known as one of the most independent and most incisive of our writers, with a passion for precise detail. It has fallen to his lot to review the great book, and he has done so in a sense that is adverse, and even hostile. I know that he regrets the unhappy coincidence which brings out his criticism at this particular juncture. It is one thing to throw down a gage of battle before a champion who is in possession of the lists and in the fullest vigour to defend his own cause, and another thing to issue a like challenge over a newly closed grave. All who are connected with *The Journal of Theological Studies* would have wished to avoid such a coincidence; but the article was already paged for the January number of the JOURNAL, and on the eve of being printed off at the time of Baron von Soden's death, and the publication of it could only be deferred for the moment.

W. SANDAY.