

## DEATH OF DR. GINSBURG.

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We regret to announce that Dr. Ginsburg, the distinguished Biblical scholar, died on Saturday at his residence, Oakthorpe, Palmer's Green. He was born at Warsaw in 1831, and was educated at the Rabbinic College there. After finishing his education in the Polish capital he came to England, where he further prosecuted his studies of the Hebrew Scriptures. The result of these studies found embodiment in 1857 in "An Historical Commentary on the Song of Songs." In the same year appeared his translation of "Ecclesiastes," his other works including "The Karaites, their History and Literature," 1862, "The Essenes," 1864, "The Kabbalah, its Doctrines, Development, and Literature," 1865, "The Massoreth-ha-Massoreth of Elias Levita" in Hebrew, with a translation and commentary, 1867, "Jacob ben Chajin's Introduction to the Rabbinic Bible," Hebrew and English, with notes, 1867; "The Moabite Stone," 1871; "A Commentary on Leviticus," 1882; and "The Massorah," four imperial folio volumes, 1880-6, a work of vast erudition, his labours in connection with the publications named securing for him a first place among Hebrew scholars. Dr. Ginsburg was one of the original members appointed by Convocation for the revision of the English version of the Old Testament Scriptures. He was a contributor to Kitto's "Encyclopædia of Biblical Literature," to "Smith's Dictionary of the Bible," and to the "Encyclopædia Britannica." Among his more recent works were facsimiles of manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible, along with a critical dissertation "On the Relationship of the So-called Codex Babylonicus of A.D. 916 to the Eastern Recension of the Hebrew Text," this last mentioned treatise being produced in 1899 for private circulation. It sought to demonstrate that the St. Petersburg Codex, long regarded as the bonâ-fide text of the Babylonian school, "is in reality a Palestinian text carefully altered so as to render it conformable to the Babylonian recension."

## OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS.

In the course of an interview with a representative of the *Morning Post* in January, 1911, Dr. Ginsburg said: "I am the last survivor but one of the translators who were appointed by the Convocation of 1881 to revise the translation of the Old Testament. My one remaining colleague is Dr. William Aldis Wright. . . . With regard to the Revised Version of thirty years ago, it is important to distinguish between the Old and the New Testaments which were prepared by a different set of translators. As regards the Old Testament, with which alone I had to deal, the most scrupulous care was taken not to alter anything unnecessarily. Respect for the text on which the mind of the nation had been nurtured for so many generations was our guiding principle. It was otherwise with the New Testament, and it is that part of the work which alone in my opinion justifies the strictures of those who say that unnecessary alterations of a trifling character were introduced. The translators of the New Testament performed their work too much in the spirit of the schoolmaster. For instance, they insisted that a particular Greek phrase should be rendered by one and the same phrase in the translation throughout. Sentences where the meaning of the original was accurately conveyed were altered for no other reason than that that principle might be carried out. My colleagues and I pointed out to the revisers that their function consisted solely in the elimination of errors, but on this point we could not persuade them. It was a pity, especially as the Revised New Testament appeared before the Revised Old Testament, and the public were thus prejudiced against the entire work. Anyone who thinks that the work of revision had the effect of spoiling the Old Testament has only to read that portion of the Revised Version for himself. Nowhere is the rhythm and beauty of the old translation spoiled."

## TYNDALE AND COVERDALE.

"The English Bible," Dr. Ginsburg went on, "is undoubtedly the most important work that has ever issued from the press in this country. Its influence on men's minds and on our literature has been tremendous. At the same time it is quite possible to exaggerate the merits of King James's translators. Undoubtedly they were scholars. The Hebrew language was well understood by those who made a special study of it in the Seventeenth Century. The basis of their text was the great Hebrew Bible, which

was edited by Jacob ben Chajin, and published in 1524-25 by Bomberg, a German savant who established a printing press in Venice. That is also the foundation of all subsequent Hebrew editions, including my own. . . . With regard to the translators of the Authorised Version, of course they had not the same materials that are within reach of the modern editors, and, moreover, their standard of accuracy was not so high as is that of scholars of the present day, for you must remember that in the Seventeenth Century the science of philology could not be said to exist. But it is as regards the English of the Bible, which is so much admired by competent judges, that we owe far less to the authors of the Authorised Version than is generally supposed. Their language is not the language of the literature of their day, but that of a somewhat earlier date. The fact is that while they undoubtedly went to the original Hebrew, as I have said, they really corrected earlier English versions. The majestic English of the Authorised Version is really that of earlier workers in the same field. We really owe our English Bible in all its essentials to Tyndale and Coverdale. Tyndale's Bible, as completed by Matthew, appeared more than 70 years before King James's version. Another version which was extremely popular, and which was in all important respects very similar to the Authorised Version, was published in 1560 by English refugees in Geneva, and is therefore called the Geneva Bible. . . . Still, after making all allowances, the Authorised Version, of which we are about to celebrate the tercentenary, is undoubtedly one of the most interesting books in the world." Dr. Ginsburg went on to say that in view of these facts it was strange that copies should not be more eagerly sought after by collectors.

Dr. Ginsburg, who was a magistrate, was an Hon. LL.D. of Glasgow University.