

# FIRMLY ESTABLISHED IN EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup>-CENTURY ORIENTALISM: ALPHONSE MINGANA AMONG HIS FELLOW SCHOLARS<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

*Alphonse Mingana (around 1880–1937), a well-known scholar and manuscript collector who specialized in Syriac language and literature, literature and early Islam, was born near Mosul and moved early in his career to Britain. Mainly because of rumors that he had forged some manuscripts, Mingana's reputation is often referred to as questionable. In this paper I want to argue that during his own active life, Mingana was much more respected by his fellow scholars in his fields of scholarship than one would think from more recent discourse about him, even though it seems that this appreciation is somehow limited to his expertise with manuscripts and Oriental languages.*

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When one encounters a reference to one of Alphonse Mingana's articles or books in an academic work, it is often mentioned that he has a questionable reputation as a scholar, connoting that the work referred to would not be reliable. Although this is probably not always the author's intention, each time such a notice is made the image of Mingana as a scholar with a questionable reputation is reinforced.

Mingana has this reputation mainly because of four accusations of having forged parts of his data that came from manuscripts. The accusations were made during his life, but the discourse about it continued after his death, as more evidence became available. In two cases it has now been established that Mingana was correct, while in the two other cases the status quo is that Mingana was not completely sincere in his use of sources.

In this paper, I am concerned with Mingana's position in contemporary Orientalism and what his academic network looked like. I want to know in that respect if the reputation Mingana has nowadays was different from the reputation he had when he was active as a scholar, and what the influence was of the accusations of forgery during his own life. I will also relate it to the discussion of 20<sup>th</sup>-century (British) Orientalism as a whole.

I will first give a very short overview of Mingana's life, about which more information can be found in several biographies, a new and updated one being in preparation by Kristian Heal.<sup>2</sup> I will then indicate the most important problematic aspects of his academic career. The main part will then be an analysis of the correspondence with and concerning Mingana by Western scholars who were working in the same fields as Mingana, which I mainly found in the Cadbury Research Library in Birmingham, United Kingdom. The immediate reception of Mingana's academic work in the form of reviews will also be taken into account. This provides

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<sup>2</sup> The most extensive and recent biography so far has been published by Samir Khalil Samir in 1990, which is a published lecture he addressed at the First Woodbrooke Symposium in Birmingham (United Kingdom) in 1990. For the new biography by Heal newly available material from the Cadbury Research Library in Birmingham is being used, part of which has also been used for this paper. Samir Khalil Samir, *Alphonse Mingana (1878–1937) and his contribution to early Christian-Muslim Studies* (Birmingham: Selly Oak Colleges, 1990).

an insight in the discourse surrounding Mingana in his own age, but the main aim is to show how Mingana was embedded in the network of British and other Western Orientalists of that time, and on what parts of his academic work his reputation was based.

### **BECOMING A BRITISH ORIENTALIST: MINGANA'S ARRIVAL AND WORK IN BRITAIN**

Mingana was born as Hormizd in a Chaldean family in the village of Sharanish near Zakho around the year 1880.<sup>3</sup> He got his ecclesiastical education at a Catholic missionary seminary in Mosul (both in service to the Syriac Catholics and the Chaldeans), and after ten years he was ordained priest in 1902, when he obtained the name Alphonse. However, he did not stay active as a priest for a long time; in the same year he became lecturer of Syriac language and culture at the seminary where he was educated. In this position he wrote his first publications, both in Latin and French. In 1910 Mingana's position ended.

In 1913 Mingana left Mosul and went to Birmingham in Britain through the intervention of the missionary A.N. Andrus, who introduced him to the British New Testament scholar and Quaker James Rendel Harris, who would remain important for Mingana for the rest of his life. It is unknown what exactly happened in the period between 1910 and 1913, and why Mingana moved to Britain, but all sources point to a conflict with the Catholic Church: Mingana openly doubted the infallibility of Saint Peter, which would have severe consequences for the legitimacy of the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>4</sup> In Birmingham he stayed for two

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<sup>3</sup> Officially, his birth date is 23 December 1881, as is mentioned on his funeral card (John Rylands Library JRL/4/1/1), but this date has been questioned by Jacques-Marie Vosté, and rectified to 1878 by Samir on the basis of his ordination date and the fact that people in the Middle East in that age often did not know their exact birth dates. There is however not enough evidence that his actual year of birth was 1878. Jacques-Marie Vosté, "Alphonse Mingana: A propos du 'Catalogue of the Mingana Collection, t III,'" *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 7 (1941), 515–516 and Samir, *Alphonse Mingana*, 6 (see in particular the second endnote).

<sup>4</sup> Samir, *Alphonse Mingana*, 14–15. A letter by A.N. Andrus, who was there as a missionary, to Rendel Harris gives more information: he met him in Duhok, and they were "mutually drawn together." Mingana was "practically a prisoner there while acting as a secretary to the Chaldean

years at the Woodbrooke Quaker settlement and college as a settler.<sup>5</sup> In 1915 he moved to Manchester where he obtained a job at the John Rylands Library to catalog its collection of Arabic manuscripts, of which he later became the curator. In the years 1924–1929, Mingana made three journeys to the Middle East to collect manuscripts. Some of the manuscripts were placed at the John Rylands Library, but most of them went to the Selly Oak Colleges Library in Birmingham (Woodbrooke was a part of the Selly Oak Colleges), where they formed the famous Mingana collection of manuscripts.<sup>6</sup> In 1926 Mingana became curator of his

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bishop of that town. This is his punishment for having spoken too truthfully in his book – ‘[illegible] Zkhâ.’” Andrus proposes that Harris takes him for a year to Woodbrooke so that he ‘get[s] at Selly Oak a vision of the *spiritual* nature + power of the religion which has hitherto been to him but one of rite + ceremony, fast + feast” (Cadbury Research Library, DA21/1/1/27, letter from Andrus to Harris, 26 August 1912). In a letter dated 10 March 1913, Mingana is already on his way to Birmingham. A more detailed but partly conflicting account of what would have happened can be found in A.W. Price, *The Ladies of Castlebræ* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1985), 182–183, but Price does not specify his sources and acknowledges that he supplemented his sources with his imagination, as he wrote the book as a novel. A booklet from the *Mingana Papers* with testimonials to Mingana mentions his “doubts about the infallibility of St. Peter,” but the same source claims that he obtained his education in Europe (in France and Italy, including at Sorbonne in Paris). Anonymous, “Testimonials to Rev. Alphonse Mingana, D.D. Late Professor of Semitic Languages in the Syro-Chaldean Seminary, Mosul; Lecturer in Syriac, Arabic and Persian at the Friends’ Settlement, Woodbrooke, Selly Oak, Birmingham,” no date, no place (Cadbury Research Library, DA66/2/6/2).

<sup>5</sup> John Rylands Library, JRL 4/1/1, letter from Mingana to Henry Guppy (librarian of the John Rylands Library), dated 25 January 1914. Mingana writes in this letter that as an “alien friend” he is not allowed to pay Guppy a visit at a certain moment because of a new regulation.

<sup>6</sup> In fact, the manuscripts that went to Birmingham were first given to the one who paid most of the expenses of the journeys, the philanthropist Edward Cadbury, the son of George Cadbury (also a philanthropist), who had founded Woodbrooke. Edward Cadbury donated the manuscripts to Woodbrooke, where it was decided to house them in the Selly Oak Colleges Library, which was yet to be built, especially for the sake of this collection. More information about this complicated construction can be found in Samir, *Alphonse Mingana*, 31–32.

own collection in Birmingham, but he kept a part-time position at the John Rylands Library until 1932, and moved to Birmingham only when this position ended.<sup>7</sup> Mingana kept working in Birmingham for the Selly Oak Colleges until late 1937, when he died from heart disease.<sup>8</sup>

### MINGANA'S PUBLICATIONS AND ACCUSATIONS OF FORGERY

Mingana produced about ninety academic publications from the beginning of his career in the Middle East to the very end, including about fifty articles and twenty books.<sup>9</sup> His most important publications were undoubtedly the three catalogs of manuscripts of the Mingana collection in Birmingham and the catalog of Arabic manuscripts at the John Rylands Library in Manchester. Many of his other publications consist of critical analyses, editions and translations of texts available in the collections he was responsible for. All his publications were written in English, except the ones he wrote early in his career, when he used Latin and French. Besides his academic works, he also published a good number of newspaper articles commenting on contemporary events in the Middle East. I have not taken these into account here.<sup>10</sup>

While Mingana thus deployed the same genres as other European scholars, he seems sometimes not at ease with the usual

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<sup>7</sup> To be more precise, Mingana kept working on a freelance basis in Manchester after he moved to Birmingham in 1932 until 1934, when his *Catalogue* was published. John Rylands Library, JRL 4/1/1, letter from Mingana to Henry Guppy, dated 13 April 1934. The *Catalogue* meant is Alphonse Mingana, *Catalogue of the Arabic manuscripts in the John Rylands Library, Manchester* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1934).

<sup>8</sup> Cadbury Research Library, DA66/1/3/1/3, letter from Mingana to W.E. Crum, 28 October 1937.

<sup>9</sup> This number was based on the bibliography provided in D.S. Margoliouth and G. Woledge, *Alphonse Mingana: A Biography and Bibliography* (Birmingham: Library of the Selly Oak Colleges, 1939). I found one article by Mingana that was not included in this bibliography, but I do not expect that there is much more.

<sup>10</sup> The articles, written during the full period when he was in Britain, were gathered in a scrapbook that is available in the Cadbury Research Library, DA66/2/5/9. Most of the articles were published in the *Manchester Guardian*.

academic writing style. This is more visible in his analytical essays and monographs than in his text editions and translations. For example, a number of Mingana's works start with an introduction that does not explain the contents of the article or book, but that give instead a lengthy overview of the subject in general, which one would rather expect in an encyclopedia.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to that, Mingana was often very concise in his assertions. The most obvious example is the estimations Mingana made about the date of manuscripts when no date was provided by the scribe. For most of the manuscripts in his four catalogs, Mingana is able to date the manuscript accurately to the nearest decade, without providing any explanation. About this specific example, however, Samir Khalil Samir writes that while he was very skeptical at the beginning, he became convinced of the validity of Mingana's dating after examining a number of manuscripts that

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<sup>11</sup> An example can be found in the book *Leaves From Three Ancient Qur'āns, Possibly Pre-'Othmānic*, for which Mingana wrote the introduction. Without giving a clue about the main topic of the book, Mingana gives a long introduction to the Quran and especially its transmission. Although relevant for the topic of the book—to understand the importance of these 'pre-'Othmānic' leaves it is necessary to know something about the transmission of the Quran and 'Uthmān's role in it—the long introduction has such a general connection to the contents of the book that one would expect this kind of contribution rather in an encyclopedia. Alphonse Mingana and Agnes Smith Lewis, *Leaves From Three Ancient Qur'āns, Possibly Pre-'Othmānic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914). Also the contemporary Jean-Baptiste Chabot made a remark about this in a critique to Mingana's edition of Narsai's homilies: "L'ouvrage est précédé d'une préface d'une trentaine de pages dans laquelle l'éditeur a recueilli toutes les données déjà connues sur Narsai et ajouté quelques éléments nouveaux d'information sur lesquels il nous paraît utile d'attirer l'attention." (The work is preceded by a preface of about thirty pages in which the editor gathered all facts already known about Narsai, and to which he added some new elements of information, of which it seems useful to draw attention to.) J.-B. Chabot, "Narsai le docteur et les origines de l'école de Nisibe, d'après la chronique de Barḥadbešabba," *Journal asiatique* 6 (10th series, 1905), 157.

Mingana had cataloged.<sup>12</sup> In other cases Mingana considers arguments self-evident to his readers.<sup>13</sup>

This is not enough for Mingana to receive such a troubled reputation, though. Most people who questioned Mingana's authority or even integrity refer to the fact that a few of his editions of primary texts have been considered forgeries by some scholars. Much has been written about these possible forgeries, and while an updated overview still has to be written, it is not my primary concern here. We will see, however, that a considerable portion of Mingana's correspondence is about these supposed forgeries, so it is necessary to know what they are in order to gain insight into the appreciation Mingana enjoyed: it is not only part of today's discourse about Mingana, but it also had influence in his own time.<sup>14</sup>

As stated above, there are four cases known in which Mingana was accused of forgery. Two of them had to do with text editions that he published when he was still living in the Middle East. In 1905, Mingana published a text by Barḥadhshabba that was previously unknown, simply as part of the preface to an important edition of works by Narsai.<sup>15</sup> The contemporary Orientalist Jean-Baptiste Chabot wrote in an article on Barḥadhshabba's text using Mingana's edition that the second part of the work was so different from the first part, that the whole seemed incoherent and that therefore (among other reasons) it was not possible to ascribe a

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<sup>12</sup> Samir, *Alphonse Mingana*, 25.

<sup>13</sup> Another example is his article "Syriac influence on the style of the Ẓur'ān," which forms an early argument for a heavy influence of Syriac on the Arabic of the Quran. Mingana gives a wealth of examples of words for which he gives an etymology from Syriac, but he presents these etymologies as self-evident and does not always explain why they were not original in Arabic but rather borrowed or calqued from Syriac. An example is Arabic ﷲ *Allāh* 'God,' which he traces back to Syriac ܐܠܗܐ *Elāhā* 'God,' while it is (nowadays) usually derived from *al-Ilāh* 'the deity.' Alphonse Mingana, "Syriac influence on the style of the Ẓur'ān," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 11 (1927), 86.

<sup>14</sup> Samir summarized parts of the discourse surrounding these accusations in his biography, which I have been using gratefully. Samir, *Alphonse Mingana*, 8–13, 24, and 26–28.

<sup>15</sup> Narsai, *Narsai doctoris Syri homiliae et carmina*, edited by A. Mingana (Mosul: Typis Fratrum Prædicatorum, 1905), 32–40.

very great historical value to the text.<sup>16</sup> Later, in 1907 and 1913, it became clear that there was no other manuscript known where this part of the text was present, and it is still unknown if the lines were present in the manuscript Mingana used or forged by him.<sup>17</sup>

In the second case the accusation is that Mingana made a manuscript look older than it was in reality. When Mingana published in 1907 the *Chronicle of Erbil*, attributed to Mshiḥa-Zkha, this text and his edition became famous.<sup>18</sup> From 1925, however, the authenticity of the text was disputed, first by Paul Peeters, whom we will meet further on for similar matters as well. After Mingana's death, it became clear that the manuscript had its provenance not in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, as Mingana wrote, but in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, while the scribe who produced the manuscript declared that he had learned from Mingana how to make manuscripts look older. In the end one scholar, Jean-Maurice Fiey, wrote that Mingana had written the text himself, but this conclusion seems not to be shared by too many scholars.<sup>19</sup>

The third case is probably the most important one, as it generated the most discussion, both in articles and reviews, and in correspondence, as we will see. In 1920, Mingana wrote an article about the *Book of Religion and Empire*, which he often referred to as the *Apology of Islam*, by 'Alī al-Ṭabarī. This was a hitherto unknown

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<sup>16</sup> J.-B. Chabot, "Narsai le docteur": 157–77. Chabot first states that Mingana's edition of Narsai's text is "important."

<sup>17</sup> Samir, *Alphonse Mingana*, 9–11. See also A. Becker, *Sources for the Study of the School of Nisibis* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), 168–171, for a recent discussion of this fragment, also including a short more general discussion on the reliability of Mingana's works.

<sup>18</sup> Alphonse Mingana, *Sources syriaques*, volume 1, *Mshiḥa-Zkha, texte et traduction* (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1908).

<sup>19</sup> Samir, *Alphonse Mingana*, 12–13. A recent overview of the discussion since Mingana's publication until 2006 can be found in Joel Thomas Walker, *The Legend of Mar Qardagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 287–290. Even after the start of the controversy, the document was still widely used and praised by scholars, most interestingly by Peter Kawerau, who published in 1985 a new facsimile edition and German translation of the text, using the same contested manuscript (now owned by the *Staatsbibliothek* in Berlin). Remarkably, he does not include any reference to the controversy surrounding the way Mingana dealt with this text. Peter Kawerau, *Die Chronik von Arbela*, two parts (Louvain: Peeters, 1985).



text defending Islam using a wealth of Biblical citations, which Mingana found in a manuscript in the John Rylands Library. Later he published the text itself and wrote two further articles about it.<sup>20</sup> Paul Peeters (see above) first wrote a review in 1924 in which he stated that the manuscript was much more recent than it was dated.<sup>21</sup> Maurice Bouyges, a famous Orientalist, even wrote in a letter to the John Rylands Library that Mingana had probably written the text himself.<sup>22</sup> Although Mingana could prove that the manuscript was already in the library in 1843, Bouyges did not change his accusation. Later on, Samir found the text in another manuscript in the form of a Coptic response to it.<sup>23</sup>

The fourth and last publication giving trouble is a document published in 1925 about the conversion to Christianity of a Turkish tribe as part of a 5<sup>th</sup>-century letter (the “Letter of Philoxenus to Abū ‘Afr”), also on the basis of a manuscript from the John Rylands Library, dated 1909.<sup>24</sup> It was again Paul Peeters who questioned the authenticity in 1927, when he suggested that the work was a forgery. Mingana responded in 1930 that he also found the text in a 16<sup>th</sup>-century manuscript in his own Mingana collection. After Mingana’s death Peeters however repeated the argument, and Fiey (see above as well) wrote in an article that the second manuscript did not exist. Sebastian Brock however showed in an

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<sup>20</sup> Alphonse Mingana, “A semi-official defence of Islam,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1920), 481–488. The edition is ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *The Book of Religion and Empire, A semi-official defence and exposition of Islam*, edition and translation by A. Mingana (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1922–1923).

<sup>21</sup> Paul Peeters, review of *The Book of Religion and Empire*, by ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, edited by Mingana, *Analecta Bollandiana* 42 (1924), 200–202. Peeters is very positive, though, about Mingana’s edition and translation.

<sup>22</sup> M. Bouyges, *Le « Kitab ad-Din wa’d-Dawlat », récemment édité et traduit par M<sup>r</sup> A. Mingana, est-il authentique ? Lettre à Monsieur le Directeur de la John Rylands Library, Manchester* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1924–1925).

<sup>23</sup> Samir, *Alphonse Mingana*, 27–8.

<sup>24</sup> Alphonse Mingana, “The early spread of Christianity in Central Asia and the Far East: a new document,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 9 (1925), 297–371. The article starts with a long general introduction about Christianity in Central Asia and the Far East; the part covering the new document with translation and edition starts at page 343.

article in which he compared the texts in the two manuscripts that their accusation could not be correct.<sup>25</sup>

The four accusations are severe, and while the latter two are today known to be false, this was not the case during Mingana's lifetime; the third one was only solved after Mingana's death, while the fourth one was more or less resolved, but discourse against Mingana was still being published in 1961. At the same time, other scholars actively defended Mingana, even in the case of the accusations that have never been resolved.<sup>26</sup> In other words, while the accusations towards Mingana were more serious when he was alive, the outcome of the discussion was much less clear than it is now. It seems therefore self-evident that these questions have influenced Mingana's reputation during his life in a different way than they do now, and in the next sections the correspondence in which this issue is dealt with will play a prominent role.

## AN ACADEMIC NETWORK THROUGHOUT EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES

The archival fonds called the *Mingana papers* located in the Cadbury Research Library in Birmingham contains a great amount of correspondence between Mingana and other scholars. Most of this correspondence took place in Mingana's second period in Birmingham (1932–1937), while a smaller part is from the earlier period in Manchester (1915–1932). Together with correspondence I found at other places, the letters provide a wealth of information about the way other scholars looked at Mingana and vice versa.<sup>27</sup> In

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<sup>25</sup> S.P. Brock, "Alphonse Mingana and the Letter of Philoxenus to Abu 'Afr," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 50 (1967), 199–206.

<sup>26</sup> For instance, see I. Ortiz de Urbina, "Intorno al valore storico della cronica di Arbela," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 2 (1936), 5–6 and 32. Writing after (and partly in response to) Peeters' negative assessment of the *Chronicle of Erbil* of 1925, Ortiz de Urbina judges that the document is of "mediocre authority" and that its reliability can only be assessed on the basis of the contents of the text, not on the basis of the date of the manuscript or the authority of the author. An example of an early adoption is Eduard Sachau, *Die Chronik von Arbela: ein Beitrag zur Kenntnis des ältesten Christentums im Orient* (Berlin: Verlag der königl. Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1915).

<sup>27</sup> The staff of the Cadbury Research Library of the University of Birmingham and of the John Rylands Library of the University of

most of the cases from the time that Mingana is using a typewriter, a carbon copy is available for outgoing letters, making the material much richer.<sup>28</sup>

Taking for the moment only the correspondence present in the *Mingana papers* in Birmingham, we get a rough picture of the extent of Mingana's network. The total number of persons with whom Mingana had contact in this collection is about 140, of whom about seventy are scholars. The other persons are mainly manuscript sellers, library personnel, clergy (both Western and Eastern), missionaries, and journalists.

The scholars represented in the *Mingana papers* are of varying disciplines, more or less corresponding to Mingana's own fields of interest. The two largest groups, which comprise together almost half of the scholars, are theologians (scholars of biblical studies, church history, and others) and scholars of Islamic studies. Most other scholars are specialists in a specific language and its literature.

Almost half of the scholars are British, while scholars from the United States and Germany also form a big part. There are only a few scholars from France, Italy, and The Netherlands, and only one from each of Australia, Egypt, India, Ireland, Lebanon, and Russia. The relatively small number of French scholars that occur in Mingana's correspondence is remarkable because of his original French education, but it may relate to the fact that Mingana broke off his relations with the Catholic Church.<sup>29</sup> Also remarkable is the fact that Mingana had so little correspondence with people from the East: this is especially true for the scholars among them, but also for the people with other professions.

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Manchester have been very helpful and patient in providing me access to the archival material, and in particular I would like to thank Ms. Elizabeth Gow, who prepared for me all the material available in the John Rylands Library concerning Alphonse Mingana.

<sup>28</sup> Mingana is using a typewriter from May 1932, just after the new Selly Oak Colleges Library opened its doors, as is clear from the archive containing the John Rylands Library correspondence (John Rylands Library, JRL/4/1/1), which contains a continuous flow of letters from Mingana to Guppy, the librarian.

<sup>29</sup> C. Snouck Hurgronje, *Abdoel-Ghaffaar: sources for the history of Islamic studies in the Western world, volume 1: Orientalism and Islam: the letters of C. Snouck Hurgronje to Th. Nöldeke from the Tübingen University Library*, published by P.Sj. van Koningsveld (Leiden: Documentatiebureau Islam-Christendom, Faculteit der Godgeleerdheid, 1985), 335.

Most scholars are from the same generation as Mingana, meaning that they were active in more or less the same period as he was, while a smaller part is from an older generation and another small part from a younger generation. The latter category includes people who were students at the time of the correspondence, but who became known as scholars later.

From this quantitative survey, which only includes the material available in the *Mingana papers* in the Cadbury Research Library in Birmingham, it becomes clear that there was a large number of scholars from all the relevant fields with whom Mingana had contact, and who were for the greatest part Western scholars, being concentrated in Europe and North America. Most of the scholars he was in contact with were at the same stage of their careers. While these facts are helpful, as they suggest that Mingana was embedded and part of the academic context to which he formally belonged, they are not enough: the question is whether the letters are representing (mutual) appreciation, or for example simply contain inquiries for library items. In the following sections I will therefore discuss the correspondence dividing them into three categories: inquiries, supervision of students, and academic discussion.

### USING MINGANA'S EXPERTISE: INQUIRIES

Many letters contain inquiries about material that was accessible for Mingana, and for which he was the most suitable person to ask because of his function of curator of manuscripts (both in Manchester and in Birmingham). Their relevance for this paper lies in the fact that the inquirer had to trust Mingana's expertise in the use of manuscripts and oriental languages. Inquiries are also present in the other direction, where Mingana needs information for one of his articles, books or catalogues, but I have found much fewer of these. Most of the inquiries simply ask Mingana to look up something, but some of them go further, and want Mingana to identify a text or even to make a translation.

Mingana tended to put a lot of effort into these inquiries, if needed. William Lockton, a relatively unknown British church historian and New Testament scholar, asks Mingana in 1934 for a piece of Syriac text in translation. Mingana makes a translation specifically for him, even though the two do not seem to know

each other personally.<sup>30</sup> Mingana's willingness to provide a translation is especially remarkable in the light of the following statement to Francis Crawford Burkitt, a British theologian whom we will meet later on, from about the same period:

There are apparently very few people in this country who can read Syriac, and I cannot understand how a critical student of the New Testament can dispense with this language.<sup>31</sup>

This complaint about the lack of knowledge of languages among scholars is an echo of an earlier complaint, made when he was still in the Middle East, speaking in a cynical way about scholars who could only read Syriac with the help of a dictionary, as described by Samir in his biography.<sup>32</sup> While Mingana is less severe in his later letter to Burkitt, it is still surprising that Mingana translates the Syriac text for Lockton without complaining.

Another example where Mingana takes much time to help somebody with an inquiry is the case of Maurice Arthur Canney (1872–1941), a British religion scholar who is known for his *Encyclopædia of Religions*.<sup>33</sup> In very extensive correspondence that lasted from 1932 until 1936, Canney asks Mingana to prepare rotogravures of a manuscript which was needed by F.D. Coggan, one of Canney's Ph.D. students. From the correspondence it is clear that Mingana did a lot of work to provide these rotogravures, while he provided much more additional information about the manuscript than what Canney asked for. Canney had to pay for the rotogravures and the costs of sending them, and Mingana appears to have been very precise about this. The letters do not only contain formal elements, but also account for visits they were to pay to each other.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Cadbury Research Library, DA66/1/3/2/1/32–33 (correspondence between Mingana and W. Lockton, three letters, 1934).

<sup>31</sup> Cadbury Research Library, DA66/1/3/2/2 (correspondence between Mingana and F.C. Burkitt, 1933–1934).

<sup>32</sup> Samir, *Alphonse Mingana*, 10.

<sup>33</sup> Maurice Arthur Canney, *An Encyclopædia of Religions* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1921).

<sup>34</sup> Cadbury Research Library, DA66/1/3/2/1/5–25 (correspondence between Mingana and M.A. Canney, 1932–1935). Another group of letters is available in Cadbury Research Library, DA66/1/3/2/4 (1932–1936),

Mingana was not always immediately willing to answer the inquiries he received, as appears from his correspondence with an Indian scholar named ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, where he is requested to look up a few passages in the original Arabic from ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī’s *Apology*. Mingana did not answer these questions, but referred to his edition, indicating how he could order it.<sup>35</sup>

In 1937, when Mingana was ill for the full year and when he eventually died, he was still prepared to answer inquiries, although in some cases he was too ill to do it. Also Mingana himself is still doing inquiries during this year, as he asks Robert Ellis (whom I have not been able to identify) in October 1937, two months before Mingana’s death, to identify an Armenian palimpsest.<sup>36</sup>

In general the inquiries show that Mingana was known, both by otherwise unknown people like ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd and by eminent scholars such as Canney, as a point of access to information they could use for their academic work. Although we cannot look into the minds of these scholars, let alone the scholars who did not use Mingana as a source of information, it seems that Mingana was trusted for the way he looked up and translated information, especially from his own manuscripts.

### MINGANA AS A SUPERVISOR AND EXAMINER

In part of the correspondence Mingana acts as a (official or unofficial) supervisor of students who are working on a thesis. These students are from outside Manchester or Birmingham, where Mingana was active as a lecturer.<sup>37</sup> Possible supervision of students

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which contains many informal elements and where Mingana shows his most ironical side.

<sup>35</sup> Cadbury Research Library, DA66/1/3/2/1/26–28 (correspondence between Mingana and ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, 1934). It has to be mentioned that one of ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd’s questions was how he could order the work.

<sup>36</sup> Cadbury Research Library, DA66/1/3/2/4 (letter from Mingana to R. Ellis, 1937).

<sup>37</sup> Mingana’s biographies show that in Manchester he was appointed as a ‘special lecturer’ of Arabic at the University of Manchester; correspondence with Guppy, the librarian in the John Rylands Library in Manchester, shows that after his departure to Birmingham he has “lectures to give.” See for the lectureship in Manchester: Margoliouth and Woledge, *Alphonse Mingana*, 3. The letter to Guppy is in John Rylands

in Manchester and Birmingham would probably yield less correspondence because it could have been done orally.

One of the longest series of correspondence within the *Mingana papers* in the Cadbury Research Library is with Willem van Unnik (1910–1978), a Dutch New Testament scholar, who wrote his doctoral dissertation in Leiden with Mingana's help. Van Unnik's official supervisor in Leiden was Johannes de Zwaan, who was professor of New Testament and early Christian literature, and also a former student at Woodbrooke, but from the correspondence it seems that the person who did most for him was Mingana.

Van Unnik was one of the many students of theology in Leiden who went to Woodbrooke in Birmingham,<sup>38</sup> to which Mingana was affiliated because of his position at the Selly Oak Colleges Library, and Van Unnik used this opportunity to study, using the Mingana collection of manuscripts, the East Syriac text "Questions of the Eucharist" by ʾĪshōʿyabh IV. After a few letters sent from London, where Van Unnik did research at the British Museum, the long series of letters starts after his return to The Netherlands. From the beginning it is clear that their relationship had informal sides, Mingana using the nickname "the great Van Unnik" for him.<sup>39</sup>

In April 1933, Van Unnik wrote from Haarlem, where he lived, that he had spoken to De Zwaan to discuss what he "had done under your [Mingana's] direction." De Zwaan had agreed to the basic idea, but wanted to see a more detailed outline of Van Unnik's proposed thesis, which he announces to specify in "close contact with you, so that you [Mingana] *in fact* will become my promotor [doctoral advisor]."<sup>40</sup> While Mingana's idea about Van Unnik's thesis was that he prepare an edition with a translation and a small commentary, Van Unnik wrote that this would not be

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Library, JRL/4/1/1 (library correspondence; letter from Mingana to Guppy, 9 May 1932).

<sup>38</sup> See G. van Dalfsen, "The Influence of Woodbrooke in the Netherlands," in *Woodbrooke 1903–1953: A Brief History of a Quaker Experiment in Religious Education*, edited by R. Davis (London: The Bannisdale Press, 1953), 159–168.

<sup>39</sup> One of the most telling examples is Cadbury Research Library, DA66/1/3/2/17, letter from Mingana to Van Unnik, 29 April 1933.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. (letter from Van Unnik to Mingana, 13 April 1933).

enough for his thesis to be accepted, and that he had to provide a history of the Eucharist in the East Syriac Church. Mingana agreed to this, but warned that this would take much more time.

Although a considerable portion of the correspondence is about the ideas for and the outline of the thesis, Mingana did not give further advice regarding its content. Most of the letters deal with the production and the shipment of rotogravures of parts of manuscripts from the Mingana collection. Mingana warns several times that Van Unnik wants to have too many rotogravures and that it would become too expensive for Van Unnik, but eventually Van Unnik writes in 1935 in a rather bold letter that because an edition with translation is not enough, he has to conduct a comparison with similar phenomena, and that because he “found that next to nothing of the works dealing with this branch of historical science had been published and investigated,” he has to do it himself, necessitating an abundance of additional rotogravures.<sup>41</sup> Unfortunately, Mingana’s reaction to this is missing, but in a later letter Mingana writes that he is happy that certain rotogravures have arrived.<sup>42</sup>

Because Van Unnik also had to study for his doctoral examination, his ecclesiastical education, and was working on some articles for which he also used the Mingana collection, work on the dissertation took much more time than was originally intended. It seems that Mingana eventually became irritated about the continuous delays, writing ironically in October 1935:

I am pleased to hear that things are beginning to move, and that you will have to finish your thesis in February, that is to say, in about three months’ time. I hope that February is in Holland our true February, and not like the double Dutch ordination, of which we know nothing!<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid. (letter from Van Unnik to Mingana, 17 April 1935).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. (letter from Mingana to Van Unnik, 23 May 1935).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. (letter from Mingana to Van Unnik, 28 October 1935). With the “double Dutch ordination,” Mingana refers to the fact that Van Unnik had to do two examinations before he could become a minister, one for the “state” and one for the church, pointing to the separation between a secular and ecclesiastical part of programs of theology at certain universities in The Netherlands.



This was the last letter of this correspondence that is available in the *Mingana papers*, the dissertation finally being defended in November 1937.<sup>44</sup> It seems that at least some letters are missing at this point, while the earlier part appears to be virtually complete.

Another Ph.D. candidate who received Mingana's help was Abraham Levene, who worked for the Nottingham Hebrew Congregation. In 1932 he proposes his Ph.D. project at the University of London, which is about an anonymous East-Syriac commentary on the Pentateuch that is preserved in a manuscript from the Mingana collection. Also these letters are in large part about rotogravures, which Mingana commissioned for him. In the last letter that is preserved, dated 4 November 1936, Mingana writes that it would be a good idea if Levene published his thesis, which he finally did in 1951.<sup>45</sup>

Mingana was also sometimes asked as a (secondary) examiner for master's and Ph.D. dissertations. When Mingana is asked by the important Islam scholar Richard Bell (1876–1952), well known for his *Introduction to the Qur'ān*, to examine a Ph.D. thesis that was written under his supervision about the Yezidis, Mingana answers that he is willing to do this under the condition that the thesis is not abnormally long. Bell states that it is Mingana whom he asks for this task because he considers him “the person in this country who knows most about them.”<sup>46</sup>

Finally, when Mingana is asked by Canney (see above) to act as an external referee for a thesis by a person named Mougy, he only agrees to do it after Canney insists, writing that he has very little time for it, and finally returns the manuscript before finishing the job because he has a lasting problem with his eye. He writes that

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<sup>44</sup> W.C. van Unnik, *Nestorian Questions on the Administration of the Eucharist, by Isho'yabb IV: A Contribution to the History of the Eucharist in the Eastern Church* (Haarlem: Joh. Enschedé en zonen, 1937).

<sup>45</sup> Abraham Levene, *The early Syrian Fathers on Genesis: from a Syriac ms. on the Pentateuch in the Mingana collection: the first eighteen chapters of the ms. ed. with introd., transl. and notes, and incl. a study in comparative exegesis* (London: Taylor's Foreign Press, 1951). The letters are found in Cadbury Research Library, DA66/1/3/1/10 and DA66/1/3/2/12 (both correspondence between Mingana and Levene, 1932–1936).

<sup>46</sup> Cadbury Research Library, DA66/1/3/2/2 (correspondence between Mingana and Bell, 1933).

his impression was that it was “a commonplace composition, which any orthodox Mohammedan might have written.”<sup>47</sup>

To conclude, Mingana’s access to and knowledge of a wealth of Middle Eastern manuscripts made him a valuable person for students to assist them with writing their theses, and his expertise in specific subjects made him a suitable candidate to act as an examiner. In particular, Mingana’s correspondence with Van Unnik shows a deep appreciation of Mingana as a supervisor from Van Unnik’s side, and a genuine determination from Mingana’s side to bring Van Unnik’s Ph.D. thesis to a good ending. Moreover, there is no reason to assume that Mingana had any official obligation to put any effort into helping a student in Leiden.

### ACADEMIC DISCUSSION

The largest part of the correspondence can be identified as academic discussion, not so much in the sense that Mingana gets into debates with other scholars directly, but that opinions on academic matters, works, and persons are being exchanged.

Many letters deal with the *Apology* by ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, of which, as we have seen above, the authenticity had been questioned by two scholars not long after Mingana had published an article about the text for the first time in 1920. Most letters are about the authenticity and are in defense of Mingana’s sincerity and about the genuineness of the document, whereas a few are about the implications of the contents of the document.

The well-known German scholar Franz Taeschner (1888–1967), who specialized in Turkish language and literature, published an article about the *Apology* concerning its quotations from the Pentateuch, drawing upon Mingana’s edition which he published in 1932/1933.<sup>48</sup> Mingana and Taeschner corresponded about this in

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<sup>47</sup> Cadbury Research Library, DA66/1/3/2/4 (correspondence between Mingana and Canney, 1932–1934). Another thesis was one submitted by a woman named A.H. Fahmy about education in the medieval Muslim world, submitted for the master’s program of Education at the University of Birmingham, about which Mingana was very satisfied. Cadbury Research Library, DA66/1/3/1/5 (correspondence between Mingana and C.W. Valentine on behalf of the Education Department of the University of Birmingham, 1937).

<sup>48</sup> Franz Taeschner, “Die alttestamentische Bibelzitate, vor allem aus dem Pentateuch, in at-Ṭabarī’s Kitāb ad-Dīn wad-Daula und ihre

1935. The first letter that is available is a carbon copy from Mingana and shows that Mingana was pleased by the article:

I read your pamphlet with great interest, and found that your argument based on Ṭabari's quotations from the Pentateuch is well put, and I congratulate you on your painstaking labour on Ṭabari's important work.<sup>49</sup>

Mingana however mentions some problems that he really wants to see fixed. According to him, Taeschner had failed to take into consideration three important articles on the matter, including one by Mingana himself and one by David Samuel Margoliouth. Because Mingana's own article contains a correction to his original edition, Mingana is anxious that Taeschner publishes an erratum:

Could you write a further note in the *Oriens Christianus*, and draw attention to the above point? By omitting them you have not done good justice to yourself.<sup>50</sup>

Taeschner responds that he was not able to see two of the articles because the publishing process took too long, but that it was "eine große Unterlassungssünde" (a big mistake out of carelessness) that he had not taken into consideration Mingana's correction, and he promises to publish a correction. About Margoliouth's article, which was so similar to his own that Taeschner's could almost be seen as a case of plagiarism, Taeschner stresses that he had not seen the article by Margoliouth and that his work is indeed original.<sup>51</sup> Taeschner's rectification was published half a year later in *Oriens Christianus*.<sup>52</sup>

Later, Mingana sends an article from the *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* to Taeschner, to which he responds as follows:

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Bedeutung für die Frage nach der Echtheit dieser Schrift," *Oriens Christianus* 9 (1934), 23–39.

<sup>49</sup> Cadbury Research Library, DA66/1/3/2/1/39 (letter by Mingana to F. Taeschner, 1935).

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Cadbury Research Library, DA66/1/3/2/1/38 (letter by F. Taeschner to Mingana, 1935).

<sup>52</sup> It was published as a *Nachtrag* in *Oriens Christianus* 9 (1934): 277–278. The correspondence took place in January 1935, so this issue must have appeared in the beginning of 1935 as well.

Empfangen Sie meinen besten Dank für Ihren Brief und den Sonderabzug Ihres Artikels im “Bulletin...” An der Echtheit der Ṭabarī-schrift kann meiner Ansicht nach nunmehr kein Zweifel mehr bestehen.

(Please accept my best thanks for your letter and the offprint of your article in the “Bulletin...” In my opinion, from now on there can be no doubt anymore about the authenticity of the text by Ṭabarī.)<sup>53</sup>

We can be almost certain that this refers to the note that Henry Guppy, the librarian of the John Rylands Library in Manchester, wrote much earlier in 1930. In this note, Guppy spoke up for Mingana against the accusation that Mingana had forged the *Apology*, by simply stating that the manuscript was already there in 1843.<sup>54</sup> Taeschner’s letter shows that he already believed in the authenticity of the document and in Mingana’s sincerity, and that thanks to this document he became even more convinced about this.

The *Apology* also plays a role for Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857–1936), a scholar of Islam at Leiden University. In correspondence between him and the German Semitic scholar Theodor Nöldeke (1836–1930), published by Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld,<sup>55</sup> Mingana is mentioned three times. On 8 December 1923 Snouck Hurgronje writes to Nöldeke about the *Apology* (here referred to using its Arabic name):

Van het door Mingana nu ook in tekst uitgegeven  
كتاب الدين والدولة [*Kitāb al-dīn wa-l-dawla*] hebt U zeker  
ook een exemplaar ontvangen? Het is wel een  
hoogst merkwaardig boek. Soms vraagt men zich

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<sup>53</sup> Cadbury Research Library, DA66/1/3/2/1/2 (postcard from F. Taeschner to Mingana, 1935).

<sup>54</sup> Henry Guppy, “The genuineness of ‘At-Ṭabarī’s Arabic ‘Apology,’ and of the Syriac document on the spread of Christianity in Central Asia in the John Rylands Library,” with a note by Alphonse Mingana, “Remarks on the Early Spread of Christianity in Central Asia,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 14 (1930), 121–124.

<sup>55</sup> I would like to thank Professor Van Koningsveld for his suggestion to look through his edition of Snouck Hurgronje’s letters.

af, of de Moslimsche toepassing van al die Bijbelteksten den gewezen Christen volkomen ernst geweest kan zijn. De editie is keurig verzorgd in alle opzichten.

(I suppose you have also received a copy of the *Kitāb al-dīn wa-l-dawla*, of which the text has now also been published by Mingana? It is a highly remarkable book. Sometimes one wonders whether the Muslim usage of all the biblical texts was completely serious for the former Christian. The edition is very well-cared for in all respects.)<sup>56</sup>

The phrase “highly curious book” refers here to the contents of the work that Mingana edited itself, and not Mingana’s edition, which he names “very well-cared for in all respects.”

Between 1935 and 1937, Mingana maintained correspondence with the French Orientalist Jean-Baptiste Chabot (1860–1948). Much earlier, in 1905 when he was still in the Middle East, Mingana had attacked him harshly after Chabot’s critique to Mingana’s edition of the text by Barḥadhḥshabba (see above), accusing Chabot of not being able to read Syriac without a dictionary.<sup>57</sup> The relationship at the time of the correspondence seems much better, though, writing to each other with the fullest respect and friendliness, and Chabot is interested in some of Mingana’s manuscripts.<sup>58</sup> However, after Mingana visited Chabot in Paris in 1935, he writes the following, in which he indirectly questions Chabot’s sincerity in his relation toward Mingana:

J’espère que, suivant l’occasion, vous écrirez une notice concernant le Catalogue, et l’œuvre de Job, dans le *Journal des Savants* pour corriger

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<sup>56</sup> Letter by Snouck Hurgronje to Nöldeke, dated 8 December 1923. C. Snouck Hurgronje, *Abdoel-Ghaffaar, volume 1, Orientalism and Islam*, 319–320. Snouck Hurgronje wrote his letters to Nöldeke in Dutch instead of the expected German; see page XIII of Van Koningsveldt’s edition.

<sup>57</sup> Samir, *Alphonse Mingana*, 9. Samir cites Mingana’s *Réponse à Mr l’Abbé J.-B. Chabot à propos de la Chronique de Bar-hadhḥshabba*, Mosul, 1905, which was not intended for publication but distributed by Mingana among a number of people. I have not seen this *réponse*.

<sup>58</sup> Cadbury Research Library, DA66/1/3/2/3 (correspondence between Mingana and Chabot, 1935–1937).

l'impression, faite par vos revues de mes *Woodbrooke Studies* à quelques savants de France et d'Allemagne, que vous aviez une rancune personnelle contre l'auteur ... Pour vous dire la vérité, elles m'ont fait la même impression qu'elles avaient faite aux savants de France et d'Allemagne, qui m'en avaient écrit, spécialement le feu et regretté M. F. Nau. Pardonnez-moi d'avoir écrit sur cette question, qui est plus personnelle que scientifique, mais j'ai pensé que ce serait bon pour nous deux d'en faire mention, dans le but de ne laisser aucune chose, ouverte ou cachée, qui pourrait ternir notre amitié.

(I hope that, if there is an occasion, you will write a notice about the *Catalogue* and the work about Job in the *Journal des Savants*, to correct the impression that was given to some scholars in France and Germany by your reviews about my *Woodbrooke Studies*, that you would have a personal rancor against the author ... To tell you the truth, they<sup>59</sup> gave me the same impression as they gave to the scholars in France and Germany, who wrote to me about it, especially the late and regretted M.F. Nau. Excuse me for writing about this matter, which is more personal than scholarly, but I thought that it would be good for the two of us to make a notion about it, in order not to leave anything that could harm our friendship, whether it is open or hidden.)<sup>60</sup>

Chabot had indeed published two reviews in *Journal des Savants*, discussing respectively the second and third, and the fourth through the seventh volumes of Mingana's *Woodbrooke Studies*, which is an important series of text editions with translations from manuscripts in Mingana's own collection. Chabot's reviews are very critical about some of the texts Mingana published; not about the quality of the editions or translations, but about the importance and authenticity that Mingana ascribes to them. According to him,

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<sup>59</sup> The reviews are meant here.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. (letter from Mingana to Chabot, 3 December 1935).

a text named *Vision of Theophilus* presented in volume III is a Syriac translation while the Arabic original is available as well, and Chabot supposes that he publishes the translation to give his own manuscript collection more importance. About volume VII, named “Early Christian Mystics,” he writes that these Christian mystics are not early, as information about earlier Christian mystics is known, and suggests that the text was compiled by the scribe himself as he wrote the manuscript in 1918, because Mingana does not indicate his source.<sup>61</sup>

Having received Mingana’s letter quoted above, Chabot promptly answers that he does not have anything against the editor, but that he does indeed have doubts about the edited manuscripts, based on a letter that he once got from a missionary in Syria, who wrote that manuscripts were copied and fabricated, and that everything went to private collections in England, and that he cannot exclude this possibility in this case because he has no information on the manuscripts Mingana used.<sup>62</sup>

In the following letters that are preserved, nothing more is written about this matter, but in January 1937 Mingana expresses his satisfaction after reading another review by Chabot of Mingana’s publication of the *Book of Treasures* of Jacob of Edessa, in which Chabot praised the importance of the text and the quality of Mingana’s translation.<sup>63</sup> Chabot responds in the last preserved letter of the correspondence between him and Mingana that he submitted two other reviews in *Journal des Savants*, commenting on the first two volumes of Mingana’s catalogue of his own collection,

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<sup>61</sup> J.-B. Chabot, review of *Woodbrooke Studies*, volume II through IV, edited by Alphonse Mingana, *Journal des Savants* 1932, 82–85, and J.-B. Chabot, review of *Woodbrooke Studies*, volume V through VII, edited by Alphonse Mingana, *Journal des Savants* 1934, 228–229. In fact, Mingana refers to his *Catalogue* where he mentions the copyist of the manuscript he used (Mingana Syriac 601) and the copyist’s source. Alphonse Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana collection of manuscripts, now in the possession of the trustees of the Woodbrooke settlement, Selby Oak, Birmingham, volume 1* (Cambridge: Heffer, 1933), 1153.

<sup>62</sup> Cadbury Research Library, DA66/1/3/2/3 (letter from Chabot to Mingana, 13 December 1935).

<sup>63</sup> J.-B. Chabot, review of *Book of Treasures*, by Jacob of Edessa, edited by Alphonse Mingana, *Journal des Savants* 1936, 236–237.

and that Mingana would probably like it.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, Chabot's tone in these reviews is quite positive, and he even renounces what he had written earlier concerning *Woodbrooke Studies*:

Il a donné lui-même une idée des avantages qu'on pourra tirer de sa Collection dans les sept volumes qu'il a été parlé ici même, et à ce propos, après examen du Catalogue, je reconnais volontiers que les réserves formulées au sujet de quelques textes n'étaient pas fondées.

(He himself has given an idea of how one could take advantage of his Collection in the seven volumes which have been discussed right here, and for this reason, after examining the Catalogue, I gladly recognized that the reservations that I formulated concerning some texts were not well-founded.)<sup>65</sup>

A scholar who was immediately pleased by Mingana's *Woodbrooke Studies* was the German Syriac scholar Anton Baumstark (1872–1948). In a review of volumes IV and V published in his own journal *Oriens Christianus*, he praises the value of the texts edited. Unfortunately his critique is mainly limited to the importance of the texts itself, and Baumstark writes very little about the quality of Mingana's editing and translation work, except for a few remarks about details in Mingana's translation.<sup>66</sup>

Baumstark's recognition of Mingana's work is interesting in the light of the fact that he is known for his active role in the NSDAP party in Germany during the time before the Second World War. Apparently, also for Mingana this was no reason not to praise Baumstark, as he writes to him in 1934:

If at any time you think of coming to England, I shall be very pleased indeed to give you hospitality at our house, for a week or two, and if I know that

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<sup>64</sup> Cadbury Research Library, DA66/1/3/2/3 (correspondence between Mingana and Chabot, 1935–1937).

<sup>65</sup> J.-B. Chabot, review of *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts, volume 1 and 2*, by Alphonse Mingana, *Journal des Savants* 1937, 38–40.

<sup>66</sup> A. Baumstark, review of *Woodbrooke Studies*, volumes IV and V, edited by Alphonse Mingana, *Oriens Christianus* 8 (1933), 95–99.



what would impede you from coming would be your financial situation, I shall gladly pay your travelling expenses one way.<sup>67</sup>

In 1936, Mingana writes to him while sending the second volume of his catalogue of the Mingana collection:

You are the only scholar in Germany, and the second in all the world, to whom I am sending this catalogue, and I know that you are the scholar to appreciate it and make use of it more than any other living man!<sup>68</sup>

Unfortunately, no letters in the other direction are present in the *Mingana papers*, but it is clear that the correspondence took place in both directions.

In correspondence between Mingana and Arthur Jeffery (1892–1959), who was affiliated to the American University in Cairo between 1921 and 1938, the two give an insight into their approach to scholarship of Islam. Like Mingana himself, Jeffery had a critical way of studying Islam and the Quran in particular. He belonged to a group of scholars, also including the above-mentioned Margoliouth, who were in favor of studying the history and origins of Islam and the text of the Quran in the same critical way as it was fashionable among theologians concerning Christianity and the Bible. Both liked the idea of the production of a critical edition of the Quran.<sup>69</sup> Jeffery has sometimes been identified as an anti-Islamic scholar, and his works are being used

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<sup>67</sup> Cadbury Research Library, DA66/1/3/2/1 (letter from Mingana to Baumstark, 1934).

<sup>68</sup> Cadbury Research Library, DA66/1/3/2/2 (letter from Mingana to Baumstark, 1936).

<sup>69</sup> Gerhard Böwering and Jane Dammen McAuliffe, preface to the 2006 reprint of *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qurʾān*, by Arthur Jeffery (Leiden: Brill, 2006 [1938]), IX–X. Mingana begins his article on the Syriac influence on the language of the Quran by stating that “[t]he time has surely come to subject the text of the Qurʾān to the same criticism as that to which we subject the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Jewish Bible, and the Greek of the Christian Scriptures.” Mingana, “Syriac influence on the style of the Qurʾān,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 11 (1927), 77.

by anti-Islamic groups,<sup>70</sup> but reading through his work it actually appears that he writes about Islam with respect, even though for him this does not imply that he follows the Islamic tradition. The same is evidently true for Mingana, who however became less identified with this aspect, as it was only one part of his work. The correspondence however shows that they both wrestled with this problem and agreed upon the way of handling it: by pursuing their work in the way they wanted, apparently ignoring the criticism they received from Muslim sides, while at the same time not being negative about Islam itself. Some letters nevertheless suggest that Jeffery enjoyed attacking the traditional views on Islamic history and texts, while Mingana seems to be less concerned with this.<sup>71</sup>

In the following letter, Jeffery complains about the fact that certain Western scholars of Arabic or Islam were not allowed to participate in a meeting of the *Académie arabe* in Cairo because of their attitudes to Islam:

The great excitement in Cairo at the present time, outside the usual political wrangles, is the coming meeting of the Academie Arabe. Preliminary meetings are already being held and the official assembly is calling for the end of the month. You probably heard the fuss there was over Wensinck

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<sup>70</sup> This is evident from a simple search on the Internet using Jeffery's name, which also yields many results from Islamic websites rejecting Jeffery for being anti-Islamic.

<sup>71</sup> I say this mainly on the basis of a case where Mingana discovered a manuscript of the Bukhārī Hadith collection that was a major variant of the normally used witness (the one used at *al-Azhar* university). Jeffery insisted that Mingana published a facsimile edition of the manuscript because the new manuscript made that "doubt is cast on the whole Corpus of Tradition, and their problem is to demonstrate to the world that the text they have chosen is the only authentic one" (Cadbury Research Library, DA66/1/3/1/8, letter from Jeffery to Mingana, 5 December 1936). Mingana was willing to publish a full facsimile edition, but in the end he published only a small portion of it in facsimile because the costs were too high, but in the introduction he also writes that "the reproduction of all the pages was not really necessary for students interested in the critical study of the early transmission of Muslim Traditions," which implies that Mingana was not interested in contradicting Islamic tradition. Alphonse Mingana, *An Important Manuscript of the Traditions of Bukhārī* (Cambridge: Heffer, 1936), 28.

being invited. As a result of the newspaper campaign his name has been dropped. There was also a dirty attack on Nallino in one of the papers, but his name has been allowed to stand as he has not written any work attacking Islam. Dr Margoliouth was not invited to form part of the Academy because he had written two books which are considered offensive to Islam. I went for them on this question, and wanted to know what a scholar's views on Islam had to do with his suitability for appointment to an Arabic Academy which was not concerned with religion but with Arabic language and literature. Had they forgotten that there were Jewish and Christian poets writing in Arabic before Muhammad was born? Did they not know that Arabic was the language of a Christian civilization before there was any Islam? But they would not print my letter.<sup>72</sup>

Founded mainly to maintain the "integrity" of the Arabic language and to make it suitable for modern usage, the Cairene *Académie arabe* was established in 1932 on the initiative of the Egyptian government.<sup>73</sup> As the academy was officially only concerned with the Arabic language and not with Islam, Jeffery's complaint about the rejection of Western scholars on the basis of their views on Islam seems reasonable. Western Orientalists with a critical attitude toward Islam were however from the beginning not accepted as members of the academy.<sup>74</sup> The fact that the scholars mentioned in Jeffery's letter were dropped is therefore not surprising. Jeffery's concern, however, tells us that even though he did not approve of its connection to an orthodox form of the Islamic religion, he considered the *Académie arabe* important enough to write a complaint to them. We do not have Mingana's reaction, but Jeffery's tone suggests that Mingana would agree to this.

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<sup>72</sup> Cadbury Research Library, DA66/1/3/1/8 (letter from Jeffery to Mingana, 20 January 1934).

<sup>73</sup> Rachad Hamzaoui, *L'Académie de langue arabe du Caire: histoire et œuvre* (Tunis: Publications de l'Université de Tunis, 1975), 54 and 57.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 65 and 100.

### **MINGANA AS A WELL-RESPECTED ORIENTAL SCHOLAR IN A PRE-SAIDIAN WORLD**

There is much more correspondence available that was not discussed above. The letters that were not highlighted paint more or less the same picture as the picture that emerged in the previous section. Most letters are formal, while a good number have a warm personal tone and mention plans to pay each other visits or give an account on how holidays were spent. The majority of the letters is on academic matters and expresses consideration of the other's work, and in a few cases there are plans to work together on a project.

The large number of well-known and eminent scholars shows that Mingana was to a great extent part of the academic context of Western and especially British Orientalists of his time. These scholars work in all the fields that Mingana himself specialized in. The content of the letters shows that the ones with whom Mingana was in contact respected him, used him as a source of information, trusted him in the way he processed Oriental texts to editions, and were also interested in his theories. Despite all the accusations that he forged material, the people with whom he had correspondence do not take these accusations seriously or do not seem to be influenced by them in the way they address Mingana. The negative influence of these accusations must have been much graver after his death.

There is however a further remark to be made. Positive as the comments about Mingana's work might seem, it is most of the time restricted to his reproductions, critical editions and translations of ancient and medieval texts. About Mingana's theories and other critical work *about* these texts, I have found much fewer positive reactions, and in some cases they were even negative. The evidence is not very rich, and a definitive conclusion can therefore not be drawn.

We can also make a note in relation to the Orientalism debate. The well-known critique about old-fashioned Orientalists who would have only respect for Oriental texts and not for Oriental people, is sometimes also directed toward the scholars with whom Mingana had contact. In this case, I think I can say that there is no reason to assume that these scholars did not have sincere appreciation for Mingana as a person and as a scholar, even if they often did not agree with his critical work.

It is often noted that Edward Said in his book *Orientalism* left out or misread Orientalists who did not fit into his narrative of Orientalists as scholars who used their profession to assert power over Middle Eastern societies. In an important critique on Edward Said's *Orientalism*, Daniel Martin Varisco criticizes Said because he was "either unaware of or willfully ignored the scholarly output of quite respectable 'Arab' or 'Muslim' Orientalists," after which he mentions a long list of names.<sup>75</sup> Mingana is not part of this list, but he could very well be added to it.

To conclude, in my opinion Mingana was a very well respected scholar in his own lifetime. There is reason to assume that he was more appreciated for his editions and translations than for his critical work, but even for the latter category it seems that he was at least taken seriously. Living in an age that was long before Said's influential work, Mingana was one of the many oriental Orientalists who formed an integral part of the Orientalist discourse, showing the need to revise the view that in the Orientalism of Mingana's time, people from the Middle East itself did not take part. At the same time, I assert that the issues concerning possible forgeries of documents influenced his reputation to a much smaller extent than one would expect from the discourse about him nowadays.

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<sup>75</sup> Daniel Martin Varisco, *Reading Orientalism: Said and the Unsaid* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), 43.

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