

OBITUARY NOTICE

Alphonse Mingana

On Sunday, 5th December, at the age of 56, Dr. Mingana succumbed to an illness which had been troubling him for many months. He had crowded into his life work which would have provided adequate occupation for several scholars with many more years at their disposal.

Born near Mosul in 1881 he was Professor of Semitic languages in the Syro-Chaldean Seminary 1902-1919, for many years Assistant Keeper of Oriental MSS. in the John Rylands Library, Manchester, and in 1932 came to Birmingham to take charge of the great collection of Oriental MSS. and antiquities which he had made in his repeated expeditions financed by Mr. Edward Cadbury, who also founded a home for them in the Woodbrooke Settlement. Three of these expeditions were executed in the years 1924, 1925, and 1929, and extended over Syria, Persia, Iraq, the Sinaitic Peninsula and Egypt, Lower and Upper. The wealth of these collections is astonishing; his Catalogue of the Syriac MSS. contains over 600 items, and that of the Christian Arabic MSS., over 800. He had calculated that the cataloguing of the Muslim Arabic collection would take ten years. The six stately volumes of *Woodbrooke Studies* and other publications for which he somehow found time have given the world documents of unique importance for the history of Christianity, and also for the history and theology of Islam. He was most generous in according the use of the materials which he had amassed with so much skill, courage and endurance to students throughout the world. When on the staff of the John Rylands Library he made many valuable contribution to its *Bulletin* from its treasures, and had the merit of discovering and publishing with translation the earliest defence of Islam from the Jewish and Christian

Scriptures, the *Book of Religion and Empire* by Ibn Rabban, which furnished material for the later apologists.

From the expert notice of his life and work which appeared in the *Birmingham Mail* of 6th December, and which, it is to be hoped, may be reproduced in a more accessible and permanent form, two sentences may be quoted here. "His exceptional intellectual attainments, his charming, unaffected personality, the single-minded devotion to research and authorship which had earned world-wide fame, combined to justify the assertion that Dr. Alphonse Mingana was rare among men." "He carried lightly a great profundity of knowledge, and his scholarly eminence was modestly concealed by a warm and friendly disposition."

D. S. MARGOLIOUTH.