Finding Aid for

Robert Tobias Papers, 1960 – 1962


Finding Aid prepared by: Rossy Mendez and Brigette C. Kamsler, October 2013
With financial support from the Henry Luce Foundation

Summary Information
Creator: Robert Tobias, 1919 – 2010
Title: Robert Tobias Papers
Dates: 1960 – 1962
Abstract: Scholar, professor and leader of the ecumenical movement. Materials included in collection pertain to his involvement in starting a World Association of Theological Schools in the 1960s.
Size: 3 boxes, 1.25 linear feet
Storage: Onsite storage
Repository: The Burke Library
Union Theological Seminary
3041 Broadway
New York, NY 10027
Email: burkearchives@library.columbia.edu
Administrative Information

Provenance: The collection is part of the William Adams Brown Ecumenical Library, which was established in 1945 within Union Theological Seminary’s main library to hold ecumenical materials.

Access: Archival papers are available to registered readers for consultation by appointment only. Please contact archives staff by email to burkearchives@library.columbia.edu, or by postal mail to The Burke Library address on page 1, as far in advance as possible. Burke Library staff is available for inquiries or to request a consultation on archival or special collections research.

Access Restrictions: The collection is unrestricted to readers. Please note that certain materials are in a fragile condition, and this may necessitate restriction in handling and copying.

Preferred Citation: Item description, William Adams Brown Ecumenical Archives: Robert Tobias Papers, box #, folder #, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

Biography

Robert Tobias was born August 17, 1919 in Lyons, Kansas. Tobias completed a Master of Arts from Phillips University in 1943 and obtained his Bachelor of Divinity from Union Theological Seminary in 1945. He went on to pursue his Doctorate in Theology at the University at Geneva. His dissertation entitled, Communist-Christian Encounter in East Europe, 1917-1951 revealed his interest in ecumenism and the role of the church in society.

This interest was perhaps influenced by his special responsibilities towards East Europe while working as the Assistant Director of the Department of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees, which was part of the World Council of Churches. He served in this position from 1946-1953. Tobias also served as a World Council of Churches observer for the Geneva sessions, led by Eleanor Roosevelt. These sessions were used to draft the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Tobias earned many honors for his work in ecumenism, including Geneva’s key to the city and prominent decorations by King Paul of Greece as Commander of the Royal Order of Phoenix and in Yugoslavia, by patriarchs German and Pavel with the Order of St. Sava.

From the 1950s-1980s Tobias served as a theology professor at the Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis, Indiana and later at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago, Illinois. During his time at the Christian Theological Seminary, Tobias worked with other faculty and ecumenical leaders, such as Dr. Henry P. van Dusen from Union Theological Seminary, to establish a World Association of Theological Schools. In 1960, a proposal was drafted at the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism in Bossey, Switzerland. As the secretary of the continuation committee, Tobias sent out surveys to seminary schools nationwide and abroad to gauge interest in a world-wide association of seminaries. In 1961, the committee met during the World Council of Churches meeting in New Delhi to discuss the formal establishment of the association. Following this meeting Tobias assisted in establishing a world-wide directory of seminaries.
Robert Tobias continued with his work on ecumenism and went on to serve on committees of many ecumenical and international organizations. Beginning in 1983, Tobias co-chaired sessions of the Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue in North America and has written books and articles related to his work, including, *Heaven on Earth: A Lutheran - Orthodox Odyssey*.

Tobias passed away on October 6, 2010 and was buried in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

Sources:

Collection Scope and Content Note
The collection consists of Robert Tobias’ files pertaining to the potential founding of a World Association of Theological Schools. Although the proposal gained a lot of support, the association never came to fruition. The files contain correspondence with different schools as well as drafts of letters sent by Robert Tobias. In some folders there are also catalogues and course descriptions pertaining to the seminaries which Tobias contacted.

The following schools had folders but were found empty: Haas Theological Seminary, [Salisbury, North Carolina], Evangelical Lutheran Theological Seminary [Columbus, Ohio], Talusan C. Smith University [Charlotte, North Carolina], McMaster Divinity College [Hamilton, Ohio], North Baptist Theological Seminary [Chicago, Illinois], Vladimir Orthodox Theological Seminary, [New York New York], Union College of British Columbia [Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada], and the Janhtau School of Theology, Affiliated with United Theological Seminary [Minneapolis, Minnesota].

The records are arranged primarily by region and in alphabetical order by name of seminary.

Processing
Materials were rehoused onto new acid-free folders and archival boxes. Material was separated by acid free paper to indicate separate school listings.
Further Sources:
The Burke Library Archives include collections from organizations which Tobias was affiliated with, including the World Council of Churches and Union Theological Seminary Archival Records. For more information on these collections, please visit the Burke Library Archives website at http://library.columbia.edu/locations/burke/archives.html or contact archives staff by email burkearchives@library.columbia.edu.
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|     |        | The Graduate Seminary, Phillips University, Enid, Oklahoma
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| 2   | 2      | The Hartford Seminary Foundation, Hartford, Connecticut
|     |        | Harvard Divinity School, Cambridge, Massachusetts
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|     |        | Knox College, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
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| 3   | 3      | United States Seminaries Address List |
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**Seminaries-Abroad**

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