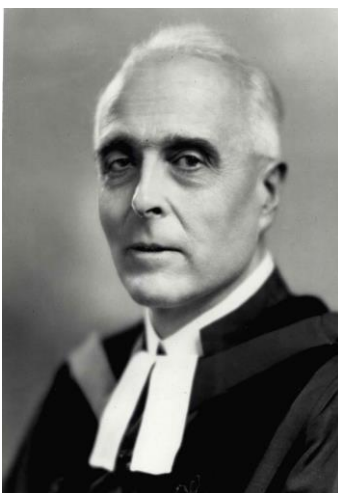


**The Burke Library Archives, Columbia University Libraries  
Union Theological Seminary, New York**

Union Theological Seminary Archives

Finding Aid for

**Henry Sloane Coffin Papers, 1865 – 1983**



Photograph of Henry Sloane Coffin. Credit to: UTS1: Henry Sloane Coffin Papers, 1865-1983, series 5, box 1, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

Finding Aid prepared by: Ruth Mary Pollack, Spring 1985

Processed: Benjamin Perry, Ruth Tonkiss Cameron, 2013

Reviewed and updated by Brigette C. Kamsler, January 2015 with financial support from the Henry Luce Foundation

**Summary Information**

Creator: Henry Sloane Coffin, 1877-1954

Title: Henry Sloane Coffin Papers, 1865-1983

Inclusive dates: 1865-1983

Bulk dates: 1885-1954

Abstract: Presbyterian minister in New York, notably at Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, 1905-1926; Moderator of Presb. General Assembly, 1943; UTS Professor of Homiletics and Practical Theology and President, 1926-1945; President of Board of Roberts College, Constantinople, Turkey. Contains correspondence, sermons, addresses, personal and professional papers, photographs, and draft biography.

Size: 34 boxes, 3 oversized boxes, 20.75 linear feet

Storage: **Offsite storage**, except 5:1 OS, 8:1 OS and 8:2 OS

Repository: The Burke Library  
Union Theological Seminary

3041 Broadway  
New York, NY 10027

Email: [burkearchives@library.columbia.edu](mailto:burkearchives@library.columbia.edu)

### Administrative Information

- Provenance:** The collection was donated by the family of Henry Sloane Coffin after his death in 1954. Morgan Noyes papers were donated through Austin McElroy [1964?]. In May 2008 Mr. Stuart P. and Mrs. Sue K. Feld donated the charcoal and chalk portrait of Coffin by war artist Samuel J. Woolf. (Series 6 box 24A). One article integrated from Brown Tower S6B1F10.
- Access:** Archival papers are available to registered readers for consultation by appointment only. Please contact archives staff by email to [burkearchives@library.columbia.edu](mailto: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. Certain materials however are in a fragile condition, and this may necessitate restriction in handling and copying. Please note that boxes held in Offsite storage will require 48 hours' notice in response to a weekday request for retrieval.
- Preferred Citation:** Item description, UTS1: Henry Sloane Coffin Papers, 1865-1983, series #, box #, folder #, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

### Biography

Henry Sloane Coffin (HSC), President of Union Theological Seminary (UTS) from 1926 to 1945, was born in New York City January 5, 1877 where his early years were spent. He attended Yale University, awarded Phi Beta Kappa, Class of 1897. After graduation from Yale, HSC spent two years in theological studies at New College in Edinburgh, graduating in 1899. He then graduated from UTS with his Bachelors of Divinity in 1900. While at UTS, he concurrently completed a M.A. from Yale. He was ordained in the Presbyterian Church USA in 1900, began his ministry at the Bedford Park Church in the Bronx, NY and remained there from 1900-1905. Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church called him to their pastorate in 1905 until 1926. When he arrived this congregation was small and struggling. By the time he left in 1926 the congregation numbered 2,000 and was one of the largest in New York City. His active leadership in ecumenical affairs as well as the Presbyterian Church was often given public recognition and appreciation and he appeared on the cover of Time Magazine in 1926.

Coffin started his teaching career at UTS in 1904 as part-time Associate Professor of Homiletics and Practical Theology in addition to his parish commitments. Eventually, he accepted the Presidency of UTS in 1926 and served until his retirement in 1945. Referred to as "Uncle Henry," a popular nickname attached to him by students, he was an active leader in all aspects of seminary life, and in the larger Christian leadership. During his time as president, Coffin was responsible for hiring both Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich. He deftly navigated UTS through the financial woes of the depression era. Coffin was also a strong advocate of US involvement in World War II. With Herbert Hoover he worked to send provisions to England prior to the US declaration of war in 1941. His commitment to education is evidenced by his tenure as the President of the Board of Trustees of Roberts College in Constantinople, Turkey. He was the Fellow of the Corporation for Yale University, and was elected Moderator by the 155th Presbyterian General Assembly in May, 1943, the highest honor bestowed by his denomination.



President Henry Sloane Coffin was often joined by students at lunch. Photograph from a scrapbook in the Union Theological Seminary Records, The Burke Library Archives at Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York.

Coffin was awarded honorary degrees from many institutions: Doctor of Divinity from New York University (1906), Yale (1915), Harvard (1922), Princeton (1925), Glasgow (1926), Union College (1928), Episcopal Theological Seminary (1935); Doctor of Laws from Amherst (1927) and St. Andrews (1934); Doctor of Sacred Theology from Jewish Theological Seminary (1937); Doctor of Literature from College of Ozarks (1931) and Western Reserve (1937); and Doctor of Theology from University of Marburg (1930) and from the Faculté Libre de Théologie Protestante in Paris (1938).

In 1906 he married Dorothy Prentice Eells. They were survived by two children: Ruth Prentice Coffin, born March 12, 1921 and David D. Coffin, born November 26, 1922. Henry Sloane Coffin died November 25, 1954. Dorothy Coffin survived her husband until 1983.

## Books by Henry Sloane Coffin:

The Creed of Jesus, Scribners (1907)  
 Social Aspects of the Cross, Doran (1911)  
 University Sermons, Yale Press (1911)  
 Christian and the Church, (?) 1912  
 Christian Convictions, Yale Press (1915)  
 Ten Commandments, Geo. Doran (1915)  
 In a Day of Social Rebuilding, Yale Press (1918)  
 A More Christian Industrial Order, Macmillan (1920)  
 Portraits of Jesus Christ, Macmillan (1926)  
 What Is There in Religion?, Macmillan (1926)  
 What To Preach, Geo. Doran (1926)  
 The Meaning of the Cross, Scribners (1931)  
 What Men Are Asking, Cokesbury Press (1933)  
 God's Turn: A Collection of Sermons, Harpers (1934)  
 Religion Yesterday and Today, (?) (1940)  
 Co-Editor (name unknown) for Hymns of The Kingdom, (publisher? date?).  
 A Half-Century of Union Theological Seminary, 1896 - 1945, Scribners (1954)

Sources

Handy, RT *A History of Union Theological Seminary in New York*  
 Morgan P. Noyes *Henry Sloane Coffin: The Man and his Ministry*

**Collection Scope and Content Note**

This collection of papers is arranged in 8 series. A large portion of the papers involve correspondence, sermons, addresses and unidentified addresses, prayers and working notes. Also included are two manuscripts: one by Coffin, *A Half-Century of Union Theological Seminary*, the other by his biographer, Morgan P. Noyes, *Henry Sloane Coffin: The Man and His Ministry*.

In this collection are materials involving the Presbyterian church and a large correspondence concerning Robert College in Turkey and Yale University, institutions to which he devoted a great deal of time.

- **Series 1: Correspondence, 1885-1960 (9 boxes, 3.75 lin. ft.)**
  - **Subseries 1A: General Correspondence, 1901-1958 (3 boxes, 1.25 lin. ft.)**  
 Correspondence in this subseries is presented into two sections. The first section contains correspondence between Henry Sloane Coffin and major theological leaders such as Arthur McGiffert and Harry Emerson Fosdick. The correspondence in this section extends across several years, arranged chronologically.

The second section contains the bulk of Coffin's correspondence, which is usually limited to one or two letters per correspondent and is arranged alphabetically.

- **Subseries 1B: Church Related Correspondence (1 box, 0.50 lin. ft.)**

The subseries contains official correspondence from Coffin acting on behalf of Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church, USA

- **Subseries 1C: Correspondence re Educational Institutions and War Issues, 1897-1945 (3 boxes, 1.25 lin. ft.)**

This subseries contains correspondence between Coffin and Yale University, and Robert College. Correspondence with Yale is arranged chronologically. Correspondence with Robert College includes correspondence with Stephen Baker, H.Y. Hussein Bey, Floyd H. Black, Collins P. Bliss, Philip M. Brown, Bayard Dodge, Beirut, Cleveland C. Dodge, Frederick S. Erdman, Edgar J. Fisher, Luther R. Fowle, Dean Russell Gait, Rev. C.F. Gates, Joseph C. Grew, George H. Huntington, Elizabeth Dodge Huntington, Hasim A. Kuyucak, Paul Monroe, Laurence S. Moore, Wallace Murray, Stephen B.L. Penrose, George W. Perkins, Bayard Schieffelin, Harold P. Scott, Frank P. Shepard, Charles H. Sherrill, Robert P. Skinner, A.W. Staub, Henry L. Stimson, and Walter L. Wright, Jr.

This correspondence is arranged alphabetically. This subseries also contains the correspondence regarding war issues.

- **Subseries 1D Family Correspondence, 1885-1953 (2 boxes, 0.75 lin. ft.)**

The family correspondence is mainly between Henry Sloane Coffin and his mother, and wife, Dorothy. The correspondence is arranged chronologically.

- **Series 2: Sermons, Addresses, Lecture Notes 1903-1962 (13 boxes, 6.50 lin. ft.)**

This series contains sermons, addresses, speeches, and lectures delivered by Henry Sloane Coffin. The series is divided into two sections. The first section contains sermons delivered by Coffin, mainly at Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church and Union Theological Seminary. The sermons are arranged chronologically.

The second section contains speeches, lecture notes, and articles by Coffin, also arranged chronologically. This section also contains several issues of the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church weekly publication.

- **Series 3: Personal and Professional Papers, 1901-1950 (5 boxes, 2.25 lin. ft.)**

This series contains papers related to the professional and personal life of Henry Sloane Coffin. The professional papers relate to Coffin's tenure as President of Union Theological Seminary, and position as Pastor of Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church. The researcher will find here documents relating to Coffin's inauguration as President, newspaper clippings about Coffin and some of his personal and financial information including financial correspondence.

- **Series 4: Half Century of UTS, 1953 (1 box, 0.25 lin. ft.)**

This series contains a draft of [Henry Sloane Coffin's book, \*A Half Century of UTS\*](#).

- **Series 5: Photos, 1883-1944 (1 box, 1.00 lin. ft.)**

The photographs in this series are organized into categories.

The first category is portraits of Coffin. The second contains group shots which include Coffin. The third and fourth sections contain portraits and group shots of others. Finally, there are photographs from Coffin's botanical hobby. Within each category photos are organized chronologically.

- **Series 6: General, [1877?]-1945 (1 box, 0.50 lin. ft.)**

Articles written about Coffin are to be found in this series. Also included are his family Bible, birth information, and honorary degree certificate. The contents of this series are arranged chronologically.

- **Series 7: Noyes Book Draft: Henry Sloan Coffin, [195?]-1963 (4 boxes, 2.00 lin. ft.)**

This series contains several iterations of Morgan Noyes' biography of Coffin, *The Man and His Ministry*. These are in the form of a manuscript, early draft, final draft, and galley proof of the book. In addition, Noyes' working notes and correspondence regarding the book are included.

- **Series 8: Oversized Material, 1932-[1945] (3 boxes, 4.50 lin. ft.)**

These are items which were transferred from their original locations because of size or fragility. Their original place in the collection is indicated in the contents list.

### Processing

Metal clips and staples were removed from materials and folded items were flattened. Materials were placed in new acid-free folders and boxes. Acidic items were separated from one another by interleaving with acid-free paper. In 2013, the collection was fully processed, organized and described by Benjamin Perry and Ruth Tonkiss Cameron. The collection was reviewed and updated in 2015 by Brigette C. Kamsler as part of the grant project funded by the Henry Luce Foundation.

### Further Sources

Many of the collections in the Missionary Research Library (MRL) pertain to issues and geographic locations related to those Coffin was interested. For a full listing of available collections in MRL and the associated finding aids, please see the [MRL Archives website](#). For other topics of interest, see the general [Burke Library Archives website](#).

The collection [MRL2: Near East College Association Records, 1928-1943](#) contains information on Robert College. The Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Columbia University house the official records for Robert College and the American College for Girls at Istanbul. Please see the online finding aids for availability and more information:

Robert College: [http://findingaids.cul.columbia.edu/ead/nnc-rb/ldpd\\_6607719](http://findingaids.cul.columbia.edu/ead/nnc-rb/ldpd_6607719)

American College for Girls: [http://findingaids.cul.columbia.edu/ead/nnc-rb/ldpd\\_6799283](http://findingaids.cul.columbia.edu/ead/nnc-rb/ldpd_6799283)

## Contents list

### Series 1: Correspondence, 1885-1960

#### Subseries 1A: General Correspondence, 1901-1958

Series	Box	Folder	Contents
<b>Main Correspondents</b>			
1A	1	1	Marcus Dods, 1901-1908
1A	1	2	Harry Emerson Fosdick, 1924-1954. Includes Sermon- Shall the Fundamentalists Win?, 1922
1A	1	3-4	William M. Kingsley, 1923-1942
1A	1	5	Bishop W.T. Manning, 1925-1930
1A	1	6	Bishop W.T. Manning Incident, Newspaper Clippings, 1929
1A	1	7	A.C. McGiffert, Jr., 1915-1933
1A	1	8-10	Morgan P. Noyes, 1916-1953
1A	1	11	Morgan P. Noyes from James M. Howard, 1957-1958
1A	1	12	George Stewart, [1919]-1945
1A	1	13	Henry L. Stimson, 1928, 1940
1A	1	14	Testimonial Dinner for HSC, 1936
1A	1	15-16	Correspondence on Christian Century Article, 1934
1A	1	17	Correspondence on American Committee on Lectures in History of Religion, 1915-23, 1931
<b>A-Z Correspondents</b>			
1A	2	1	A, 1905-1954
1A	2	2	B, 1898-1954
1A	2	3	C, 1911-1954
1A	2	4	D, 1907-1954
1A	2	5	E, 1914-1954
1A	2	6	F, 1910-1954
1A	2	7	G, 1897-1954
1A	2	8	H, 1897-1954
1A	2	9	I-J, 1911-1954
1A	2	10	K-L, 1899-1954
1A	2	11	M, 1914-1954
1A	2	12	N, 1925-1955
1A	2	13	O-P, 1910-1954
1A	2	14	R, 1918-1955
1A	3	1	S, 1896-1955
1A	3	2	T, 1915-1954
1A	3	3	U-V, 1909-1954
1A	3	4	W, 1897-1960
1A	3	5	X-Z, 1946
1A	3	6	Dorothy Coffin Correspondence, 1948-1949
1A	3	7	Unidentified, 1910-1955



**Series 1: Correspondence (Cont'd)****Subseries 1B: Church Related Correspondence, [1893?]-1950**

Series	Box	Folder	Contents
1B	1	1	Re: Virgin Birth and Presbyterian material, 1926-28
1B	1	2	Presbytery of New York: Documents, Reports, and Correspondence, [1893-1945]
1B	1	3	Development of Madison Ave. Church, 1901-1950
1B	1	4	HSC election as Moderator of Presbyterian General Assembly, 1943
1B	1	5	Church Union Negotiations of Presbyterian Church, USA, and Protestant Episcopal Church, 1937-1942
1B	1	6-9	Church Union, 1928-1950

**Subseries 1C: Correspondence- Educational Institutions and War Issues, 1897-1945**

1C	1	1	UTS Board of Directors, 1921-1942
1C	1	2	Hua Chung College, 1944
1C	1	3-4	Yale University, 1897-1954
1C	1	5	Yale-in-China Association, 1944 -1945
1C	1	6-9	War Issues, 1940-1943

**Robert College**

1C	2	1	Office of Registrar, Nov. 1932 - Feb. 1933 Registrar Charts [Oversized Relocated to Series 8 OS Box 1 Folder 1]
1C	2	2	Report by H. A. Smith, Feb. 1, 1932
1C	2	3	Balkan Conference and Founders Day, 1931, 1953
1C	2	4	Board of Trustees, 1931-1943
1C	2	5-11	Correspondence B - S, 1927-1945
1C	2	12	General Correspondence, 1929-1945
1C	3	1-3	President Walter L. Wright Jr., Pres. 1935-1944

**Subseries 1D: Family Correspondence, 1885-1953**

1D	1	1-8	HSC to Mother, July 28, 1893-June 15, 1899
1D	1	9-15	HSC to Wife, 1910-1921
1D	2	1-5	HSC to Wife, 1922-1953
1D	2	6	Family, 1885-1944
1D	2	7	Announcement - Death of Dorothy P. Coffin, 1983

**Series 2: Sermons, Addresses, Lecture Notes, 1903-1962**

Series	Box	Folder	Contents
			<b>Sermons</b>
2	1	1-7	Feb. 22, 1903 - June 2, 1918

**Series 2: Sermons, Addresses, Lecture Notes (Cont'd)**

Series	Box	Folder	Contents
			<b>Sermons (cont'd)</b>
2	2	1-9	Oct. 20, 1918-Dec. 31, 1922
2	3	1-7	Jan. 7, 1923-May 23, 1926
2	4	1-8	Oct. 10, 1926-Nov. 19, 1933
2	5	1-10	Feb. 4, 1934-Oct. 17, 1943
2	6	1-2	Mar 5-Nov 14, 1944-1946
2	6	3-4	1949-1953
2	6	5-8	[19??]
2	7	1-8	[19??]
2	7	9	List of Sermons on File in HSC's Office
2	8	1-9	Short Speeches [19??]
2	9	1-2	Short Speeches [19??]
2	9	3-8	Lecture Notes [19??]
2	10	1-2	Lecture Notes [19??]
2	10	3-7	Articles by HSC, 1910-1955
2	10	8	Short Articles by HSC, 1940-1945
2	10	9	Lectures by HSC, [19??]
2	11	1	Radio Speeches and Sermons, 1937-1945
2	11	2-4	Addresses by HSC, [1920?]-1949
2	11	5	Books Reviews by/about HSC, 1941-1950
2	11	6	Communion through Preaching - Reviews, 1953
2	11	7	Joy In Believing - Reviews, 1956-1962
2	11	8	Lecture Notes, 1946
2	11	9-12	Prayers, 1908-1952
2	11	13-14	Prayers [19??]
2	12	1-5	Prayers [19??]
2	12	6-8	<i>The Weekly</i> , Madison Ave Presbyterian Church, New York, 1915-1919
2	13	1-7	<i>The Weekly</i> , 1920-1933

**Series 3: Personal and Professional Papers, 1901-1954**

Series	Box	Folder	Contents
3	1	1	Union Theological Seminary 100th Anniversary Pamphlet, 1936

**Series 3: Personal and Professional Papers (Cont'd)**

Series	Box	Folder	Contents
3	1	2	Biographical Information HSC, 1951
3	1	3	Retirement Tribute to HSC, May 15, 1945
3	1	4	Retirement, 1945
3	1	5	In Memoriam - Correspondence, Photos, Clippings, 1954
3	1	6	Church Programs [1943?-1952?]
3	1	7	Newark Evening News Article by/about HSC 1920-1950
3	1	8-9	Newspaper Clippings, 1901-1918
3	2	1-4	Newspaper Clippings, 1901-1950 [Relocated to Series 8 Box 1 Folder 2] <i>The Citizen</i> Article on HSC LL.D.
3	2	5	Pencil notes by HSC, 1932
3	2	6	Church of Scotland, 1929, 1950
3	2	7-11	UTS Presidential Inauguration, 1926
3	3	1-3	HSC Inauguration - Correspondence, 1926
3	4	1-5	Personal Financial Papers, 1936-1944
3	5	1	Records of Marriages Performed, [1900-1940]
3	5	2-3	Correspondence re: Potential Marriages/Divorces, [1900-1940]
3	5	4-8	Personal Correspondence, 1904-1945
3	5	9-10	Personal Financial Correspondence, 1930s-1940s
3	5	11	Bank Books in Trust for Children, Old Bank Books
3	5	12	Travel: Itineraries; Trip Details [191?]

**Series 4: Half Century of UTS, 1953**

4	1	1-4	Draft, Half-Century of UTS, 1953
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**Series 5: Photographs, 1883-1944**

5	1	1-6	HSC Portraits, 1897-1944
5	1	7-24	HSC Group Pictures, 1929-[1950]
5	1	25-30	Portraits of Others [188?-189?]
5	1	31-32	Group Shots of Others, 1899; 1934
5	1	33-37	Printed Portraits, 1924-1954
5	1	38-40	Photographs of Churches [1889?]
5	1	41-44	Botanical Hobby Photographs by HSC

**Series 6: General, 1865-1945**

6	1	1	<b>[FRAGILE]</b> HSC Family Bible, 1865
6	1	2	HSC Biographical - Birth Information--notebook, 1877
6	1	3	<i>Liber Massorum Sanctitorum</i> annotated with Details of Mass [19??]

**Series 6: General (Cont'd)**

Series	Box	Folder	Contents
6	1	4	Notes on Sermons of Dr. H.S.Coffin, by Miss Florence Allen, 1905-1907
6	1	5	HSC Accepts the Call, New York Observer, May 11, 1905
6	1	6	Reformed Church Messenger, Feb. 27, 1930
6	1	7	Christian Century, 1930 [Relocated to Series 8 Box 1 Folder 3] Jewish Exponent Article-This Age of Wistfulness, by HSC
6	1	8	HSC New York Observer and Jewish Exponent Articles, 1908-1940
6	1	9	HSC Honorary Degree Certificates, 1931; 1937
6	1	10	Needed: A Spiritual Basis for Democracy, NY Times Article about HSC, By S.J. Woolf, May 27, 1945

**Series 7: Noyes Book Draft: Henry Sloane Coffin, [195?]-1963**

7	1	1	Morgan P. Noyes Final Draft - Foreword, Chapter 1 [195?]-1963
7	1	2-11	Morgan P. Noyes Early Draft - Ch. 2-Ch. 20 and Notes [195?]-1963
7	2	1-15	Morgan P. Noyes Manuscript - Ch. 1-Ch15 [195?]-1963
7	3	1-4	Morgan P. Noyes Manuscript Ch. 16-19 [195?]-1963
7	3	5	Morgan P. Noyes Manuscript - Ch. 20, Notes [195?]-1963
7	3	6	Outline Notes [195?]-1963
7	3	7	Biographical Notes [195?]-1963
7	3	8	Notes - Bedford Park [195?]-1963
7	3	9	Working Notes [195?]-1963
7	3	10	Index [195?]-1963
7	3	11-12	Correspondence re Biography, 1956-1963
7	4	1	Final Draft - Foreword, Ch. 6 [1962]
7	4	2-8	Final Draft - Ch. 7-20 [1962]
7	4	9	Final Draft Appendix [1962]
7	4	10	Final Draft Working Notes [196?]
7	5	1	Henry Sloane Coffin-Man and His Ministry -- Galley Proof

**Series 8: Oversized Material, 1932-[1945]**

8	1	1	Robert College Registrar Documents, 1932
8	1	2	Citizen Article on St. Andrews Graduation HSC awarded LL.D., 1934
8	1	3	Jewish Exponent-This Age of Wistfulness by HSC. 1937
8	2	1	Honorary Doctorate from French Theologians, Paris, 1938
8	2	2	Honorary Doctorate of Sacred Theology, 1940
8	3	1	<b>[FRAGILE]</b> Portrait by Samuel J. Woolf-Charcoal/White Chalk [1945]