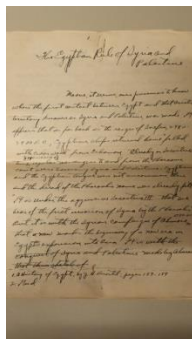


**The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary,  
Columbia University in the City of New York**

**Union Theological Seminary Archives 1**

**Finding Aid for**

**Herman E. Wornom Papers, 1923 – 1939**



Detail of Seminar Paper taken with Reinhold Niebuhr. UTS1: Herman E. Wornom Papers, 1923-1939, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 2. The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York

Finding Aid prepared by: Kevin Windhauser and Rebecca Nieto, January 2018  
With financial support from the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation

**Summary Information**

**Creator:** Herman E. Wornom, 1902 – 1992  
**Title:** Herman E. Wornom Papers, 1923-1939  
**Inclusive dates:** 1923 – 1939  
**Bulk dates:** 1935 – 1938  
**Abstract:** UTS and Columbia University Alumnus (1923-4 and again 1935); religious educator and professor, author, and General Secretary of the Religious Education Association, 1952-1970. Collection contains textual material related to university study, including transcripts, syllabi, reading lists, class notes, assignments, and term papers. Also included are small amounts of additional material related to the Toward a Better World Society  
**Size:** 3 boxes, 1.25 linear feet  
**Storage:** Onsite storage  
**Repository:** The Burke Library  
Union Theological Seminary  
3041 Broadway  
New York, NY 10027  
Email: [burkespecial@library.columbia.edu](mailto:burkespecial@library.columbia.edu)

## Administrative Information

- Provenance:** The Herman E. Wornom Papers were among a large group of unprocessed materials that were organized in 2018 with the support of the Henry Luce Foundation and the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation.
- Access:** Archival papers are available to registered readers for consultation by appointment only. Please contact archives staff by email at [burkespecial@library.columbia.edu](mailto:burkespecial@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.
- Preferred Citation:** Item description, UTS 1: Herman E. Wornom Papers, 1923-1939, series #, box #, and folder #, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

## Biography

Herman E. Wornom was born on June 30, 1902, in Dare, Virginia. He earned a Bachelor's degree from Randolph-Macon College in 1923, and an M.A. degree from Columbia University in 1924. During this time at Columbia, Wornom first met, and studied under, George Albert Coe, a major figure in early twentieth-century religious education and one of the founders of the Religious Education Association (REA), which Wornom would later lead. Following graduation from Columbia, Wornom became Minister of Education at three churches: Worcester Central Church in Massachusetts, the Congregational Church in Glen Ridge, New Jersey, and the Chevy Chase Presbyterian Church outside of Washington, D.C.

In the late 1930s, Wornom returned to New York City to pursue further graduate study at Union Theological Seminary and Teachers College, Columbia University. While there, Wornom studied under some of Union's best-known faculty, including Paul Tillich and E.W. Lyman, and forged further relationships with people who would become important figures in the REA, including his mentor, friend, and predecessor as REA General Secretary, Harrison Elliot (whose [papers](#) are also held at Burke). Wornom was ordained in 1940. In the years between his arrival at Union and his appointment as General Secretary of the REA in 1952, Wornom served as a religious educator in a variety of positions throughout the United States: at Union Theological Seminary as an assistant director of field work, at Springfield College in Massachusetts as supervisor of field work, and finally as assistant professor of religious education and director of field work at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California.

After the sudden passing of Harrison Elliot, Wornom succeeded his friend as General Secretary of the REA in 1952. Wornom's tenure as General Secretary is generally seen as transformative for the organization, described variously as "a new era"<sup>1</sup> and an "astounding...record of accomplishments".<sup>2</sup> During his early tenure, Wornom oversaw several major developments in the REA, most notably the movement of the organization's headquarters from Chicago to New York City and the expansion of the REA from a traditionally-Protestant organization to one that Wornom himself called "truly multifaith in membership", including Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish members.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout the 1950s and 60s, Wornom prioritized development and expansion of the REA, focusing on securing increased financial resources for the organization and establishing conferences and roundtable events throughout the United States—conferences that eventually surpassed 1,500 attendees. Supported by a series of grants from the Lilly Foundation, Wornom launched a massive program for promoting research into religious and character education. The program, which included a panel of researchers tasked with surveying previous work and developing new avenues of inquiry, a 12-day workshop at Cornell University, and the creation of the REA's own dedicated research division, culminated in the 1971 publication of the pioneering handbook *Research on Religious Development*.

After retiring from the REA in 1970, Wornom remained active in religious education endeavors. He served as visiting professor at Andover Newton Theological School in Newton, Massachusetts, and worked in Mexico, Iran, and India, including working as a visiting professor at Sri Venkateswari University. Herman E. Wornom passed away on May 7, 1992, preceded in death by his wife, Mary Virginia. The papers collected here provide a glimpse into Wornom's formative educational experiences, and hint at the capable and tenacious organizer, leader, and developer he would soon become.

### **Collection Scope and Content Note**

This collection consists primarily of documents related to Wornom's education at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University, and Teacher's College. Included are syllabi and reading lists from courses in which Wornom enrolled, as well as lecture notes, assigned readings, essays, and term papers. These documents are drawn from both Wornom's M.A. Coursework, taken in 1923 and 1924, and his later graduate work, from 1935-39, during which

---

<sup>1</sup> "Finding Aid", Yale Divinity Library, Religious Education Association Papers. New Haven, CT. <http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/divinity.074>

<sup>2</sup> Kathan, Boardman W. "Wornom, Herman E, 1902-1992." *Religious Education* 87, no. 4 (September 1992): 491-495

<sup>3</sup> Wornom, Herman E. "Funds for Expansion of REA's Staff and Services." *Religious Education* 59, no. 2 (Mar 01, 1964): 122.

time Wornom studied under major Union figures such as Reinhold Niebuhr, Paul Tillich and E.W. Lyman. The collection also includes a letter from Wornom to E.W. Lyman, and handwritten notes taken by Wornom at meetings of a group known as the Toward a Better World Society.

The collection is organized in one series, further divided into three subheadings:

- **Series 1: UTS/Columbia Coursework, 1923-1939 (3 boxes, 1.25 lin. ft.)**

This series contains approximately 2.5 boxes of course material, including handwritten and typed term papers, course assignments, class notes, reading lists, syllabi, and assigned readings. Additionally, this series contains notes and documents from off-campus activities. The series has been further divided under three subheadings: UTS Coursework, 1934-9; Columbia Coursework, 1923-38; and, General Coursework and Off-Campus Activities, 1923-3?. UTS Coursework 1934-9 contains documents from courses at Union Theological Seminary, arranged chronologically by course start date. Columbia Coursework, 1923-38 contains documents from courses at Columbia University, arranged chronologically by course start date. General Coursework and Off-Campus Activities, 1923-3? contains both dated and undated documents from courses at Columbia University and UTS, as well as documents related to activities of the Toward a Better World Society.

## **Processing**

Metal clips and staples were removed from materials and folded items were flattened. Materials were placed in new acid-free folders and boxes. Files wrapped in brown paper were transferred to folders.

## **Further Sources**

Much of Wornom's correspondence and records from 1952-70, the years in which he served as General Secretary of the Religious Education Association, are held by Yale University as part of the Religious Education Association Records collection, located in the Yale Divinity Library, call number RG 74. The Finding Aid for the YDS collection may be found [here](#).

## **Contents list**

**Series 1: UTS/Columbia Coursework, 1923-1939**

Series	Box	Folder	Contents
<b>UTS 1934-9</b>			
1	1	1	Practical Theology 42- Fosdick, 1934
1	1	2-8	Christian Ethics II- Niebuhr, 1935-6
1	1	9-11	Philosophy of Religion 11-12- Lyman, 1935-6
1	2	1	Philosophy of Religion 11-12- Lyman, 1935-6
1	2	2	Philosophy of Religion 19-20- Niebuhr, 1936-7
1	2	3	Christian Ethics 43- Ward, 1936-7
1	2	4	New Testament I- Geoff, 1936-7
1	2	5	Religious Education 343F- Elliot, 1936-7
1	2	6	Religious Education 63- Elliot, 1936-7
1	2	7-8	Advanced Problems in Systematic Theology- Tillich, 1938-9
<b>Columbia 1923-39</b>			
1	2	9	History S113, 1923
1	2	10	Education S422, 1923
1	3	1	Philosophy 135- Montague, 1934-5
1	3	2	Sociology 162, 1937
1	3	3	Philosophy 161, 1938-9
<b>General 1923-3?</b>			
1	3	4	General Notes and Documents from classes at Union, Columbia, and Teacher's College, 1935-7
1	3	5	Toward a Better World Society, General Documents, 1923