

# Guide to the George Albert Coe Papers

RG 36



compiled by Martha Lund Smalley

1977

409 Prospect Street  
New Haven, CT 06511  
(203) 432-5301

[divinity.library@yale.edu](mailto:divinity.library@yale.edu)

<http://web.library.yale.edu/divinity/special-collections>

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Yale Divinity Library  
409 Prospect Street  
New Haven, CT 06511  
(203) 432-5301  
divinity.library@yale.edu  
<http://web.library.yale.edu/divinity/special-collections>

**CALL NUMBER:** RG 36

**CREATOR:** Coe, George Albert, 1862-1951

**TITLE:** George Albert Coe papers

**DATES:** 1883-1952

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 4 linear feet (7 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** Correspondence with personal friends reveals Coe's personality and character, while correspondence with professional colleagues gives insight into the development of Coe's thought. Notable correspondents include William Clayton Bower, Emil Brunner, Adelaide Case, Harrison Elliott, and A. J. W. Myers. Writings include articles, essays, and drafts. Printed material includes reviews of Coe's books and committee reports and minutes. George Albert Coe was born in Mendon, New York on March 26, 1862. He received degrees from the University of Rochester and Boston University. He was a prominent author and professor in the fields of psychology of religion, philosophy, and religious education at the University of Southern California, University of Berlin, Northwestern University, Yale University, Union Theological Seminary, and Columbia University. Coe was chairman of the Committee on Militarism in Education and Honorary President of the Religious Education Association. Coe died on November 9, 1951.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/divinity.036>

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## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use on site, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/divinity.036>.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b.      box  
f.      folder

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of George Albert Coe

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### Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

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### Preferred Citation

George Albert Coe Papers (RG 36), Special Collections, Yale Divinity School Library.

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## Biographical / Historical

Date	Event
1862 Mar 26	○ Born in Mendon, N.Y., son of a clergyman
1884	○ B.A., University of Rochester
1887	○ S.T.B., Boston University
1888	○ M.A., University of Rochester
1888 Sep 3	○ Married Sadie E. Knowland; she later became a professor at the Northwestern University School of Music and died in 1905.
1888-1890	○ Professor of Philosophy, University of Southern California
1890-1891	○ At University of Berlin as Jacob Sleeper Fellow of Boston University
1891	○ Ph.D., Boston University
1891-1909	○ Professor of Philosophy, Northwestern University
1909	○ LL.D., University of Rochester
1909-1910	○ Instructor in Religious Education, Yale
1909-1922	○ Professor of Religious Education and Psychology of Religion at Union Theological Seminary; organized and supervised the Union School of Religion, an experimental and demonstration Sunday School.
1922-1927	○ Professor of Education, Teachers College, Columbia University
1951 Nov 9	○ Died (Biographical Material, Box 7, Folder 58)

George Albert Coe has been called one of the three foremost pioneers in the field of psychology of religion along with William James and Edwin D. Starbuck. Coe served for many years as chairman of the Committee on Militarism in Education and was Honorary President of the Religious Education Association. He was a prolific writer throughout his life, producing noteworthy articles through his eighth decade. In one of the many tributes which appeared after Coe's death, Stewart G. Cole wrote: "He enlisted his germinal mind and his social passion in rethinking religion in terms of the needs of man's experience, the growth of human

personality and the social issues affecting the well-being of every individual." (Cole, Stewart G., "A Tribute", Religious Education, March-April, 1952, p. 88.)

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## Scope and Contents

The first series, Correspondence is divided into three sections:

- a) General
- b) Letters of sympathy received at the time of the death of Mrs. Coe.
- c) Letters received at the time of Coe's retirement in 1927

The General section includes correspondence with Coe's professional colleagues and personal friends. Correspondence with friends sheds light on Coe's personality and character. Substantive letters to and from colleagues give insight into the development of Coe's thought throughout his long career, a development which led Coe to write at age eighty-two: "I have reexamined my own position with the result of becoming to a significant extent a dissenter from some of my own published writings." (Preface of Coe's book, *What is Religion Doing to Our Consciences?*) Notable correspondents include: William Clayton Bower, Emil Brunner, Adelaide Case, Harrison Elliott, Harry Emerson Fosdick, Hugh Hartshorne and A. J. W. Myers. Correspondence from the period before 1915 is included in the scrapbooks maintained by Coe to document the reception of his published works.

The second series, Writings, dates from 1883 to 1951. The writings are primarily articles and essays in printed or reprint form with a few typescript drafts. Manuscripts of Coe's major works are not represented in this series.

- a) Reviews of Coe's books (1924-1943). Reviews of earlier publications are included in the four scrapbooks which follow Series IV.
- b) Reports and minutes of the Committee on Militarism in Education of which Coe was chairman for many years (1936-1940).
- c) Miscellaneous (1924-1947, n.d.): Includes material from the Military Intelligence Association, Inc., which disapproved of Coe's pacifist stance and of the activities of the Committee on Militarism in Education.

The fourth series, Personal Items and Memorabilia, includes three folders. The first contains biographical material regarding Coe, including bibliographies of his published works. The second folder contains photographs of Coe and ones taken by him. The third folder contains material regarding Coe's wife, Sadie Knowland Coe, including photographs, newspaper clippings regarding her death, and music composed by her.

The four bound volumes date from 1900 to 1920. They contain reviews and correspondence regarding Coe's published works.

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## Arrangement

- I. Correspondence, 1915-1950, n.d.
- II. Writings, 1893-1951
- III. Printed Material, 1924-1947, n.d.
- IV. Personal Items and Memorabilia, 1905-1952, n.d.

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## Collection Contents

### Series I: Correspondence, 1915-1950, n.d.

General Correspondence: The letters are arranged chronologically. One folder of letters regarding Coe's resignation from Union Theological Seminary follows the material which is chronologically arranged. This folder is to be used only with the permission of the Head Librarian.

Letters of Sympathy: arranged alphabetically by author.

Letters received at the time of Coe's retirement: These letters are in a bound volume, left in their original order.

General Correspondence		
b. 1, f. 1-10	Correspondence	1915-1937
b. 2, f. 11-20	Correspondence	1938-1950, n.d.
b. 3, f. 21	Correspondence with Union Seminary	1919-1922
Letters of Sympathy		
b. 3, f. 22	A-C	1905, 1906
b. 3, f. 23	D-L	1905
b. 3, f. 24	M-Y	1905
b. 3, f. 25	Telegrams and Calling Cards	1905
Letters re: GAC's retirement		
b. 3, f. 26	Correspondence	1927

**Series II: Writings, 1893-1951**

The writings are arranged chronologically.

b. 4, f. 27-36	Writings	1883-1914
b. 5, f. 37-45	Writings	1915-1935
b. 6, f. 46-53	Writings	1936-1951, n.d.

**Series III: Printed material, 1924-1947, n.d.**

The material is arranged in three sections:

- a) Reviews of Coe's books, listed alphabetically by title.
- b) Reports, minutes of the Committee on Militarism in Education
- c) Miscellaneous

b. 6, f. 54	Reviews: "Educating for Citizenship"	1932-1933
b. 6, f. 54	"Law and Freedom in the School"	1924
b. 6, f. 54	"Motives of Men"	1928-1929
b. 6, f. 54	"What Ails our Youth?"	1924-1925
b. 6, f. 55	Reviews: 'What is Christian Education?'	1929-1930
b. 6, f. 55	"What is Religion Doing to Our Consciences"	1943
b. 7, f. 56	Reports, minutes of Committee on Militarism in Education	1936-1940
b. 7, f. 57	Miscellaneous	1924-1947,n.d.

**Series IV: Personal items and memorabilia, 1905-1952, n.d**

b. 7, f. 58	Biographical material re: Coe	1950-1952,n.d
b. 7, f. 59	Biographical material re: Coe's wife, Sadie Knowland Coe	1905,1906,n.d.
b. 7, f. 60	Photographs - portraits of Coe	ca. 1870-1950, n.d.
b. 7, f. 61	Photographs - scenes from trips and vacations, craft items made by GAC	ca. 1927-1950, n.d.
b. 7, f. 62	<p>Scrapbook / log of river trips on Coe's boat "School's Out"</p> <p>Photographs and journal entries describe Coe's boat journeys, including in the Thousand Lakes area of New York. The notebook also contains Coe's War Zone Pass issued by U.S. Customs, captioned "A Souvenir of the Great War."</p> <p>This scrapbook was found in the library of Pilgrim Place, the retirement center in California where Coe lived, and transferred to the Coe Papers in 2022.</p>	1916-1918

## **Oversize material, 1900-1920**

b. OV1–OV4

Four scrapbooks

1900-1920

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## **Selected Search Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### **Subjects**

Educators  
Psychology, Religious  
Religious education

### **Occupations**

Authors

### **Names**

Bower, William Clayton, 1878-  
Brunner, Emil, 1889-1966  
Case, Adelaide Teague, 1887-1948  
Coe, George Albert, 1862-1951  
Elliott, Harrison S. (Harrison Sacket), 1882-1951  
Fosdick, Harry Emerson, 1878-1969  
Hartshorne, Hugh, 1885-1967  
Myers, A. J. William (Alexander John William),  
1877-

### **Corporate Body**

Religious Education Association