



# ArchivesSpace

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## Robert Wood Lynn papersin00034194205

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This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on April 09, 2026.  
Description is written in: English.

Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary

3041 Broadway

New York, NY 10027

Telephone: (212) 851-5606

[burke@library.columbia.edu](mailto:burke@library.columbia.edu)

URL: <https://library.columbia.edu/locations/burke.html>

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository:</b>	Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary
<b>Creator:</b>	Lynn, Robert W.
<b>Title:</b>	Robert Wood Lynn papers
<b>ID:</b>	in00034194205
<b>Date [inclusive]:</b>	circa 1942 -- 2018
<b>Physical Description:</b>	3.5 linear feet 3.5 linear feet; 7 boxes
<b>Language of the Material:</b>	English
<b>Abstract:</b>	This collection contains personal and professional materials of Robert Wood Lynn, UTS graduate and professor and Dean of Auburn Theological Seminary, including coursework and Lynn's UTS dissertation; photographs; degrees, honors, and awards; correspondence; recognitions and tributes; biographical material; speeches, presentations, and notes; published and unpublished writings, including writings and studies on faith and giving and material related to the Auburn History Project; as well as material related to Lynn's tenure at Union Theological Seminary.

### Preferred Citation

Item description, UTS1: Robert Wood Lynn papers, circa 1942-2018, box #, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

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## Biographical / Historical

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Robert Wood Lynn was born on April 3, 1925 in Wheatland, Wyoming. Lynn graduated from Princeton University (B.A., 1948), Yale Divinity School (B.D., 1952), and Union Theological Seminary in New York City (Th.D., 1959). After graduation from Yale and ordination, he accepted a call to serve as assistant minister for adult education at Montview Boulevard Presbyterian Church in Denver; this experience increased his sense of the importance and possibilities of Christian education, and Lynn subsequently entered a doctoral program at

Union, where he studied for two years with Paul Ramsey, H. Richard Niebuhr, Lewis Sherrill, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Paul Tillich, before returning for another three years of teaching in the Denver congregation. In 1959, Lynn was appointed to the faculty of Union, where he pioneered in the historical study of Christian education. One year later he was named Dean of Auburn Theological Seminary, a Presbyterian institution located at Union. During his tenure at Union and Auburn, Lynn's influences included C. Ellis Nelson, Robert T. Handy, Lawrence Cremin, and colleagues at Columbia Teacher's College and Jewish Theological Seminary. Lynn declined the offer of the presidency of Union in 1963, and then from 1975-1989 was a foundation officer and Vice President for Religion at the Lilly Endowment, a private family foundation in Indianapolis that funds research and support for American religious institutions, where he developed grants programs addressed to understanding and renewing theological education, congregational life, and other areas of American religion, with steady concern for how such institutions might serve the common good. Convinced that American religion's expansion far beyond the mainstream Protestant churches had implications for all religious groups and for the shape of American life as a whole, Lynn persuaded Lilly to include Catholic, Jewish, African American, and Evangelical scholars, leaders, and institutions in the Endowment's work. Lynn also focused on theological education, including the changing role of seminaries in religious life and education. Lynn retired from Lilly at 64 and moved to New England. He later served for ten years as a member of the Corporation of Yale University, where he led the search for Yale's president, Richard C. Levin, in 1993, and also served as a trustee, lecturer, or consultant at various theological schools. In addition, Lynn helped establish the Lake Family Institute on Faith and Giving at the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University/Purdue University Indianapolis. Robert Wood Lynn died on October 7, 2018, at the age of 93, survived by his wife of 66 years Katherine Wuerth Lynn, two of their children, eight grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren. Lynn's writings include "Protestant Strategies in Education" (1964), "Big Little School: 200 Years of the Sunday School" (with Elliot Wright, 1971, 1980), "Amazing Pressure: The Hidden History of Stewardship in American Protestantism" With D. Susan Wisely (2012) and numerous articles in various publications.

[biography adapted from <https://www.biola.edu/talbot/ce20/database/robert-wood-lynn>]

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## Scope and Contents

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This collection contains personal material including coursework and Lynn's UTS dissertation; letters of recommendation; photographs; degrees, honors, and awards; personal notes and correspondence; retirement recognitions; tributes, including funeral materials; programs and leaflets for events; and biographical material. This collection also contains speeches, presentations, and notes; published and unpublished writings, including writings and studies on faith and giving and material related to the Auburn History Project; as well as material related to Lynn's tenure at Union Theological Seminary. Also included are organizational notes from Barbara Wheeler.

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## Arrangement

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This collection is arranged in four series: Series 1: Personal; Series 2: Speeches and presentations; Series 3: Writings; and Series 4: Union Theological Seminary.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

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### Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

Onsite storage.

### Immediate Source of Acquisition

This collection was donated by Katharine W. Lynn and transferred by Barbara Wheeler in 2019, accession UTS-2020-002.

### Custodial History

This collection was organized before donation by Barbara Wheeler. Her organizational notes and explanations appear throughout the collection.

### Processing Information

Materials were minimally processed: sensitive and duplicative material was weeded, and materials were housed in acid-free boxes and folders. Original order, including

organizational notes from Barbara Wheeler, was maintained where possible. The finding aid, including a folder-level inventory and series-level descriptions, was created by Leah Edelman in 2026.

## Conditions Governing Use

Some material in this collection may be protected by copyright and other rights. Information concerning copyright, fair use, and reproduction requests can be consulted at Columbia's Copyright Advisory Office.

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## Controlled Access Headings

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- United States -- Religious life and customs
- Christian education
- Lynn, Robert W. -- : Archives
- Union Theological Seminary (New York, N.Y.)
- Auburn Theological Seminary (New York, N.Y.)

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## Burke Library record group:

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Union Theological Seminary Archives: UTS 1, papers of faculty and students

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## Collection Inventory

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### Series 1: Personal , circa 1942 -- 2018

Physical Description: 1 linear feet 1 linear foot, 2 boxes

Conditions Governing Access:

#### Conditions Governing Access

This series is open for research.

#### Arrangement

This series is roughly arranged by broad topic and format groupings.

**Scope and Contents**

This series contains coursework, including Lynn's UTS dissertation; letters of recommendation; photographs; degrees, honors, and awards; personal notes and correspondence; retirement recognitions; tributes, including funeral materials; programs and leaflets for events; and biographical material. Organizational notes from Barbara Wheeler may be included.

<b>Title/Description</b>	<b>Instances</b>	
Coursework, including Union, Princeton, Yale, circa 1948 -- 1956	box 1	folder 1-2
UTS dissertation, 1962	box 1	folder 3
Letters of recommendation, circa 1942 -- 1952	box 1	folder 4
Programs and leaflets for graduations, ordinations, etc, circa 1943 -- 1975	box 1	folder 5
Biographical material, circa 1949 -- 2013	box 1	folder 6
Retirement events and recognitions, circa 1988 -- 2001	box 1	folder 7
Degrees and certificates, honors and awards, circa 1943 -- 2004	box 2	folder 1
Photographs, circa 1950 -- 1990	box 2	folder 2
Tributes, including funeral materials, circa 1965 -- 2018	box 2	folder 3
Personal notes and correspondence, circa 1985 -- 2012	box 2	folder 4

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**Series 2: Speeches and presentations, circa 1965 -- 2000**

Physical Description: 1 linear feet 1 linear foot, 2 boxes and 1 folder

Conditions Governing Access:**Conditions Governing Access**

This series is open for research.

**Arrangement**

This series is arranged in original order.

**Scope and Contents**

This series contains handwritten and typed speeches, presentations, and notes, as well as cassette tapes and slides. Organizational notes from Barbara Wheeler may be included.

<b>Title/Description</b>	<b>Instances</b>	
Speeches and presentations, circa 1980 -- 1984	box 2	folder 5
Speeches and presentations, circa 1985 -- 1989	box 3	folder 1
Sprunt lectures, 1988 -- 1989	box 3	folder 2-3

Sprunt lectures cassette tapes, 1988 -- 1989	box 3	folder 4
Speeches and presentations, circa 1990 -- 2000	box 4	folder 1
Speech notes, combines speeches and presentations, circa 1967 -- 2000	box 4	folder 2
Misc. speeches tapes and slides, circa 1965 -- 2000	box 4	folder 3

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### Series 3: Writings, circa 1950 -- 2018

Physical Description: 1.5 linear feet 1.5 linear feet, 3 boxes

Conditions Governing Access:

**Conditions Governing Access**

This series is open for research.

**Arrangement**

This series is arranged in original order.

**Scope and Contents**

This series contains an unpublished manuscript and unpublished essays, selected published writings from obscure publications, book reviews and bibliographies, writings and studies on faith and giving, and material related to the Auburn History Project which Lynn directed. Organizational notes from Barbara Wheeler may be included.

Title/Description	Instances	
"The Unnoticed Revolution" unpublished manuscript, 1975	box 5	folder 1
Unpublished essays and typed speeches, circa 1960 -- 2010	box 5	folder 2
Selection of published writings from obscure publications, circa 1950 -- 2018	box 5	folder 3
Book reviews and bibliographies, circa 1980 -- 1995	box 5	folder 4
Writings and studies on faith and giving, Amazing Pressure, 2012	box 5	folder 5
Writings and studies on faith and giving, Stewardship: Searching for Standards of Giving, 1999	box 6	folder 1-2
Writings and studies on faith and giving, Why Give?, 1999	box 6	folder 3-4
Writings and studies on faith and giving, circa 1990 -- 2018	box 6	folder 5
Writings and studies on faith and giving, circa 1992 -- 2018	box 7	folder 1
Notes on chapters, and conversations with Glenn Miller, circa 1979 -- 1998	box 7	folder 2
Auburn History Project, circa 1975 -- 1987	box 7	folder 3-4

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#### **Series 4: Union Theological Seminary, circa 1963 -- 1973**

Physical Description: 1 folder

Conditions Governing Access:

##### **Conditions Governing Access**

This series is open for research.

##### **Arrangement**

This series is arranged in original order.

##### **Scope and Contents**

This series contains materials on courses taught, correspondence and materials regarding Lynn and a possible presidency at Union, and reports of committees on which Lynn was a member or the chair. Also included are organizational notes from Barbara Wheeler.

<b>Title/Description</b>	<b>Instances</b>	
Union Theological Seminary, circa 1963 -- 1973	box 7	folder 5

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