

YALE DIVINITY SCHOOL News Release

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The Yale Divinity Library and World Council of Churches have signed a letter of agreement to microfilm selected materials from the WCC archives, building on five years of previous collaboration between the institutions that resulted in the microfilming of four major Council collections.

The agreement, unveiled January 21 at World Council of Churches headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, will help preserve additional archival holdings documenting the Council's work around the world, some affiliated organizations, and its predecessor bodies. Under the agreement, funding will be provided through Yale Divinity School's Kenneth Scott Latourette Initiative for the Documentation of World Christianity, a proactive program for preserving and providing access to material documenting the history of Christian missions and World Christianity.

"These archives are important primary documents for understanding the history of Christianity in the twentieth century," said Paul Stuehrenberg, Yale Divinity librarian, who represented Yale at the signing ceremony in Geneva. "We are delighted that this project both preserves this important documentation and makes it available to scholars and the church."

According to Stuehrenberg, the agreement solidifies a collaboration that until now has proceeded on an ad hoc, project-by-project basis. He estimated that there is at least five years of microfilm work to be done in the near term. Ann Okerson, Associate University Librarian, Yale University Library, and Samuel Kobia, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, are signatories of the agreement.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) describes itself as the broadest and most inclusive among the many organized expressions of the modern ecumenical movement, a movement whose goal is Christian unity. The organization brings together more than 340 churches, denominations and church fellowships in over 100 countries and territories throughout the world, representing some 400 million Christians and including most of the world's Orthodox churches,

In previous years, the Yale Divinity Library has underwritten the cost of microfilming World War II era material (1938-1948) documenting the founding of the World Council of Churches; the World Student Christian Federation archives; and archives of the

Programme to Combat Racism, a controversial Council program that supported liberation movements in underdeveloped countries. A fourth collection, the archives of the Dialogue with People of Living Faiths, a program to encourage Christians to be open to persons of different religious traditions, is currently being microfilmed at a cost of 34,300 Euros. These microfilm collections are distributed by IDC Publishers of Leiden, the Netherlands.

The Latourette Initiative provides funding for the microfilming of published and archival resources documenting the history of Christian missions and the life of the churches in countries where missionaries served. The Initiative is named for Kenneth Scott Latourette (1884-1968), who was the D. Willis James Professor of Missions and World Christianity at Yale Divinity School. Latourette was instrumental in changing the focus of the Day Missions Collection at Yale from a resource for training missionaries to a collection documenting the history of Christian missions. The endowment he established to further the work of the Yale Divinity Library provides the funding for the Latourette Initiative.

Other microfilming projects supported by the Initiative include the archives of the Regions Beyond Missionary Union, held at the University of Edinburgh; monographs related to the "Old Believers" held by the Russian National Library; and the missions archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

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