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Guide to the Shailer Mathews Papers 1892-1942



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Descriptive Summary

Identifier	ICU.SPCL.SHAILERMATHEWS
Title	Mathews, Shailer. Papers
Date	1892-1942
Size	22 linear feet (44 boxes)
Repository	Special Collections Research Center University of Chicago Library 1100 East 57th Street Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.
Abstract	Shailer Mathews (1863-1941) Professor, 1894-1933, Dean of the Divinity School, 1908-1933. Contains correspondence, minutes, articles, reports, and teaching materials. Subjects relate to the history of the University of Chicago and the Divinity School, the development of the religious and social ideas known as Modernism, and the Chautauqua Institute.

Information on Use

Access

No restrictions.

Citation

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Mathews, Shailer. Papers, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library

Biographical Note

Shailer Mathews was born in Portland, Maine on May 26, 1863. He received an A.B. from Colby College in 1884, and an M.A. in 1887 In the latter year, he also graduated from Newton Theological Seminary, after which he spent a number of years as a professor at Colby. He was on leave during the year 1890-1891, studying at the University of Berlin, and returned with an enthusiasm for research and the historical-scientific approach to all knowledge that became a lifelong characteristic.

In 1894, at the invitation of William Rainey Harper, he came to the newly reorganized University of Chicago, where he was to play an influential role until his retirement in 1933. He held a number of positions in the Divinity School of the University; Assistant Professor of New Testament Interpretation, 1894-97; Professor in the same field, 1897-1905; Professor of Systematic Theology, 1905-1906; Professor of Historical and Comparative Theology, 1906-1933; junior Dean, 1899-1908; Dean, 1908-1933. At the same time he played a very active part as a member of the administrative council of the University as a whole and as a participant in countless faculty and administrative activities He found time to write or to edit more than a score of books, many of which were extremely influential and widely read, particularly those dealing with the new approach to religious knowledge then widely disparaged as "Modernism" and with the social application of the Christian Gospel. He edited a journal of general observation and comment on world affairs, "The World Today", from 1903 to 1911; he also was editor of "The Biblical World", 1913-20 For a long period he was an editorial adviser on religious books for Harpers

Dr. Mathews did not believe that real scholarship could prosper in an "ivory-tower" and he was always active in a great variety of organizations and associations outside the University. He was a member of the Chicago Co-operative Council of City Missions (the forerunner of the Council of Churches), 1908-1915; of the Chicago Baptist Executive Council, 1910-1919; and of many other similar groups. His abilities as a leader and parliamentary officer were drawn upon in many ways within these groups He was the first president of the Federal Council of Churches, 1912-1916, and had much to do with the formulation of its policies and procedures. In 1915 he served at a very critical juncture as president of the Northern Baptist Convention and is credited with being largely responsible for saving that body from splitting in two over the question of Modernism versus Fundamentalism. From 1929 to 1932 he was president of the Chicago Church Federation.

The breadth of Mathews' interests is indicated by his association with a number of other activities not officially related to the churches or directly to theology. He was, for example, director of religious work for the Chautauqua Institute from 1912-1934, most of which time he was also a trustee of the association and a major figure in Chautauqua's development. In 1920 he served as a member of the Kobe College Foundation and made a trip to Japan which made him a national spokesman for Japanese and American friendship. His interest in politics and social welfare is indicated by his membership on the board of trustees of the Church Peace Union in 1914, as well as his participation and encouragement in the work of Jane Addams' Hull House. However, he strongly supported the cause of the Allies once the United States entered the first World War and from 1917 to 1918 served at the appointment of Illinois' governor as State Director of War Savings. He co-operated and supported progressive movements in politics led by men like Charles Merriam in Chicago and Theodore Roosevelt on the national scene.

Mathews died on October 23, 1941.

Scope Note

During the year 1954-55, these records were removed from storage in the basement of Swift Hall and deposited in the University Archives Their present organization is based on the arrangement at the time of transfer and in general reflects their original arrangement as working files The many relationships of the School and of Shailer Mathews with other organizations are not easily discernable in the present basic chronological arrangement but it should be noted that symbols

have been introduced in this guide to indicate the dominant subject matter in otherwise general folders However, these symbols should be used with caution since they are not to be understood as being inclusive of all the correspondence that might exist in a particular folder. Also, the dating assigned to each folder is not necessarily inclusive but should serve as a suggestion to the general location of specific material

Following deposit in the Archives some general weeding was performed on the papers which was limited to a vast amount of routine matters Occasional samplings of this routine correspondence and memoranda were saved and are so marked in the guide below.

The sketch of Mathews' career has been appended to assist users of this collection to gain a minimal understanding of the scope of his varied activities as a University administrator, scholar, and churchman. His autobiography, New Faith for Old (New York, Macmillan, 1936) should be also consulted.

Dr. Mathews' papers in the possession of the University Archives are to a large extent administrative records dealing with matters affecting both the Divinity School and the University as a whole. There is also considerable correspondence touching upon the practical matters of American church life, particularly the efforts of the strict fundamentalists to split the churches over the modernism issue; a large group of papers bears upon the development of the Chautaugua Institute, particularly its religious program; and the collection includes miscellaneous correspondence, lecture notes, and manuscripts of published and unpublished articles and books There are no examples of correspondence with leading political figures, but many, of course, of correspondence with educational and religious leaders

The chief emphases of Dr. Mathews papers will be found in three areas, 1) the history of the University of Chicago and of the Divinity School; 2) the history of the development of the religious and social ideas which came to be known as "Modernism" and of the struggles within Protestantism which resulted from them; and 3) the reconstruction of the general intellectual, social, and spiritual climate which characterized the great era of vast changes in American life from 1890-1930 In addition valuable material on the history of Chautaugua and of a number of other movements and groups is scattered through the whole. The attitude of religious leaders toward the first World War is another example of a secondary topic upon which Dr. Mathews' papers shed some interesting light.

Related Resources

The following related resources are located in the Department of Special Collections:

http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/spcl/select.html

Subject Headings

- Mathews, Shailer, 1863-1941
- Chautauqua Institution
- University of Chicago -- History
- University of Chicago. Divinity School

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Shailer Mathews?, Course notes (possibly Gerald B. Smith's notes, not Mathews)

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Folder 3

Divinity School, Faculty minutes, 1892-1907

Box 3

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Divinity School, Faculty minutes, 1915-1921

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Folder 1

Divinity School, Photographs of the first graduating class and the last of Morgan Park Academy, 1892-1893

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Shailer Mathews/Divinity School, 1897-1911

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Shailer Mathews/Divinity School, 1897-1911

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Folder 4

Northwestern Baptist Educational Society, 1895-1921

Box 5

Folder 1

E. B. Hubert, P-Z, 1898

Box 5

Folder 2

Morgan Park, South Side and Bradley. Board of Trustees minutes, 1898-1900

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Folder 3

Morgan Park, South Side and Bradley. Board of Trustees minutes, 1900-1901

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Shailer Mathews/Personal Correspondence, June-December, 1899

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Divinity School/General Correspondence, E-G, to June, 1903

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Folder 6

E. D. Burton and W. A. Stevens correspondence on the Harmony of the Gospels, mostly 1903-1906

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E. D. Burton and W. A. Stevens correspondence on the Harmony of the Gospels, mostly 1903-1906

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Materials from Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work Conference;" invitations, membership cared, order of procession, program

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Photographs and postcards taken at "Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work Conference," 1925

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Photograph, King and Queen of Sweden, 1925

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Broadside advertisement, "William Tyndale's Translation of the New Testament"