George D. Kelsey Papers, 1932-1996
Finding Aid

Drew University Archives
36 Madison Avenue
Madison, NJ 07940
Phone: 973-408-3532
Fax: 973-408-3770
http://depts.drew.edu/lib/archives/
**Summary Information**

**Creator**  
Kelsey, George D.

**Title and Dates**  
George D. Kelsey Papers, 1932-1996

**Abstract**  
George D. Kelsey was the Henry Anson Buttz Professor of Christian Ethics at Drew University, where he taught for 24 years. Prior to teaching at Drew, Kelsey taught at Morehouse College where he became a mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr., then a student. He also served as an executive with the Federal Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches.

**Size**  
20 linear ft. (49 boxes)

**Location**  
Drew University Archives  
Madison, NJ 07940

**Language of Material**  
English

**Biography of George D. Kelsey**  
George Dennis Sale Kelsey was born on July 24, 1910 in Columbus, Georgia to Andrew Zadok Kelsey and Marie Hayward Jones Kelsey. He and his brother, Andrew II, were raised in Griffin, Georgia. In 1928, Kelsey graduated as valedictorian of his class from Cabin Creek High School, a Negro Baptist institution dedicated to the teaching of African-American students. Kelsey married Leola B. Hanks in 1930 and they had three children, George II, Everett, and Holly.

Kelsey entered Morehouse College in Atlanta in the fall of 1928 and received his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1934 with high honors. He graduated from Andover Newton Theological School in Newton Centre, MA with a Bachelor of Divinity degree, and as valedictorian, in 1938. During this time, Kelsey served often as a preacher and lecturer, beginning a long tradition of public oration.

Kelsey entered the Ph.D. program at Yale University in 1937. He postponed completion of the degree program in 1938 to accept a teaching position as Professor of Religion and Philosophy at Morehouse College. Also in 1938, Kelsey was ordained as a minister in the Providence Baptist Church in Atlanta. He received his Ph.D. in Philosophy from Yale in 1946.
From 1945 to 1948, Kelsey served as the Director of the School of Religion at Morehouse College and was a visiting lecturer at Gammon Theological Seminary. He began to contribute to books and journals, and his first article titled “The Nature of the Christian Ethic” was published in The Journal of Religious Thought in 1945.

It was during this time that Kelsey first met Martin Luther King, Jr., who studied sociology at Morehouse. A member of the class of 1948, King received his highest marks in his first two years of college in Kelsey’s Bible class. Later, Kelsey offered criticism of a chapter in King’s Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story prior to its publication. King later cited George Kelsey as one of his main influences in pursuing the study of race and religion.

Aside from maintaining a long-running correspondence with King, Kelsey worked and studied alongside several prominent religious thinkers of his time, including Reinhold Niebuhr, Paul Tillich, and Benjamin E. Mays. Later, the writings and views of these authors formed the basis of Kelsey’s teachings on Christian ethics and civil rights.

In 1948, Kelsey took a position with the Federal Council of Churches as an Associate Secretary in the Field Department. The same year, when the Federal Council was consolidated into the National Council of the Churches of Christ, Kelsey was promoted to Associate Director of the Central Department of Field Administration. He retained this position until 1952. Kelsey became a member of the Fellowship of Southern Churchmen, the Society for the Study of Black Religion, and the National Council on Religion in Higher Education.

In 1950, Kelsey was a guest lecturer at Drew University in Madison, NJ and taught a seminar on Christian Ethics. In 1951, he accepted the position of Associate Professor of Christian Ethics at Drew and was promoted to full Professor in 1957. In 1972, he was awarded the title of Henry Anson Buttz Professor of Christian Ethics at Drew, which he kept until his retirement in 1976.


In 1979, Kelsey delivered the convening prayer at the 96th Congress of the U.S. Senate in Washington D.C. In 1989, Andover Newton Theological School established the Kelsey-Owens Black Ministries Program. Kelsey was honored by Drew University in October 1992 with a luncheon and presentation of a portrait. He died after a long illness on April 3, 1996 in Madison, NJ.

**Scope and Content Note**

The George D. Kelsey Papers contain a comprehensive overview of Kelsey’s education, career and ministry. The collection largely consists of handwritten notes from Kelsey’s
lectures, sermons, research, and manuscripts and early drafts of his published works. Documents from Drew University, Andover Newton Theological School, Morehouse College, Yale Divinity School and other colleges provide information on Kelsey’s studies and teachings. The collection includes items from conferences and conventions attended by Kelsey, and from professional organizations Kelsey worked with, including the National Council of the Churches of Christ and the Society for the Study of Black Religion. The papers also contain information pertaining to Martin Luther King Jr. collected by Kelsey.

The collection consists of academic papers, agendas, books, brochures, bulletins, certificates, correspondence, conference and seminar papers, drafts, examinations, lecture notes, magazines, manuscripts, newspapers, offprints, outlines, photographs, published works, research notes, resumes, sermons, sheet music, speeches, surveys, syllabi, and yearbooks. In addition, one audiocassette, one drawing, and one printing plate are included.

**Arrangement**
The George D. Kelsey Papers are arranged into seven series:

Series 1: Education, 1934-1959
- Subseries A: Morehouse College and Andover Newton Theological School—Class Notes and Papers, 1934-1939
- Subseries C: Harvard Divinity School – Class Notes, 1958-1959
- Subseries D: New School For Social Research – Class Notes, Undated

Series 2: Academic Career, 1939-1995
- Subseries A: Lecture Notes, 1939-1976
- Subseries B: Correspondence and Ephemera, 1941-1995

- Subseries A: Sermons and Speeches, c. 1940-1970, Undated
- Subseries B: Conferences, 1946-1988
- Subseries C: Ministry, 1942-1991
- Subseries D: Organizations, 1932-1990

Series 4: Publications, 1943-1985
- Subseries B: Chapters, Articles and Essays, 1943-1978
- Subseries C: Reviews, 1948-1974

Series 5: Research and Notes, c. 1940-1969
- Subseries A: Notes, c. 1940-1970
- Subseries B: Research, undated

Series 6: Correspondence, 1941-1996

Series 7: Biographical and Miscellaneous, 1828-1996
- Subseries A: Biographies, 1947-1999
- Subseries B: Family and Miscellaneous Papers, 1828-1994
Access and Use

Access
The George D. Kelsey Papers are open to research.

Restrictions on Use and Copyright Information
Single photocopies may be made for research purposes. Permission to publish materials from the collection must be requested from Drew University Archives. Researchers are responsible for other copyright compliance.

Related Materials
Martin Luther King, Jr., Papers, Morehouse College
Martin Luther King, Jr., Papers, Boston University

Processing and Other Information

Processing Information
This collection was processed by Michael Maziekien in 2006. Finding aid written by Michael Maziekien in 2006.

Descriptive Rules Used
Finding aid content adheres to that prescribed by Describing Archives: A Content Standard.

Preferred Citation
Identification of specific item; Date (if known); George D. Kelsey Papers; Box and Folder Number; Drew University Archives, Madison, NJ.

Subject Headings
Kelsey, George D.
King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968
Drew University.
Morehouse College Atlanta, Ga..
Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America.
National Council of Churches.
Christian ethics.
New Jersey.
Georgia.
Correspondence.

Contents List

Series 1: Education, 1934-1959
Series Description
The Education Series contains materials relating to Kelsey’s studies. It includes notes and course materials compiled by Kelsey during his early and post-doctoral study, a draft of his thesis for Andover Newton Theological School, drafts of his dissertation for Yale University, and other academic papers.

**Arrangement**
Arranged chronologically when dates available, otherwise alphabetically.

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Subseries C: Harvard Divinity School – Class Notes, 1958-1959

- Ethics (1958-1959)
- Social Relations (1958-1959)
- Theology (1958-1959)

Subseries D: New School For Social Research – Class Notes, Undated

- Anthropology (undated)
- Social Philosophy (undated)
- Social Psychology (undated)

Series 2: Academic Career, 1939-1995

Series Description
The Academic Career Series contains materials related to Kelsey’s career as an educator. Subseries A consists of notes, course materials, and examinations from his courses. Subseries B consists of documents pertaining to universities and colleges with which Kelsey was affiliated, and includes bulletins, correspondence, memoranda, minutes, schedules, student publications, and yearbooks.

Arrangement
Arranged chronologically when dates available, otherwise alphabetically.

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12  5  Drew University, Ethics 113  1950-1973
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14  5  Drew University, The Interpretation of History  1950-1973
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17  2  Drew University, Problems in Christian Ethics  1950-1973
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20  6  Drew University, Social Relations  1950-1973
20  7  Drew University, Ph.D. Comprehensive Exams  1950-1973
21  1  Lutheran Theological Seminary, Christianity and Race Relations  1971
21  2  Pennsylvania State University, Religious Studies  1973
21  3  Bryn Mawr College, Ethics and Modern Society  1976
21  4-5  Bryn Mawr College, Ethics and Public Policy  1976
21  6  Morris Brown, Church History  undated
21  7-8  Miscellaneous  undated
Subseries B: Correspondence and Ephemera, 1941-1995

Subseries B: Correspondence and Ephemera, 1941-1995

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Series Description
The Ministerial and Professional Career Series contains materials from Kelsey’s ministry and non-academic career. Subseries A includes sermons (see appendix). Subseries B, Subseries C, and Subseries D contain brochures, bulletins and correspondence from conferences, ministry, and professional organizations and churches, respectively. This series contains materials from the convening prayer Kelsey delivered to the United States Senate in 1979.

Arrangement
Subseries A: Arranged alphabetically.
Subseries B: Arranged chronologically.
Subseries C: Arranged chronologically.
Subseries D: Arranged chronologically.
Subseries B: Conferences, 1946-1988
26 6  World Conference on Faith and Order 1951
26 7  Conference on Methodism and the Inclusive Church 1956
26 8  Consultation on Long-Range Planning 1966
26 9-10  Conference on Racism undated
27 1  Miscellaneous Bulletins, Brochures and Schedules 1946-1988

Subseries C: Ministry, 1942-1991
27 2  Baccalaureates and Convocations 1942-1983
27 3  Weekend Services 1946-1991
27 4  Funeral Services 1974-1982
27 5  United States Senate 96th Congress Convening Prayer 1979

Subseries D: Organizations, 1932-1990
27 6  Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America 1932-1950
27 7  National Council on Religion in Higher Education 1945
27 8  National Association for the Advancement of Colored People 1947-1950
27 9  National Council of the Churches of Christ 1949-1952
27 10  Fund for the Advancement of Education 1952-1961
27 11  Race Relations Institute 1955
27 12  Association of American Colleges Arts Program 1958-1972
27 13  James Library Disposition Committee 1968
27 14  Young Life Institute 1971-1972
28 1  Society for the Study of Black Religion 1973
28 2  Kelsey-Owens Black Ministries Program 1988-1990
28 3  Home Mission Board undated
28 4  National Urban League undated
28 5  World Council of Churches undated
28 6-8  A Comprehensive Study of the Ethical, Legal, and Social Implications of Advancements in Biomedical and Behavioral Research an Technology 1976

Series 4: Publications, 1943-1985
Series Description
The Publications Series contains outlines, manuscripts, drafts, copies, and offprints of Kelsey’s published works, along with related notes, correspondence and reviews. Subseries A consists of materials related to Kelsey’s two books, *Racism and the Christian Understanding of Man* and *Social Ethics Among Southern Baptists, 1917-1969*. Subseries B consists of materials related to Kelsey’s published articles, pamphlets, essays, and chapters in symposia and other collections. Subseries C consists of book reviews written by Kelsey.

**Arrangement**
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| Subseries B: Chapters, Articles and Essays, 1943-1978 | | | |
| 31  | 7      | “The Christian Way in Race Relations” | 1943 |
| 31  | 8      | “The Nature of the Christian Ethic” | 1945 |
| 31  | 9      | “Protestantism and Democratic Intergroup Living” | 1947 |
| 31  | 10     | “The Confusion as to Means and Ends in Social Progress” | 1950 |
| 32  | 1      | “Present Crisis in Negro Ministerial Education” | 1949 |
| 32  | 2      | “Our Bread and Butter Culture” | 1949 |
| 32  | 3      | “Social Policies of Contemporary Methodism” | 1951 |
| 32  | 4      | “Racial Patterns and the Churches” | 1952 |
“An Interpretation of the Doctrine of Stewardship” 1953
“Religious Bases of Human Rights” 1953
“The Implications of the Fall of Man for Race Relations, and Justice, The Unfinished Task of the West” 1954
“Negro Churches in the United States” 1955
“The Plight of Man” 1956
“Churches and Freedom” 1956
“Ethico-Cultural Revolution in American Race Relations” 1957
“Meaning of Vocation in Urban Culture” 1958
“Law, Morals and American Protestantism” 1960
“The Lord of Life” 1960
“Meditations” 1962
“The Nature of the Racist Faith” 1964
“Power Available in the Church” 1968
“Your Reasonable Service” 1970
“Christian Faith and the Second Post-Reconstruction Era” 1974
“The Racist Search for the Self” 1978
“So You Want to Be in Style” undated
Correspondence 1951-1960

Subseries C: Reviews, 1948-1974
Published 1951-1965
Manuscripts and Drafts 1948-1974

Series 5: Research and Notes, c. 1940-1969
Series Description
The Research and Notes Series contains Kelsey’s research, including handwritten notes, newspaper articles, bibliographies, and other materials. There is no indication whether these materials were used for Kelsey’s lectures, writings, studies, or personal research. Subseries A contains Kelsey’s written notes on various authors and subjects, including a lengthy manuscript titled “The Nature of Racism.” Subseries B contains photocopied material collected by or given to Kelsey.

Arrangement
Arranged alphabetically.

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### Series 6: Correspondence, 1941-1996

#### Series Description

The Correspondence Series consists of letters written and received by Kelsey. See Series 1 for Drew University correspondence, Series 3 for correspondence related to publications, and Series 6 for Martin Luther King, Jr. correspondence.

#### Arrangement

Arranged chronologically.

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Series 7: Biographical and Miscellaneous, 1828-1996

Series Description
The Biographical and Miscellaneous Series contains materials which summarize the life and career of Kelsey. Subseries A includes biographies, curricula vitae, newspaper and magazine articles, and information on the honorary luncheon and portrait presentation by Drew University in 1992. Subseries B contains miscellaneous materials related to Kelsey’s family, finances, and personal schedules, photographs, artwork, and other personal papers. There is a small amount of material related to Martin Luther King, Jr., including one signed letter from King.

Arrangement
Subseries A: Arranged chronologically.
Subseries B: Arranged alphabetically.

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<td>“George D. Kelsey: An Estimate of His Scholarship” by Donald G. Jones</td>
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<td>The Pastor Scholar Special Edition: <em>Unsung Hero: The Legacy of George Kelsey</em></td>
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Subseries B: Family and Miscellaneous Papers, 1828-1994

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Series 8: Reading Notes, undated

**Series Description**
The Reading Notes Series contains four sets of index cards with citations and notes of articles and books read.

**Arrangement**
Arranged alphabetically.

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Biblical Basis for Christian Social Action
Biblical Foundations for World Democracy
Blessed Are the Humble
Blocks to Racial Equality and Justice
The Challenge of Our Economic Culture to the Churches
Christ and Life after Death, Mark 12:24-27
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Christian Attitudes Towards War
Christian Faith and Democracy
Christian Faith and Reaction
Christian Faith and Secularism
Christian Faith and Socialism
Christian Faith and Sexuality
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Christian Motivation for Political Action
A Christian Understanding of Human Rights (See also The Christian Interpretation of Human Rights)
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Eulogy of Margaret Pielstick
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How Shall We Sing the Lord’s Song in a Strange Land?
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