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### W88-1237.7. Hesselink, I. John, Jr. (1928-2018). Papers, 1953-2007. 4.50 linear ft.

Western Theological Seminary

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**W88-1237.7.** Hesselink, I. John, Jr. (1928-2018).  
Papers, 1953-2007. 4.50 linear ft.



### Abstract

Missionary in Japan, 1953-1973; evangelist; writer; president of Western Theological Seminary (WTS), 1973-1985; professor at WTS, 1985-1998. Collection includes correspondence, articles, essays, and books written by Hesselink. Subjects include theologians, doctrinal theology, books of the New Testament, the RCA, Japan mission, and Western Theological Seminary.

Accession No.: W88-0048.3; W94-1179, W88-1237.7  
Provenance: I. John Hesselink, Jr.  
Donor: I. John Hesselink, Jr.  
Photographs: 81 images (Boxes 3 and 7)  
Processed by: Craig G. Wright, November 1990  
Leon Witteveen, September 1997, June 1999

### Biography

Ira John Hesselink was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1928. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Central College (Iowa) in 1950. Hesselink attended the New Brunswick Theological Seminary from 1950 to 1951, during which time he also served as the Junior Assistant Pastor of Highland Park Reformed Church. In 1951, he married Etta Marie Ter Louw. Hesselink received his bachelor of divinity degree from Western Theological Seminary in 1953. That same year, he was ordained in Holland, Nebraska, and became a missionary in Japan. He received his doctorate in theology from the University of Basel, Switzerland, in 1961. He gained a reputation as a Calvin scholar of renown with his dissertation, "Calvin's Concept and Use of the Law."

Hesselink then went back to Japan as a professor at the Tokyo Union Theological Seminary from 1961 to 1973, with the years 1965 to 1967 spent as a visiting professor at Western Theological Seminary. It was in 1973 that Hesselink became the president of Western Theological Seminary, a position he held until 1985. He received an honorary doctor of humane letters degree from Hope College in 1973, and an honorary doctor of divinity from Central College in 1981. In 1986, he was installed as the Albertus C. Van Raalte Chair of Systematic Theology at Western Theological Seminary.

Over the years, Hesselink has put his talents to good use in a wide variety of roles: evangelist, missionary, lecturer, instructor, translator, and administrator. He is a prolific writer who has published in the English, Japanese, and German languages. During his career, he has studied under Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, and Hesselink was responsible for the historic "reconciliation" meeting between the two men in Switzerland.

Hesselink passed away in Holland, Michigan on October 28, 2018.

### Scope and Content

The Dr. I. John Hesselink papers consist of materials from 1953 to 1993, which document his activities during that time period. Included are correspondence, reports, studies, articles, essays, and books. The folders have been arranged alphabetically by topical headings and the material within the folders has been arranged chronologically.

The strengths of this collection lie in the “correspondence” and “papers” subgroups. The correspondence consists of letters written to Hesselink while living in Japan and correspondence generated during his term as president of Western Theological Seminary. The papers subgroup includes several dozen samples of Hesselink’s writings, including articles, essays and several books.

### Container List

#### Series 1 – Topical

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American Association of Theological Schools, 1973-1975  
Biographical, n.d., 1953-2018 (scattered)  
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    Accreditation, 1982-1984  
    Board of Theological Education, 1973-1975  
    Breward, Ian, 1971-1981  
    Brunner, Emil, 1960 (German)  
    Calvin Seminary, 1973-1977  
    Copies of correspondence of others, 1973-1975  
    Ellens, Harold, 1976  
    General, 1963-1975, 1982, 1983, 1985, 1993 (4 folders)  
    Girod, Gordon H., 1976  
    Hageman, Howard, 1972-1981  
    Heideman, Eugene, 1953-1958, 1970 (3 folders)  
    Holland Home, 1982  
    Hostetter, Paul, 1973-1980  
    Japan Missionary Letters, 1962-1966  
    Jewish Chautauqua Society, 1973-1974  
    Karsen, Wendell, 1984  
    Laman, Gordon, 1976-1981  
    Laymen’s Publicity League, 1965-1985  
    Mulder Chair of Theology, 1974-1979 (3 folders)

Phillips, James M., 1973-1982  
Redeker, Russ, 1975-1976  
Ridder, Herman J., 1966-1967  
Schuller, Robert H., 1975-1985  
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Box 2

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Student Scholarships, 1971-1985 (3 folders)  
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Women in Ministry, 1975-1982  
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Curriculum Revision, 1976-1980

Curriculum Vitae, Wayne E. Oates, 1980

D. Min. Program, 1976-1980

Dedication Program, 1981

Expand Western: Case Statement, 1978

Expand Western: Steering Committee, 1978-1979

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Bennink, Richard John, 1969-1985  
Coughenour, Robert, 1973-1985  
Cruz, Virgil, 1982-1984  
Eenigenburg, Elton, 1964-1988  
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Conrad, Charles, 1983  
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Handbook of Supervised Ministry, 1983

Box 3

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Pamphlets  
Arguments on the Yasukuni Shrine Issue, 1971  
Barth, Karl, Study on Galatians 6:2, 1963 (German)  
Disciples Divinity House of the U. of Chicago, 1972  
Services of Western Theological Seminary, 1973-1974

Papers

Articles

Barth-Brunner Rivalry, 1962, 1987  
*Church Herald*, 1957-1988 (scattered)  
"The Dramatic Story of the Heidelberg Catechism," 1994  
"The Future of the Church in a Technological Society," 1971  
"How Christians Worship in Japan," 1957  
"Issues and Developments in Modern Theology," 1992  
Japan, 1954-1980 (scattered)  
"The Quest for Authenticity," 1966  
Study on Philippians 3:10, "That I May Know Him," 1957  
Study on John 14:23-29, 1989  
Women in Ministry, 1975-1982  
Why Study Church History? 1968  
Bible Study Book for R.C.W., "Christ's Peace - Live it!" 1987  
Bible Study Book for R.C.W., Leader's Guide for above, 1987

Essays

Essays on Karl Barth, n.d., 1988  
Essays on Emil Brunner, n.d., 1989  
Essays on John Calvin, n.d., 1957-1990 (scattered)  
Essays on Jesus Christ, n.d., 1988  
Essay on Paul Tillich, n.d.

Lectures

“The Christian World Mission Today,” n.d.

“On Dying with Dignity - and Love: The History and Nature of the Hospice Movement,” 1986

Manuscripts

“On Being Reformed: Twelve Misunderstandings,” (1st Edition), 1975

“On Being Reformed: Twelve Misunderstandings,” (2nd Edition), 1980

Messages, General Synod, 1987

Photographs, 1975-1976 (45 images)

Publications

*Christ's Peace-Live It!*, 1987

*On Being Reformed: Distinctive Characteristics and Common Misunderstandings*, 1983

“The President’s Letter,” 1979, 1985

Preaching Chair, 1975

Programs and Brochures

Japan, n.d., 1962, 1967

Miscellaneous, 1973

Purposes and Goals, 1975-1976

Reports

Board of Theological Education, 1973, 1975, 1983

Dean Search, 1981

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Student Record, Basel University, 1958-1961 (German)

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Missionary Research Library, 1972

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Reformed Church Booklets, 1928-1989

Non-Reformed Church Booklets, 1948-1992

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Gospel of Mark and Song Book (Japanese), ca. 1920 (from Hoeksema family)

Miscellaneous Books (Japanese), ca. 1920 (from Hoeksema family)

New Testament (Latin), 1921 (from Hoeksema family)

Brochures

Baiko Girls’ School (Alice Elzinga), 1964-1976 (also Correspondence)

Billy Graham Crusade, Tokyo, 1967 (also Correspondence)

Doshisha University, 1994

Ferris Girls’ School, 1978, 1994

International Christian University, 1964-1975

John Calvin Translation Society, 1957-1968

Kiyosato Agricultural Project, 1960-1990

Meiji Gakuin University, 1962-1992 (3 folders)

Ministry of Rudy Kuyten in Japan, 1971-1974

Miscellaneous Japanese Christian Schools, 1965-1990 (also Bulletins)

Orio Gakuen School, n.d., 1983

Saffron Home for Blind Women, 1972

Social Welfare Institutions/Facilities, 1962-1983

Tokyo Union Church, 1966 (also Historical Booklet, 1980)

Tokyo Union Theological Seminary, 1963-1986 (also Photos)

Toyo Eiwa Women’s Junior College, 1965-1973 (also Yearbook)

Uchimura Kanzo, No-Church Movement, 1972

Clippings

Missionaries to Japan, Samuel Robbins Brown, 1880-1996 (also biographical information)

Student Unrest, 1960-1970

Box 6

Correspondence

- Board Secretaries, 1961-1979
- Buys, Ekdal, 1991
- Hesselink, I. John, Missionary Letters, 1962, 1966
- Hymns of the Church, 1964 (also listing)
- Isao Inuzuka, 1955-1979 (Hoeksema family)
- Koedyker, John, 1980-1982
- Luben, Bernard, 1996-2000
- Meiji Gakuin University, 1976-1996 (also clippings)
- Miscellaneous, 1947-1986 (Hoeksema family)
- Shinsei Kan "New Life Center," 1962 (Albertus Pieters Evangelistic Center)  
(also brochures)
- Takenaka, Jiro, 1950-1976 (Hoeksema family)
- Testimonial Letters from Japanese Christians, 1962-1995
- Toyohiko Kagawa, 1950-1971 (also clippings)
- Ferris Girls' School Pennant, n.d.
- Hungarian Reformed News, 1978-1979
- Interboard Bulletins, 1953-1969 (3 folders)
- Interboard Committee Manuals, 1962
- International Christian University
  - Board Minutes and Reports, 1963-1972
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  - Reports, Student Unrest, 1960-1970
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  - Newsletters, 1966-2003 (2 folders)
  - Policy Statements and Brochures, 1963-1986
- Magazines
  - Asia Notebook, 1967-1971
  - Japan Harvest, 1974
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  - Consultation, 1971 (papers)
  - Festival, New Jersey Synod, 1971 (programs)
  - Festivals, Miscellaneous, 1971 (programs and papers)
  - Posters, n.d.
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- Missionary Address Lists, 1966, 1981, 1982, 1984

Box 7



Missionary Directories (Japan), 1962, 1969  
Missionary Letters and Articles, 1914-1981  
Missionaries to Japan, Herman Van Slyke Peeke (biographical information)  
Monthly Digest, Japan Christian Press, 1958  
Nagasaki International Cultural Center Construction Plan, n.d.  
Newsletters  
    “Ministers Exclusive,” 1949-1953  
    Memo to Missionaries, 1953-1960  
Newspapers, n.d. (Japanese)  
Obituaries and Memorial Services, 1911, 1965-1983  
Pageant, “Reveal Christ Anew,” History of Women’s Mission Work in R.C.A.,  
    1875-1975  
Pamphlets  
    “Arguments on the Yasukuni Shrine Issue,” 1971  
    Missions in Japan, 1970-1994 (also brochures)  
    R.C.A. Welcomes Dutch Immigrants, n.d.  
Papers  
    Christian Youth Movement, 1960-1972  
    Industrial/Urban Evangelism, 1962-1971  
    Missions Conference, W.T.S., 1979  
    Philosophy of Missions/Outreach, 1979  
    Role of Missionary, 1950s-1980s (3 folders)  
    Saga-Kyushu, 1966, 1995 (Gordon Laman)  
    Social Issues/Discrimination, 1986  
Photographs  
    Class at Steele Academy, Nagasaki, Japan, 1927 (1 image)  
    Japanese Missions, 1925-1929 (35 images) (also empty album) (2 folders)  
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    American School in Japan Dedication Ceremony, 1964  
    Missionary Conferences (Kyodan related), 1956-1973  
    Missionary Conferences (non-Kyodan related), 1957-1973  
    Reformed Theological Conferences, 1957-1973  
    Miscellaneous Programs–Japan, n.d., 1962, 1967 (also brochures)  
Report of Evangelism Tour of Donna Atwood, 1961  
Resources  
    R.C.A. World Missions, 1980s  
    Slavic Gospel News, 1978  
Tokyo Union Church  
    Annual Reports, 1969-1983  
    Faith and Life Newsletters, 1966-1971  
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    Correspondence and Clippings, Unrest in 1960s, 1967-1971  
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